HOSTIPITALITY

SESSION OF JANUARY 8, 1997

Where are we going? What awaits us at the beginning, at the turn [*au tournant*], of this year?

You are thinking perhaps that these are questions to laugh about.

But perhaps we are going to laugh, today.

We have not yet encountered this strange possibility, regarding hospitality, the possibility of laughter. We have encountered tears (those, for example, of the women who, during Tupinamba ceremonies of hospitality and "when they receive friends who go to visit them," begin to cry as a sign of welcome [*en signe de bienvenue*], "with both hands over their eyes, in this manner weeping their welcome to the visitor").[1] We have often spoken of mourning, of hospitality as mourning, of burial, of Oedipus and Don Juan, and recently even about the work of mourning as a process of hospitality, and so on.

But we have not evoked laughter. Yet it is difficult to dissociate a culture of hospitality from a culture of laughter or a culture of smile. It is not a matter of reducing laughter to smile or the opposite, but it is hard to imagine a scene of hospitality during which one welcomes [*accueille*] without smiling at the other, without giving a sign of joy or pleasure, without smiling at the other as at the welcoming of a promise [*comme à la bienvenue d'une promesse*].

If I say to the other, upon announcement of his coming [*sa venue*], "Come in [*Entrez donc*]," without smiling, without sharing with him some sign of joy, it is not hospitality. If, while saying to the other, "Come in [*Entre donc*]," I show him that I am sad or furious, that I would prefer, in short, that he not come in, then it is

1. Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to The Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America*, trans. and intro. by Janet Whatley (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 164.

assuredly not hospitality. The welcome must be laughing or smiling [*l'accueil doit être riant ou souriant*], happy or joyous. This is part of its essence in a way, even if the smile is interior and discreet, and even if it is mixed with tears which cry of joy, unless—as one can always suppose with our Tupinamba weepers, and as the hypothesis was offered—their welcoming ritual be associated with a cult of the dead, the stranger being hailed like a *revenant*.[2] "In the first place, as soon as the visitor has arrived in the house of the *moussacat* whom he has chosen for his host (the *moussacat* being the head of the household, who offers food to people passing through the village ...), he is seated on a cotton bed suspended in the air, and remains there for a short while without saying a word. Then the women come and surround the bed, crouching with their buttocks against the ground and with both hands over their eyes; in this manner weeping their welcome to the visitor, they will say a thousand things in his praise."[3]

Laughter and tears, then—through the tears, the welcoming smile, the *hôte* as *ghost* (spirit or *revenant*, holy spirit, holy ghost or *revenant*),[4] here is what awaits us perhaps, what awaits us at the turn of the year, under the heading and in the name of waiting [*au titre de l'attente*];[5] for the question of hospitality is also the question of waiting, of the time of waiting and of waiting beyond time.

Where are we going? What awaits us at the turn of this year, we were asking, and are we going to laugh? Are we going to cry? And if laughter were a new question for this seminar, what should one await from it, expect of it [*que faut-il en attendre*]?

We know nothing about this, of course, but we know enough to tell ourselves that hospitality, what belabors and concerns hospitality at its core [*ce qui travaille l'hospitalité en son sein*], what works it like a labor, like a pregnancy, like a promise as much as like a threat, what settles in it, within it [*en son dedans*], like a Trojan horse, the enemy (*hostis*) as much as the *avenir*, intestine hostility, is indeed a contradictory conception, a thwarted [*contrariée*] conception, or a *contraception* of awaiting, a contradiction of welcoming itself. And something that binds perhaps, as in Isaac's pregnancy [*la grossesse d'Isaac*], the laughter at pregnancy, at the

2. *Translator's Note:* The English edition of Léry offers the following note, which covers the issues here alluded to by Derrida:

> [Alfred] Métraux [in *La religion des Tupinamba* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1928)] gives an overview of the ceremony of the tearful greeting, which was widespread among South American tribes east of the Andes, and among some North American tribes (see also Georg Friederici, *Der Tränengruss der Indianer*) ... Métraux thinks that this ritual is associated with the cult of the dead, who names and exploits figure so often in the laments. [Charles] Wagley, in *Welcome of Tears*, notes the survival of this custom in 1953 in a Tupi-related tribe, the Tapirapé (de Léry, *History*, 252 n. 6).

3. De Léry, *History*, 164.

4. *Translator's Note:* The word *ghost* is in English in the text.

5. *Translator's Note:* "au titre de" could also mean "on behalf of" as in "je parle au titre de la Francophonie,": "I speak on behalf of Francophony."

announce of childbirth. Abraham, of whom we will speak a lot today, laughs, like Sarah, at the announce of Isaac's birth (*Yiṣḥaq* means "he laughs").

Hospitality must wait *and* not wait. It is what must await *and still* [*et cependant*] not await, extend and stretch itself [*se tendre*] and still stand and hold itself [*se tenir*] in the awaiting and the non-awaiting. Intentionality *and* non-intentionality, attention *and* inattention. Tending and stretching itself between the tending [*le tendre*] *and* the not-tending or the not-tending-itself [*ne pas se tendre*], not to extend this or that, or oneself to the other. It must await and expect itself to receive the stranger.[6] Indeed, if we gather [*nous recueillons*] all these words, all these values, all these significations (to tend and extend, to extend oneself, attention, intention, holding [*tenue*], withholding [*retenue*]),[7] the entire semantic family of *tenere* or of the *tendere* (Gr. *teinô*), we see this same contradictory tension at once working, worrying, disrupting the concept and experience of hospitality, while also making them possible. (I remember all of a sudden [*tout d'un coup*] that in English one says "to extend an invitation": to tend or extend [*tendre ou étendre*] an invitation—and we will see or recall in a moment that if hospitality seems linked to invitation, an invitation offered, extended, presented, sent; if it seems linked to the act of invitation, to the inviting of invitation, one must also make a note [*prendre acte*] of this: that radical hospitality consists, *would have* to consist, in *receiving without invitation*, beyond or before the invitation.)

If then we gather this entire semantic family of the holding [*tenir*], of the tending, the extending [*du tendre*], and the awaiting [*de l'attendre*], one must well expect [*s'attendre à*] an unlivable contradiction. I say "unlivable" because once more it is in death and on the edge of death [*au bord de la mort*], it is to death that hospitality destines itself—death thus also bearing the figure of visitation without invitation, or of haunting well- or ill-come, coming for good or ill [*la hantise bien ou mal venue*].

Let us unfold this contradiction that makes me contradict myself not only every time that I speak of hospitality, that I make it into a theme, be it a phenomenological, theoretical, speculative, or philosophical theme, but also every time that I offer hospitality.

Indeed, *on the one hand*, hospitality must wait, extend itself toward the other, extend to the other the gifts, the site, the shelter and the cover; it must be ready to welcome [*accueillir*], to host and shelter, to give shelter and cover; it must prepare itself and adorn itself [*se préparer et se parer*] for the coming of the hôte; it must even develop itself into a culture of hospitality, multiply the signs of anticipation, construct and institute what one calls structures of welcoming [*les structures de l'accueil*], a welcoming apparatus [*les structures d'acceuil*]. Not only is there a culture of hospitality, but there is no culture that is not also a culture of hospitality. All cultures compete in this regard and present themselves as more hospitable than the others. Hospitality—this is culture itself.

Since I *also* happened to have said that burial and the cult of the dead is culture, that there is no culture without a culture of death,[8] one will perhaps be surprised—but not for too long—when realizing that these two enunciations say the same thing, that they converge at the point where hospitality and the culture of the dead, of the abode as last resting place [*de la demeure comme dernière demeure*], beginning with mourning and memory itself, are the same thing (we will return to this in a moment). Hospitality therefore presupposes waiting, the horizon of awaiting and the preparation of welcoming [*accueil*]: *from life to death.*

But, *on the other hand*, the opposite is also nevertheless true, simultaneously and irrepressibly true: to be hospitable is to let oneself be overtaken [*surprendre*], *to be ready to not be ready*, if such is possible, to let oneself be overtaken, to not even *let* oneself be overtaken, to be surprised, in a fashion almost violent, violated and raped [*violée*], stolen [*volée*] (the whole question of violence and violation/rape and of expropriation and de-propriation is waiting for us), precisely where one is not ready to receive—and not only *not yet ready* but *not ready, unprepared* in a mode that is not even that of the "not yet."

One must not only not be ready nor prepared to welcome [*accueillir*], nor well disposed to welcome—for if the welcome is the simple manifestation of a natural or acquired disposition, of a generous character or of a hospitable *habitus*, there is no merit in it, no welcome of the other as other. But—supplementary aporia—it is also true that if I welcome the other out of mere duty, unwillingly, against my natural inclination, and therefore without smiling, I am not welcoming him either: One must [*il faut*] therefore welcome without "one must" [*sans "il faut"*]: neither naturally nor unnaturally. In any case, the awaited hôte (thus invited, anticipated, there where everything is ready to receive him) is not a hôte, not an other as hôte. If, in hospitality, one must say *yes*, welcome the coming [*accueillir la venue*], say the "welcome"; one must say *yes*, there where one does not wait, *yes*, there where one does not expect, nor await oneself to, the other [*là où l'on ne s'attend pas soi-même à l'autre*], to let oneself be swept by the coming of the wholly other, the absolutely unforeseeable [*inanticipable*] stranger,[9] the uninvited visitor, the

6. *Translator's Note:* See Derrida's discussion of his own translation of "s'attendre" and "s'at-tendre" in *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 64ff.

7. *Translator's Note:* The word *tenue* has many meanings in French. It has to do with duration and continuity, holding a session (in court, for example), with behaving oneself and good manners, house keeping and dress or uniform, and the handling of the road (for a car). *Retenue* has to do with holding and withholding and confiscating merchandise, holding a student at the end of the day in punishment, or, more seriously, a prisoner; *avoir de la retenue* is to behave with moderation and reserve, even wisdom.

8. *Translator's Note:* See Derrida, *Aporias*, esp. 43–44/F83–84.

unexpected visitation beyond welcoming apparatuses. If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance because I expect the coming of the hôte as invited, there is no hospitality.

It is as if there were a competition or a contradiction between two neighboring but incompatible values: *visitation and invitation*, and, more gravely, it is as if there were a hidden contradiction between hospitality and invitation. Or, more precisely, between hospitality as it exposes itself to the visit, to the visitation, and the hospitality that adorns and prepares itself [*se pare et se prépare*] in invitation. These two hôtes that the visitor and the invited are, these two faces of hospitality, visitation and invitation, are not moments of hospitality, dialectical phases of the same process, the same phenomenon. Visitor and invited, visitation and invitation, are simultaneously in competition and incompatible; they figure the non-dialectizable [*non-dialectisable*] tension, even the always imminent implosion, in fact, the continuously occurring implosion in its imminence, unceasing, at once active and deferred, of the concept of hospitality, even of the *concept* in *hospitality*. To wait without waiting, awaiting absolute surprise, the unexpected visitor, awaited without a horizon of expectation: this is indeed about the Messiah as hôte, about the messianic as hospitality, the messianic that introduces deconstructive disruption or madness in the concept of hospitality, the madness *of* hospitality, even the madness *of the concept of* hospitality.

I do say "even of the concept in hospitality" because the contradiction (atopical: madness, extravagance, in Greek: *atopos*) of which we are speaking produces or registers this autodeconstruction in every concept, in the concept of concept: not only because hospitality undoes, should undo, the grip, the seizure (the *Begriff*, the *Begreifen*, the capture of the *concipere, cum-capio*, of the *comprehendere*, the force or the violence of the taking [*prendre*] as comprehending [*comprendre*]), hospitality is, *must* be, *owes to itself* to be, inconceivable and incomprehensible, but also because in it—we have undergone this test and ordeal so often—each concept opens itself to its opposite, reproducing or producing in advance, in the rapport of one concept to the other, the contradictory and deconstructive law of hospitality. Each concept becomes hospitable to its other, to an other than itself that is no longer *its* other. With this apparent nuance we have a formula of the entire contra-

9. *Translator's Note:* "L'étranger" can often, and more appropriately, be translated as "the foreigner" and even (although not in this particular instance) as "the foreign." It can also be read as "abroad" as in "voyager à l'étranger," to travel abroad. The expression "à l'étranger" could thus be read "to the stranger," "to the foreign," or simply "abroad." Because of those and other echoes (of Levinas as well), I have chosen to consistently translate "l'étranger" as "stranger" but minimally the more contained or current meaning of "foreigner" should always be kept in mind.

diction, which is more than a dialectical contradiction, and which constitutes perhaps the very stakes of all consistent deconstructions: the difference between something like "its" other (the very Hegelian formula of "its other"), the difference, therefore, between hospitality extended to one's other (to everybody their own, their chosen and selected hôtes, their integratable immigrants, their assimilable visitors with whom cohabitation would be livable) and hospitality extended to an other who no longer is, who never was the "its other" of dialectics.

Hospitality—if there is any—must, would have to, open itself to an other that is not mine, my hôte, my other, not even my neighbor or my brother (Levinas always says that the other, the other man, man as the other is *my* neighbor, my universal brother, in humanity. At bottom, this is one of our larger questions: is hospitality reserved, confined, to man, to the universal brother? For even if Levinas disjoints the idea of fraternity from the idea of the "fellow [*semblable*],"[10] and the idea of neighbor [*prochain*] or of proximity from the idea of non-distance, of non-distancing, of fusion and identity, he nonetheless maintains that the hospitality of the hôte as well as that of the hostage must belong to the site of the fraternity of the neighbor). Hospitality, therefore—if there is any—must, would have to, open itself to an other that is not mine, my hôte, my other, not even my neighbor or my brother, perhaps an "animal"—I do say animal, for we would have to return to what one calls the animal, first of all with regards to Noah who, on God's order and until the day of peace's return, extended hospitality to animals sheltered and saved on the ark, and also with regards to Jonah's whale, and to *Julien l'hospitalier* in Gustave Flaubert's narrative (*The Legend of St Julian Hospitator* [*La légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*]). Saint Julian was a great hunter before the Lord. A large stag was struck by his last arrow, a large black stag in the forehead of whom the arrow remains stuck though it "did not seem to feel it," a large stag, whose "blazing eyes, solemn as a patriarch or a judge." This stag announces three times to him that he, Julian, will kill his father and mother: "Accursed, accursed, accursed! One day, cruel heart, you will kill your father and mother."[11] And Julian (this is the whole story that you know or should read) does in fact kill them and later finds himself devoted to a duty of hospitality, to the point of receiving the visit, the visitation of a leper

10. *Translator's Note:* On the French "semblable," see what Emmanuel Levinas writes: "Le tiers est autre que le prochain, mais aussi un autre prochain, mais aussi un prochain de l'Autre et non pas seulement son semblable [The third party is other than the neighbor, but also another neighbor, and also a neighbor of the other, and not simply his fellow]" (Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974], 200; *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis [Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998], 157).

11. Gustave Flaubert, "The Legend of St Julian Hospitator" in *Three Tales*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 67.

Christ who tells him "I am hungry," "I am thirsty," "I am cold," "take me in your bed and in your arms, embrace me."

If every concept shelters or lets itself be haunted by another concept, by an other than itself that is no longer even its other, then no concept remains in place any longer. This is about the concept of concept, and this is why I suggested earlier that hospitality, the experience, the apprehension, the exercise of impossible hospitality, of hospitality as the possibility of impossibility (to receive another guest whom I am incapable of welcoming, to become capable of that which I am incapable of)—this is the exemplary experience of deconstruction itself, when it is or does what it has to do or to be, that is, the experience of the impossible. Hospitality—this is a name or an example of deconstruction. Of the deconstruction of the concept, of the concept of concept, as well as of its construction, its home, its "at-home" [*son chez-soi*]. Hospitality is the deconstruction of the at-home; deconstruction is hospitality to the other, to the other than oneself, the other than "its other," to an other who is beyond any "its other." We have undergone such a test or ordeal a thousand times when, for example (to remain close to Levinas for a little longer), we saw that the border between the ethical and the political is no longer insured, that the third [*le tiers*], who is the birth of justice and finally of the state, already announces himself in the duel of the face-to-face and the face, and therefore disjoints it, dis-orients it, "destin-errs" it; that the *beyond* the state (the condition of ethics) had to produce itself *in* the state—and that all the topological invaginations, which made the outside produce an enclave in the inside of the inside, were affecting the order of discourse, were producing deconstructive ruptures in the discourse and the construction of concepts.[12]

There is no apparent inconsistency, no absolute discontinuity between *Totality and Infinity*—which insisted upon the welcome [*l'accueil*] (the governing word) and upon the subjectivity of the subject as hôte—and then, ten years later, the definition of the subject as hostage, vulnerable subject subjected to substitution, to trauma, persecution, and obsession. Yet, there is a change of accent and a change of scenery [*paysage*]. After peace, after the peaceable and peaceful experience of welcoming, there follows (but this following [*succession*] is not a new stage, only the becoming-explicit of the same logic) a more violent experience, the drama of a relation to the other that ruptures, bursts in or breaks in, or still, you may recall some of those citations, an experience of the Good that elects me before I welcome it, in other words, of a Goodness, a good violence of the Other that precedes welcoming.

In fact, beginning with the texts that follow *Totality and Infinity*, for example in "The Trace," we had already lent our attention to the Levinasian definition of the

12. *Translator's Note:* See Derrida, *Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas.*

face as *visit* and *visitation*: the face "visits me as already ab-solute" or "the face is of itself visitation and transcendence."[13] The concepts (disrupting of concepts) constituted by the motifs of hostage and substitution belong to [*relèvent de*] the same thought of visitation, that is to say, to the coming of an other as a hôte who is not invited [*comme hôte qui n'est pas invité*], a visitor who is not an expected guest, an invited guest [*un invité invité*], a guest the welcoming of whom I am ready for. This is indeed a thought of hospitality, and of hospitality to the infinite, to God, perhaps even more consistent, but it is a thought of hospitality where the one welcoming [*l'accueillant*] is second, where the welcoming [*l'accueil*] is second, no longer subject to the visit, to the visitation, and where one becomes, prior to being the *hôte*, the hostage of the other. There is no disagreement here with the logic of *Totality and Infinity*, but the displacement of accent intervenes in the self-contradiction, the self-deconstruction of the concept of hospitality. And with this concept of subjectivity or of ipseity as hostage, we have the inseparable concept of *substitution*, of the unique as *hostage* responsible for all, and therefore substitutable, precisely there where [*là même où*] he is absolutely irreplaceable.

Why does it appear to me necessary, today, to return to these motifs of hostage and of substitution?

To say it first in one word, before I explain myself better, I return to these two motifs of hostage and of substitution, from the point of view, obviously, of hospitality, in order to initiate, at the turn of this year, a turn in our trajectory, at any case in the references that guide us. We have spoken a lot about the Bible, what one calls the Old and the New Testaments, what Levinas himself, precisely in "The Trace" (in the passage I quoted earlier), had called "our Judeo-Christian spirituality." But we have not yet come to the culture of this other Abrahamic monotheism that is Islam, about which even the most ignorant know that it too has always presented itself—perhaps even more than Judaism and Christianity—as a religion, an ethics, and a culture, of hospitality.

The mediation that seems to me here, and which is (perhaps, perhaps) the most appropriate in our context, is found, I will explain, in the figure of a spirituality that is, this time, Christiano-Islamic: the oeuvre, the thought, the extraordinary life of Louis Massignon.

Massignon was, if one can trust these words, an Islamologist and an Orientalist. He also oriented his entire life, his entire spiritual adventure, his entire testimony

13. In *Humanisme de l'autre l'homme*, 1963–64, but gathered in this collection in 1972; see Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," trans. Alphonso Lingis, *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 106; "La signification et le sens," *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Paris : Fata Morgana-Le livre de poche, 1972), 69.

toward an experience of hospitality, of Abrahamic hospitality. As strange or predictable as it may seem, he also made use of the words *substitution* and *hostage* in order to define, and to call for, a new approach to Islam, a new understanding [*intelligence*] of Islam on the part of non-Muslim Christians. But this understanding would be more than a theoretical or objective one; it would be or aspire to be a new form of partaking [*partage*] or participation between the three Abrahamic religions reinterpreted from [*à partir de*] a Christianity (Massignon was a Christian and he had undergone a sort of Christian conversion [*une sorte de conversion de chrétien*] to Christianity—a conversion that is somehow comparable to that of Paul Claudel—and which followed what he himself called a "visitation of the stranger"; we will come to this in a moment), from a re-thinking of Christianity nourished by Islam.

This is all difficult and complicated, as you imagine, but we must approach it [*il nous faut nous en approcher*], because it is all made in the name of a thought that is at its core an original and strong thought of hospitality, and because the words *hostage* and *substitution* do not appear here by chance.

I have no hypothesis for now regarding the possible rapports or meetings between Massignon and Levinas. To my knowledge, but I have not reread everything from this perspective, and I want to remain prudent, Levinas does not refer to Massignon, even though the latter's oeuvre, his teaching and his person were quite present and radiating in pre- and postwar Paris, in the very same circles in which Levinas was a participant.[14] In any case, what I will say about it, most notably around hospitality, the hostage and substitution, has nothing to do with an investigation regarding priority or influence. It is rather a matter of a configuration that is structural, historical and even historial, a configuration that I judge significant, illuminating, and provocative for us. It makes one think [*elle donne à penser*]. It invites one to think.

What matters to me here today, more precisely, is to find a way to link what we have said so far with the question we have not yet come to, that of hospitality according to Islam, a question that is intrinsically interesting and urgent today, when the gravest ethicopolitical stakes concern *both* the tradition of internal or external—if one may say so—hospitality, in the Arabo-Islamic countries, cultures, and nations *and* the hospitality extended or—most often—refused to Islam in non-Islamic lands, beginning here "at home" [*"chez nous"*]. The analogies (limited but determined) toward which we will direct our interest cannot diminish in any way the singularity and originality of the two thoughts, Levinas's and Massignon's.

14. The *Collège de philosophie* was directed just after World War Two by Jean Wahl, great friend and protecting elder of Levinas. Massignon gave some lectures there; and Levinas' great friend, Blanchot, among others, participated with Bataille in the famous discussions about sin with Massignon, in 1944, at the home of Marcel Moré: with Bataille but also with Father Daniélou—Levinas knew Daniélou well; he often conversed with him—with Hyppolite, Sartre, Adamov, Klossowski, Camus, et al.

Whether Levinas knew Massignon or not, whether he cites him or not (as for me, I have never encountered a reference to Massignon in Levinas, nor reciprocally—the usefulness of indexes and computers, scanners, all the more so for amnesiacs like me). It is true that Levinas speaks little about Islam (like Rosenzweig, whose condescending, even pejorative pages on Islam we have studied before);[15] but if this is true that he speaks little about it, a lot less than about Christianity, Levinas declares nothing but the greatest respect for Islam. Two examples, from *Difficult Freedom*; The first, the most marked, is found in "Monotheism and Language" (1959):

> Islam is above all one of the principal factors involved in this constitution of humanity. Its struggle has been arduous and magnificent. It long ago surpassed the tribes that gave birth to it. It swarmed across three continents. It united innumerable peoples and races. It understood better than anyone that a universal truth is worth more than local particularisms. It is not by chance that a talmudic apologue cites Ishmael, the symbol of Islam, among the rare sons of Sacred History, whose name was formulated and announced before their birth. It is as if their task in the world had for all eternity been foreseen in the economy of Creation. (. . .) It is this that I should like to say, by way of explaining Judaism's attitude to Islam, to a meeting of Jewish students—that is to say, clerics and a people of clerics. The memory of a common contribution to European civilization in the course of the Middle Ages, when Greek texts entered Europe via the Jewish translators who had translated Arab translations, can be exalting only if we still manage today to believe in the power of words devoid of rhetoric or diplomacy. Without reneging on any of his undertakings, the Jew is open to the word and believes in the efficacy of truth.[16]

The other text, also in *Difficult Freedom*, seems interesting mostly because of the accent it places on heteronomy.

> Like Jews, Christians and Muslims know that if the beings of this world are the results of something, man ceases to be just a result and receives "a dignity of cause," to use Thomas Aquinas's phrase, to the extent that he endures the actions of the cause, which is external *par excellence*, divine action. We all in fact maintain that human autonomy rests on a supreme heteronomy and that the force which produces such marvelous

15. *Translator's Note:* Derrida is here referring to Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971). For a short discussion of Rosenzweig's treatment of Islam and some bibliographic references, see Barbara Galli's "'The New Thinking': An Introduction," in *Franz Rosenzweig's "The New Thinking,"* ed. Alan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli, eds. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), esp. 186, n. 22.

16. Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 179; *Difficile liberté* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976), 205–206.

effects, the force which institutes force, the civilizing force, is called God. (. . .) At the moment of this experience, whose religious range has for ever left its mark on the world, Catholics, whether secular, priests or monks, saved Jewish children and adults both in France and outside France, and on this very soil Jews menaced by racial laws heard the voice of a Muslim prince place them under his royal sovereignty.[17]

For those who may not know who Louis Massignon is, I will recall that he died at the age of seventy-nine, in 1962, that is to say at the end of the Algerian War during and against which he was very actively engaged (for this he was detained in the Hôpital Beaujon in 1959, having demonstrated with Sartre and François Mauriac and having almost lost an eye following an attack by demonstrators in 1958. He was also very active on behalf of Morocco and on behalf of the Palestinian refugees). Massignon was born in 1883 and after traveling to Algeria and Morocco, after failing at the *agrégation* in history, he began, in 1906, a great career as an Orientalist. He was a member of the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale in Cairo; he published numerous texts, among them, in 1908, "Saints Buried in Baghdad" and "Migrations of the Dead in Baghdad." He developed a relationship with Charles de Foucauld and with Claudel and experienced a kind of ecstatic conversion (one of his biographers reservedly writes: "1909: night of admiration with Foucauld"). He met André Gide, Henri Bergson, Charles Pierre Péguy, and gave mass for Charles de Foucauld in 1913. That same year he met the woman who will become his wife in 1914, though his life would be marked, in a way that is both intense and tragic, by homosexuality. During the war his first child was born and he begun to publish on Hallaj, the mystic to whom he would dedicate an immense thesis (five volumes published as *La passion de Hallaj, martyr mystique de l'islam*),[18] and the attention of a lifetime. The thesis was published in 1922 but the manuscript had been burned at Louvain in 1914. From then on, I cannot follow the considerable body of texts, travels, lectures, and events that mark this uncommon life.[19] At this time, he also began a military and diplomatic career in the Middle East during which he met T. E. Lawrence (the two are dissimilar but comparable figures). He taught at the Collège de France after doing some substitute teaching there. He published numerous texts on Arabic as a liturgical language or as a philosophical language, on "basic root-terms of the Muslim philosophical vocabulary." In 1923, he published a text that should be important to us, "The Three Prayers of Abraham Father of all Believers."[20] In this text, one reads the formulation of a central theme that inspires Massignon's entire exegesis and spiritual struggle, namely that the three monotheistic religions, as Abrahamic religions, are issued from a patriarch that came to this earth as a "stranger, a hôte, *gêr*," and a kind of saint of hospitality. We will return to this major reference of Genesis 12:1, which plays a determining role in both Rosenzweig and Levinas (another time, we shall also return to the notion of *stranger* in Levinas), where Yahweh orders Abraham to depart, to leave his land and the house of his father, transforming him into a hôte (but, obviously, while promising him a land).

In order to outline the absolute, and absolutely originary role that the establishment of hospitality plays in Massignon's thought, in his spiritual, politicospiritual adventure, I am going to quote a few texts, beginning with one he wrote in June 1949 after a long visit in the camps of Arab refugees in Palestine: "God did find a hôte in Abraham and these Arabs are the last witnesses of this cult of hospitality that our racisms deny. . . . But how many Christian exegetes are left who believe in Abraham's existence?"[21]

The same year, in Paris, during the study week of Catholic intellectuals, he asserted the following, which shows his devotion to Abraham, the absolute hôte and the father of the three religions, the traces of whom he constantly followed during his travels and missions:

During my missions, I tried to cover the itinerary of Abraham, from the *Lekh lekha* (Genesis 12:1 [when God tells him, therefore, "Go," "leave this land," get out of Ur] to "Hineni" ["Here I am"—not Genesis 21:2 as Massignon or Rocalve mistakenly asserts, since 21:2 is when Sarah, visited by Yahweh, gives birth to Isaac and says (we will return to this long scene of Isaac's laugh, of Isaac as a laugh that lasts for a long time, and is punctuated by Sarah who, alluding to a prior scene to which I would like to return as well), in Chouraqui's translation: "Elohim made me a laugh, any hearer will laugh about me;" in Dhormes' translation: "Elohim gave me reason to laugh; whoever learns of this will laugh about me."[22] "Hineni" is from Genesis 22, the

17. Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 11–12/*Difficile liberté*, 24–25. *Translator's Note:* Levinas's lecture was delivered in Morocco. Levinas is referring to Mohammed V, king of Morocco, known to have refused to turn over his Jewish subjects to the French authorities during the war.

18. Louis Massignon, *The passion of al-Hallaj: mystic and martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

19. I refer you for example, among other sources, to Pierre Rocalve, *Louis Massignon et l'islam* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1993) where you will find a bio-bibliography and a concordance both precise and precious, and to Charles Destremau and Jean Moncelon, *Massignon* (Paris: Plon, 1994).

20. "Les trois prières d'Abraham père de tous les croyants," in Louis Massignon, *Parole donnée* (Paris: Seuil, 1983) 257–72; trans. Allan Cutler in *Testimonies and Reflections: Essays of Louis Massignon*, ed. Herbert Mason (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 3–20.

21. Quoted in Louis Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1987), 30, n. 26.

22. *Translator's Note:* I translate here from the French translations used by Derrida, namely André Chouraqui (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, n. d.) and Edouard Dhormes (Paris: Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade," 1972). The NSRV translates Genesis 21:6 as follows: "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."

moment when Yahweh puts Abraham to the test by asking him to cut Isaac's throat—J. D.]. I started in Ur in Chaldea, and went very close to Haran and to Beersheba where Abraham abandoned his elder son Ishmael [the story of Hagar and the genealogy of Muslim Ishmaelites—J. D]. I went to Mamre where he asks for the forgiving of Sodom [this is one of the prayers that counted most for Massignon, and for Levinas as well. Levinas alludes to this prayer in the *New Talmudic Readings*: "Prayer of Abraham on behalf of the perverse Sodom threatened with just sanctions by the Lord, prayer by means of a sublime and famous bargaining, lasting ten verses (Genesis 18:22–32), with God himself, a very firm pleading in favor of Sodom before the Creator of the world, disputing about the notion of divine justice. It is precisely here that Abraham declares himself "dust and ashes": "I who am but dust and ashes" (verse 27)"[23] —J. D.], and finally to Jerusalem. There I understood that he was the Father of all faiths, that he was the pilgrim, the *gêr* [the stranger, the hôte], the one who left his own, who made a pact of friendship with the foreign countries where he came as a pilgrim, that the Holy Land was not the monopoly of one race, but the Land promised to all pilgrims like him.

A few years later, in 1952, Massignon, whom Claudel used to call "the knight of God," published in the *Revue internationale de la Croix Rouge* an article entitled "Respect of the Human Person in Islam and the Priority of Asylum Right over the Duty of Just War." There he wrote, "Whereas degenerate Christianity sees in Abraham no more than a incoherent folk image, the Muslim world in its entirety believes in its father Abraham, invokes him in a social and solemn fashion, for the salvation of each and all, the God of Abraham, at the annual Feast of sacrifices, 'Id al Qurban, at the end of the five daily prayers, at engagement celebrations and at funerals."[24]

In the same text, it is indeed the hospitality of the hôte Abraham that is placed at the center of Islam and that makes of Islam the most faithful heir, the exemplary heir of the Abrahamic tradition. "The European no longer understands that, thanks to the heroic manner in which he has practiced the notion of hospitality, Abraham deserved as his inheritance not only the Holy Land but also the entering in it of all the foreign hôtes who are "blessed" by his hospitality. . . . Abraham's hospitality is the sign announcing the final completion of the gathering of all nations, all blessed in Abraham, in this Holy Land that must be monopolized by none. . . . The Qur'ān mentions three times (XI, 72; XV, 51; LI, 24) the passage from Genesis

23. Emmanuel Levinas, *New Talmudic Readings*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 114; *Nouvelles lectures talmudiques* (Paris : Minuit, 1996) 83.

24. Quoted in Rocalve, *Louis Massignon*, 30.

(18:1–33).[25] It is from this fundamental text that Islam has deduced the principle of *Iqrā* (*dakhalk, jiwar*), right of hospitality, *ikram al dayf*, respect of the human person, of the *hôte*, sent by God."[26]

But what is this "fundamental text" from which Islam deduced the right of hospitality? It is a text from *Genesis* often quoted by Massignon, a scene during which Abraham extends hospitality to three visitors, three hôtes sent by God. Before reading and commenting upon this text about an originary and triple hospitality, I would like to read some passages from Massignon's letters where it is discussed in a certain manner, in his manner—this will give you an image of his quite singular fervor. These letters are reproduced in *L'hospitalité sacrée*:

> The three Angelus at the core of my life are the three prayers of Abraham, which will burst on Judgment Day like fountains of consolation for broken hearts from the very pure heart of Mary our Mother. To these Angelus, instead of vocal prayers, a small shudder of the heart, which palpitates for the glory of the saints toward the All-Saint; let us not refuse it to the Holy Spirit; let us always say to Him the "fiat" in our worst distress. [August 20, 1948]
>
> Our Badaliya is a reminder for everyone, and, first of all, for us, of the first, of the sweetest Christian duty: welcoming the other, the stranger, the neighbor who is closer than all our close ones [*accueillir l'autre, l'étranger, le prochain qui est plus proche que tous nos proches*], without reserve nor calculation, whatever it cost and at any price. [September 8, 1948]
>
> Exactly forty years ago, I was still in Brittany. I had planted a large cross in the wasteland; it is still there. On October 7 and 9, I spent the day invoking the protection of Saint Abraham (who saved me from the Dead Sea) for my entire life, committing

25. *Translator's Note:* The Qur'ānic references to the Genesis passage are the following:

XI, 71–72: "And his wife, standing by, laughed when We gave her good tidings (of the birth) of Isaac, and, after Isaac, of Jacob. She said: Oh, woe is me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? Lo! This is a strange thing!"

XV, 51–52: "And tell them of Abraham's guests, (How) when they came in unto him, and said: Peace. He said: Lo! we are afraid of you. '"

LI, 24–27: "Hath the story of Abraham's honoured guests reached thee (O Muhammad)? When they came in unto him and said: Peace! He answered, Peace! (and thought): Folk unknown (to me). Then he went apart unto his housefolk so that they brought a fatted calf; And he set it before them, saying: Will ye not eat?

The Meaning of the Glorious Koran, trans. Marmaduke Pickthall (New York: Everyman's Library, 1992).

26. *Translator's Note:* Quoted in Rocalve, 33.

myself to pray this great prayer, still relevant. This year, Ibrahim who took his name for himself, who suffered with it, who offered with it his first born, renews his consecration to the father of all believers, to whom Mary shouted her joy on the day of the "Magnificat." "*Tou'azzimou nafsia erreb*, my soul glorifies the Lord." I pray of him that he offers us to God with the three Angelus, to repeat with him these three prayers which are one, the prayer of Sod om, the exile of Ishmael and the sacrifice of Isaac, in one and unique offering to the three divine Hôtes that Abraham received at Mamre where we prayed as if upon his grave on March 7, 1934. [October 8, 1948][27]

Let us now return to the text of Genesis 17 and 18. At age eighty-six, Abraham has had a son, Ishmael, from his servant Hagar since Sarai could not bear children. After he turns ninety-nine, Abraham receives the visitation of Yahweh, and this apparition ("He appeared" says one translation [by Edouard Dhormes]; "he makes himself seen" says another [by André Chouraqui]), this unexpected apparition by an uninvited visitor who makes himself seen, who shows himself, who comes ("shows up"),[28] this nonawaited irruption is, in itself, already a visitation.

And during this visitation, Yahweh announces other arrivals [*d'autres venues*], other hôtes, in sum, other visits or visitations. This visitation of Yahweh is so radically surprising and over-taking [*sur-prenante*] that he who receives does not even receive it himself, in his name [*celui qui la reçoit ne la reçoit même pas lui-même, en son nom*]. His identity is as if fractured. He receives without being ready to welcome since he is no longer the same between the moment at which God initiates the visit and the moment at which, visiting him, he speaks to him. This is indeed hospitality *par excellence* in which the visitor radically overwhelms the self of the "visited" and the *chez-soi* of the hôte (host).[29] For as you know these visitations and announcements will begin with changes of names, heteronomous changes, unilaterally decided by God who tells Abram that he will no longer be called Abram but Abraham (with wordplay, it seems, on Ab-hamon, "father of the multitudes"), much as later, before Isaac's birth, he will change the name of Sarai into Sarah ("my princess" into "princess").

This is the moment at which the visitation of the absolute hôte to the stranger that Abraham is not only changes—in a way, or, in any case, affects—the identity and the appellation of the hôte, but does so heteronomously at the moment the father of creation institutes Abraham as father of a multitude of nations. This institution of paternity constitutes the pact or covenant, sealed by the circumcision of the male child at eight days: "Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised

27. Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 253–56.
28. *Translator's Note:* The expression *shows up* is in English in the text.
29. *Translator's Note:* The word *host* is in English in the text.

in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:14).

Then Yahweh announces the coming of Isaac, but this visitation, which announces a birth, announces, in fact, another announcement and another visit or visitation, that of hôtes, of three visitors (*tres vidit et Unum adoravit*, as Massignon will translate in a text I will address later) who will come to announce to Abraham both that Sarai will have to change her name and that she will give birth to Isaac, he who laughs—and this already made Abraham laugh who, in a scene that is truly a scene of hospitality (titled by Chouraqui, in fact, "Abraham's hospitality"—the very scene discussed by Massignon in a letter from October 8, 1948), will soon receive these three visitors and extend to them hospitality, drink and food.

With these texts, with Genesis 17:15–27 and Genesis 18, we have what are for Massignon the founding texts, and they all speak at once the universal paternity of Abraham at the origin of the three religions, the pact, and the pact as experience of sacred hospitality. Since there are so many of them, I cannot quote or analyze all the passages of Massignon's texts where the word "hôte" is made into the fundamental word of the fundamental experience. You will find many such passages, all perfectly explicit, in *L'hospitalité sacrée*, which intersect with some of those I have read earlier. Here are two examples:

> The hôte is the messenger of God (*Dheïf Allah*). Abraham's hospitality is a sign announcing the final completion of the gathering of all nations, blessed in Abraham, in this Holy Land which must be monopolized by none. (. . .) This notion of sacred hospitality seems to me essential for a search after truth between men, in our itineraries and our work, here below, and toward the threshold of the hereafter. (. . .) With hospitality, we find the Sacred at the center of our destinies' mystery, like secret and divine alms. (. . .) This mystery touches the very bottom of the mystery of the Trinity, where God is at once Guest [*Hôte*], Host [*Hospitalier*], and Home [*Foyer*].[30]
>
> Of the three solemn prayers of Abraham, before the prayer for Ishmael, the Arab and the Muslims, before the prayer for Isaac and the Twelve Tribes descended from his son Jacob, the first prayer which we must take up once again is the prayer for Sodom, without either unhealthy curiosity or hypocritical disdain, in the evening Angelus, "che volge il disio" (Dante, *Purgatorio* 8:1). This is not the place to examine the conditions under which the texts of these three prayers have been handed down to us through all the mishaps to which the copyists and translators have been exposed. (. . .) The first prayer of Abraham is the prayer which he uttered on behalf of Sodom. . . . He had abandoned the townsman's life of Chaldea to take up the life of a

30. Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 121.

> wandering shepherd. He planted the first stake which rooted him in the Promised Land very near his own future tomb. The perfect hospitality which he offered to his three mysterious visitors ("tres vidit et Unum adoravit"), who came to overwhelm him with the promise of Isaac, led them to test him: Is Abraham, now that he is assured an heir, going to continue to look after the people of Sodom, allies of his nephew Lot, whom he has already saved only by force of arms, or will he disavow his pact of fidelity with them when he learns that they have gone astray by iniquity? Then the angels told him that the people of Sodom had committed terrible sins and that the Lord was going to destroy them. But Abraham himself had come into this land as a stranger, a *ger*: a guest [*hôte*]. The guest [*hôte*] is sacred and still remains so. (. . .) Sodom is the city of self-love which objects to the visitation of angels, of guests [*Hôtes*], of strangers, or wishes to abuse them.[31]

I would like to do at least *two things* for now, regarding the logic of this reference to sacred hospitality.

1. *On the one hand*, to recall that this was not, on Massignon's part, a neutral and expert discourse of exegetical knowledge, but rather the testimonial confession, the testimony, one would almost say the martyr of a burning experience, a passion of fire, a conversion that he himself describes, in the language of hospitality, as a memory of events and visitations that fractured his identity and that almost, as you will hear it, changed his name (much as occurred to Abraham and Sarah). Naturally, this fervent Christian who saw in Islam the best heir of the Father and of Abraham's hospitality, finds this language of hospitality again when he approaches both the mystery of Mary and Jesus (in the two post-Judaic religions) and the manifestation of Christ in Islam.

Here, for example, is a text from *La parole donnée*, entitled "Visitation of the Stranger [*Visitation de l'étranger*]." In it, Massignon answers a query regarding the meaning of the word "God," our representation of God and the correspondences, in him, of the word "God." "Before the Lord who has struck the blow, the soul . . . starts only to commemorate in secret this Annunciation, viaticum of hope, that she has conceived in order to give birth to the immortal. This frail Guest [*Hôte*] that she carries in her womb determines thereafter all of her conduct. It is not a made-up idea that she develops as she pleases according to her nature, but a mysterious Stranger whom she adores and who guides her: she devotes herself to Him. . . . The soul sanctifies herself to protect her Sacred Guest. . . . She does not speak about her Guest "didactically" . . . but rather testimonially, waiting for the moment when He suggests to her that she invoke Him, making her progress in experiential knowledge through compassion."[32]

31. Massignon, "The Three Prayers of Abraham," 7–10/F260–63.

Sacred hospitality, at once received and given, is founded not only on the Father or the patriarch Abraham but also on the Christian figure of the Trinity about which, as we saw, Massignon notes on February 2, 1962 (a few months before his death, when he summoned the Assembly of the Badaliya—the community of substitution of which I will speak in a moment), "God is at once Guest, Host, and Home."

This visitation of the stranger, this language of sacred hospitality is inseparable from an experience (no doubt one that is brief in its actuality, if I may say so, but interminable in its temptation) of homosexuality. I refer you here to Destremeau-Moncelon, from whom I read the few lines that recall, discreetly but, in a way, clearly, some recognized facts. They also quote Massignon when he explains the double reference that marks his language when he speaks of "sacred hospitality":

> The faults of which Massignon accused himself are now known: his liaison in Egypt with Yā-Sīn bin Ismail, his Alexandrian nights with Luis de Cuadra in 1907, and because it immediately precedes his conversion, his attraction to Djabbouri, during the raid to the desert of El-Okhaydir. He will not keep the mystery from his friends. Paul Claudel, for example, wrote to the Abbé Fontaine on 9 February 1914, concerning André Gide: "He confessed to me the reasons for his resistance. They are the same ways [*les mêmes mœurs*] that [Massignon] practiced in the past." Massignon will even contribute some clarifications at the end of his life: "The problem for me was that I was using the language of my sins, the language of the hopeless life I had led, in the homes of strangers [*chez des étrangers*], in search of something I did not know, that I had found in the shared agony of observing sacred hospitality.[33]

2. Finally, *on the other hand*, I would like to make manifest, in this testimonial logic of sacred hospitality, these two motifs of *substitution* and of *hostage* which cross so strangely, and in spite of so many differences, the same words in Levinas.

First, the word substitution, which Massignon could have encountered first in someone who had a certain influence upon him and who was one of three great figures he admired as a young man, namely, with Charles de Foucauld and Léon Marie Bloy, J. K. Huysmans (whom Massignon visits in 1900 just after his *baccalauréat*, when Huysmans, already suffering from throat cancer, has converted to Catholicism under the influence of one Père Boullan, who professed "mystical substitution" and

32. Massignon, "Visitation de l'étranger: Réponse à une enquête sur Dieu," *Parole donnée*, 281–82; trans. Herbert Mason and Danielle Chouet-Bertola in *Testimonies and Reflections*, 39–40.

33. Destremau and Moncelon, *Massignon*, 65–66.

the redemptive role of suffering).[34] Here is how Huysmans elaborates the doctrine of "mystical substitution" (you will find here again something of Levinas's logic of the hostage "responsible for all"): "Humanity is governed by two laws that it ignores in its carelessness: the law of solidarity in evil, the law of reversibility in the good; solidarity in Adam, reversibility in Our Lord. Otherwise put, up to a point, each is responsible for the faults of the others, and must also, up to a point, expiate them. . . . God first submitted to these laws when he applied them to himself in the person of the Son. . . . He wanted for Jesus to give the first example of mystical substitution, the substitution [*suppléance*] of him who owes nothing for him who owes everything. . . . [35]

This concept of substitution will be found everywhere in Massignon's spiritual itinerary. It is the first movement of absolute hospitality. Aside from the texts and speeches where this logic and this lexicon of substitution are operative, in 1943, Massignon founded, with Mary Kahil in Cairo, under the Arabic name for substitution, *Badaliya*, a kind of spiritual community (a Christian one, gathering Christians in the East, but turned toward Islam, such that some have seen here wrongly—well, actually . . . —an attempt at proselytizing that should be fought against). The wish to found this Badaliya dated from ten years earlier (1934, already with Mary Kahil). The first statutes of the Badaliya that came into existence in Damietta, Egypt, were published in April 1943; they announce that which is to be "realized and completed" in its "providential truth," namely the "vocation of Christians in the East of Arab race or language, reduced by the Muslim conquest to being only a small flock": "union of prayers, between weak and poor souls, who seek to love God and to give him glory, more and more, in Islam."

The word *hostage* appears immediately, with a particular connotation, in order to designate who they are—who we are—who offer ourselves and commit ourselves, we who offer our life as a pledge. "We offer ourselves as pledge"—this is what the word *hostage* means—but as pledge, voluntary prisoners, guarded hôtes, in a kind of captivity or spiritual residency, in a foreign milieu that we respect, namely, Islam; a milieu that we want to bring back to the truth to which it is itself the heir and the trustee. Hostages, we offer ourselves as hostages—this means: we substitute ourselves for the others in order to give ourselves as pledge in this foreign milieu, with a mission, a duty which is not that of converting the Muslims (actually, it is, but without external pressure),[36] but rather of awakening, in the Muslim people

34. See Destremau and Moncelon, *Massignon*, 22ff.

35. Quoted in Destremau and Moncelon, 23.

36. Letter of May 20, 1938: "(Badalyia) The "conversion" of these souls, yes, it is the goal, but it is for them to find it themselves, without their suffering our insistence as an external pressure. It must be the secret birth of a love, shared Love. . . . " (Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 208).

who are cut off and excluded, the truth of Christ, of the sacred face of Christ, of which this Muslim people keeps an imprint, even if it keeps an imperfect tradition.

The strong words of the text I will read are the following: hostage, substitution or *suppléance*, intercession or incorporation, tradition, transmission, heritage and precious deposit.

"Al-Badaliya" (Statutes)

To realize and complete, in all its providential truth, the vocation of Christians in the East, of Arab race or Arabic language, whom the Muslim conquest has reduced to no more than a very *small flock*.

This union of prayers between weak and poor souls who seek to love God and to glorify him, more and more, in Islam, was born in Damietta, Egypt.

Assembled, gathered, and governed by the same impetus, toward the same goal which binds us, and through which we offer and commit our lives, from now on, *as hostages*.

—This goal, Christ's manifestation in Islam ("Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, in Islam"), demands a deep penetration, made of fraternal understanding and of careful attentiveness, in the lives of families, of Muslim generations, past and present, whom God has placed on each of our paths. He has thus brought us to the subterranean waters of the grace granted by the Holy Spirit. We are trying to find the living sources of these waters for this people who were excluded, cut off long ago from the promise of the Messiah as children of Hagar, for, in their Muslim, imperfect, tradition, they preciously keep something like an imprint of the sacred face of Christ whom we adore, of "Issa Ibn Maryam" whom we want them to rediscover in themselves, in their heart.

—In this mission of intercession for them, where we ask God, without respite nor interruption, for the reconciliation of this dear souls, for whom we wish to substitute ourselves "*fil badaliya*," by paying their ransom in their place and at our expense, it is in replacement [*suppléance*] of their future "incorporation" in the Church that we wish to assume their condition, by following the example of the Word made flesh, by living among them each day, by partaking of their lives—us, baptized—like salt partakes of the taste of food.

—It is with this vocation for their salvation that we must and wish to sanctify ourselves, aspiring to become additional Christ [*d'autres Christ*] (like living Gospels), so that they recognize *Him* through us, and that we safeguard, with this silent and obscure apostleship, the sincerity of our own donation.

—Facing them, we must perfect and complete the Passion of Christ, since our ancestors, the Christians of the East have transmitted it to us as their unfinished

legacy: they did not dare to take up Mohammed's challenge, when, one day in Medina, he called upon them to prove the Incarnation by exposing themselves to the Judgment of God: that is to say through the ordeal of fire.

This test and ordeal, demanded by the founder of Islam, has been postponed until us. It was desired by Saint Francis who gave himself [*qui s'y offrit*] to it in Damietta, and by many others who, in silence, have given themselves for the sake of Muslim souls. It was given to us as a precious deposit, transmitted from age to age, and it is incumbent upon us to perfect and realize it.

—A role is reserved for us in this mysterious duel, where for centuries Christendom has been facing the refusal of the Muslim world. Through many an ordeal and many an apostasy, this struggle has provided Christendom with many a joy and much glory for Eternity, with the institution of liturgical festivals, the founding of religious orders and the death of many a martyr.

—Waiting for this hour, we pray for them and with Him during the three Angelus of the day, affirming, through Mary's "Fiat," the mystery of divine Incarnation that the Muslims wish to deny; at the same hours the call to prayer of the Muezzin gathers the hearts in the same adoration of the One God of Abraham; during our Friday communions, day of Christ's Passion, which is also their day of gathering, chosen unconsciously to testify of their own faith.

—Living in Muslim land, under the pressure of an atmosphere which would obscure and suffocate our Christian faith were we not hoping for this *shahāda* (testimony [*témoignage*]) of martyrdom, in a hope that remembers the oath sworn long ago by the Mercedarians to replace, if necessary, in the Muslim jails, the prisoners that they wanted to redeem. We must follow the behavior of Saint Francis and of Saint Louis, facing these millions of souls who wait for us and look at us, as we are called to testify through our life, and, if God permits, through our death, like Foucauld, to whom it was granted and who also asked for it for his friends: to return to Christ who asks us to continue his Passion, this *shahāda* which we desire to offer him, as unworthy as we are.

Goals:

1) The Badaliya addresses itself to the Christians of the East.
2) It proceeds from the consciousness of a particular responsibility of these Christians toward their Muslim brothers in the midst of whom they live. These Christians have a providential mission toward them and they want to be faithful to it.
3) Moreover, because they have suffered and are still suffering at their hands, they want to practice toward them the highest Christian charity according to the command of our Lord "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44) and according to his example: "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10).
4) Thus, counting on the divine grace, these Christians want to consecrate themselves to the salvation of their brothers, and in this hope of salvation, to give to Jesus Christ, in the name of their brothers, the faith, the Adoration and the love that, because of their imperfect knowledge of the Gospels, they are prevented from giving it themselves. Salvation does not necessarily mean external conversion. It is already a lot to obtain that a greater number belong to the soul of the Church, that they live and die in a state of grace.
5) Through these characteristics, the Badaliya distinguishes itself from the various associations and leagues of prayers already existing in Europe and with which the members of the Badaliya gratefully unite.[37]

The idea of a sacred deposit and of a guardian of the deposit recurs regularly, for example in a letter to Mary Kahil, probably from 1934, where Massignon defends himself against the accusation of religious syncretism and where the logic of the deposit is interlaced with that of the mystical substitution and of the hostage as *disappropriation* (this is Massignon's word).[38]

The word *hostage*, always emphasized, is applied by Massignon to himself. He wants to be and says himself to be a voluntary hostage, for example in another letter of 1947 to Mary Kahil where Massignon writes, "Hold on to your internal vocation to intercede for these Muslim souls. With me, you have been devoted to them by your compassion for the renegade Luis de Cuadra, to whom I had become *hostage* [*dont j'étais constitué l'otage*]."[39]

It is not only the word *hostage* that recalls (*mutatis mutandis* and with each difference being vigilantly respected) Levinas's discourse, starting with *Otherwise than Being*. It is also the word *persecution*. I am hostage and I am persecuted, says Massignon, for example in a letter where he speaks of a "Islamico-Christian prayer" and even of a "Islamico-Christian prayer front." Here, then, I will read this letter before letting you think about this strange configuration of Judeo-Islamico-Christian hospitality, about peace too, but also about the war of hostages that is waged in it with pitiless compassion. "I am persecuted in all kinds of ways at the moment, but I am at peace. I was born into this world in order to share in Love and also in the Cross. Love is an inexorable fire and it burns like Sodom, for Sodom, for this world which tears itself in the midst of the love of God. (. . .) I am giving one

37. Quoted in *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 373–76.

38. *Translator's Note:* The letter is entitled "Depositum Custodi" in Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 171–73.

39. Letter of June 29, 1947, in Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 241.

of your friends some documents about the supreme effort that I attempted with my admirable Muslim friend, *Sheikh* el Okbi, in order that the Islamico-Christian prayer front maintain and affirm itself in the East, under the sign of 'Issa Ibn Maryam' (Jesus son of Mary)."[40]

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The question of forgiveness—the immense, classical but also impossible question of forgiveness, pregnant with an abyssal history—appeared to provoke us, to push us to gather and to formalize the difficulties, the paradoxes and aporias holding us on the "lookout." I would like to return to this question for a few moments, not in order to pretend to be done or even to begin with it, but rather in order to reinscribe the hand that has been dealt [*la donne*] in our trajectory, between Levinas and Massignon, and on the way toward an approach of the Muslim culture of hospitality.

First of all, regarding what links the test and the ordeal [*l'épreuve*] of hospitality to that of forgiveness, one should not only say that forgiveness granted to the other is the supreme gift and therefore hospitality par excellence. Forgiving would be opening for and smiling to the other, whatever his fault or his indignity, whatever the offense or even the threat. Whoever asks for hospitality, asks, in a way, for forgiveness and whoever offers hospitality, grants forgiveness—and forgiveness must be infinite or it is nothing: it is excuse or exchange.

But if there is a scene of forgiveness at the heart of hospitality, between hôte and hôte, host and guest,[41] if there is failing, fault, offense, even sin, to be forgiven on the very threshold, if I may say so, of hospitality, it is not only because I must [*je dois*] forgive the other in order to welcome him, because the welcoming one [*l'accueillant*] must forgive the welcomed one [*l'accueilli*]. It is also because, inversely and first of all, the welcoming one must ask for forgiveness from the welcomed one even prior to the former's own having to forgive. For one is always failing, lacking hospitality [*car on est toujours en faute d'hospitalité*]: one never gives enough. Not only because welcoming is welcoming the infinite, and therefore welcoming, as Levinas says, beyond my capacity of welcoming [*ma capacité d'accueil*] (something that results in my always being behind, in arrears, always inadequate to my hôte and to the hospitality I owe him), but also because hospitality, as we saw, does not only consist in welcoming a guest, in welcoming according to the invitation, but rather, following the visitation, according to the surprise of the visitor, unforeseen,

40. Letter of April 30, 1958, in Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 305.
41. *Translator's Note:* The words *host* and *guest* are in English in the text.

unforeseeable [*imprévu, imprévisible*], unpredictable, unexpected and unpredictable,[42] unawaited [*inattendu*]. Hospitality consists in welcoming the other that does not warn me of his coming. In regard of this messianic surprise, in regard of what must thus tear any horizon of expectation, I am always, if I can say so, always and structurally, lacking, at fault [*en défaut, en faute*], and therefore condemned to be forgiven [*voué à me faire pardonner*], or rather to have to ask for forgiveness for my lack of preparation, for an irreducible and constitutive unpreparedness.

In both cases—that I cannot ever give enough to the welcomed or awaited guest nor expect enough [*m'attendre assez*] or give enough to the unexpected visitor or arriving one—in these two hypotheses, which are, by the way, structurally heterogeneous to the rapport to the other, I am positioned so as to abandon the other, so as not to give him enough, and thus to leave him abandoned. Therefore, I have to ask for forgiveness for abandonment [*j'ai donc à demander pardon de l'abandon*], forgiveness for not giving, forgiveness for not having known how to give [*pardon de n'avoir pas su faire don*].

I will start again from this Jewish joke reported by Theodor Reik (who wrote extensively on the *Grand Pardon* and on the *Kol Nidre*).[43] "Two Jews, longtime enemies, meet at the synagogue, on the Day of Atonement [*le jour du Grand Pardon*]. One says to the other [as a gesture, therefore, of forgiveness —J. D.]: 'I wish for you what you wish for me.' The other immediately retorts: 'Already you're starting again?' "

An unfathomable story, a story that seems to stop on the verge of itself, a story whose development consist in interrupting itself, in paralyzing itself in order to refuse itself all *avenir*; absolute story of the unsolvable, vertiginous depth of the bottomlessness [*sans-fond*], irresistible whirlpool that carries forgiveness, the gift, and the re-giving, the re-dealing of forgiveness, to the abyss of impossibility.

How to acquit oneself of forgiveness? And does not forgiveness have to exclude all acquitting, all acquitting of oneself, all acquitting of the other?

Forgiving is surely not to call it quits, clear and discharged [*pardonner, ce n'est sûrement pas tenir pour quitte*]. Not oneself, nor the other. This would be repeating evil, countersigning it, consecrating it, letting it be what it is, unalterable and identical to itself. No adequation is here acceptable or tolerable. What, then?

As I have said, I think that we will agree in finding this Jewish joke not only funny, but also memorable and unforgettable, precisely where it treats of this treatment of memory and the unforgettable that one calls forgiveness. Forgiveness

42. *Translator's Note:* The words *unexpected* and *unpredictable* are in English in the text.
43. *Translator's Note:* Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, is called in French "le Grand Pardon," the Great Forgiveness. On the eve of Yom Kippur, the famous *Kol Nidre* (Aramaic, "all the vows") is recited.

is above all not forgetting, on the contrary. There is no forgiveness without memory, certainly, but no forgiveness is reducible to an act of memory. To forgive is not to forget, above all not to forget. A story "for laughs," no doubt, but what, in it, makes us laugh, laugh or cry, and laugh through the tears or anguish?

This, no doubt, has to do first of all with economy [*épargne*], an economy that was powerfully analyzed by Freud, and by Sarah Kofman interrogating Freud.[44] By the way, in her chapter on the "three knaves [*les trois larrons*]," a note also speaks of forgiveness. It speaks of the economy of "pleasure allowed by the super-ego, the *forgiveness* of sorts that is granted by it and that brings humor closer to the manic phase, since thanks to its '*gifts* [*dons*],' the diminished 'ego' finds itself if not euphoric at least inflated anew."[45]

Without pursuing this direction, I will remain, for the moment, with the wild analysis of this Jewish story: two enemies make the gesture of forgiving each other, they fake it, "for laughs," but they reopen, or internally persist with, the conflict. They avow to each other [*ils s'avouent*] this inexpiable war; they symmetrically accuse each other of it. The avowal goes through a symptom rather than through a declaration, but this changes nothing of the truth: they have not disarmed; they continue to wish each other ill.

One of the allegorical powers of this story is perhaps the following: the test and ordeal that these two Jews undergo, and that which makes us laugh, is indeed the radical impossibility of forgiveness. And yet, as I have suggested earlier, in this impossible, and commonly endured as impossible, forgiveness, in this common non-forgiveness, this mutual non-forgiveness, these two Jews, face to face (with or without a third), experience, perhaps, a kind of compassion. Perhaps. And perhaps a kind of forgiveness filters unconsciously through this compassion, supposing that an unconscious forgiveness were not nonsense.

A Jew, a Jew of any time but, above all, in this century, is also someone who undergoes the test and the ordeal of the impossibility of forgiveness, of its radical impossibility. Besides, who would give this right to forgive? Who would give—and to whom—the right to forgive for the dead, and to forgive the infinite violence done to them, depriving them of burial and of name, everywhere in the world and not only in Auschwitz? And thus everywhere the unforgivable would have occurred? Besides, regarding everything for which Auschwitz remains both the proper name and the metonymy, we would have to speak of this painful but essential experience which consists in reproaching oneself as well, in front of the dead, as it were, with having survived, with being a survivor. There would be, there sometimes is, a feeling

44. Sarah Kofman, *Pourquoi rit-on ? Freud et le mot d'esprit* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), esp. 100–13.
45. Kofman, *Pourquoi*, 104; emphases added.

of guilt, muted or acute, for living, for surviving, and therefore an injunction to ask for forgiveness, to ask the dead or one knows not who, for the simple fact of being there [*être là*], alive, that is to say, for surviving, for being here, still here, always here, here where the other is no longer—and therefore to ask for forgiveness for one's being-there [*être-là*], a being there originarily guilty. Being-there: this would be asking for forgiveness; this would be to be inscribed in a scene of forgiveness, and of impossible forgiveness. If there is, in a Nietzschean or Heideggerian, even Levinasian, sense (three very different, even irreducible, senses), a kind of a priori debt or indebtedness, prior even to any contract, as Levinas would say, prior to any borrowing, then, any *existant*, any subject, any *Dasein*, is in the process of asking for forgiveness for what he is [*pour ce qu'il est*], of asking for forgiveness insofar as he is [*en tant qu'il est*]. He confesses, even when he does not confess or denies confessing. Forgiveness asked [*le pardon demandé*] does not occur at a given moment for such particular fault or unacquittable debt, but for the unacquittable that is the fact of being there. Even if forgiveness is not asked for by way of an explicit formulation, by way of an "I beg your pardon," even if it is not asked of a determined addressee, the prayer, a kind of silent "Our Father," would be operative in the murmur or the whispering of any existence, day and night, unto sleep and unto dream.

And this constancy of begged forgiveness also testifies to the impossibility of forgiveness, received or granted. If—whether or not I want to—I am always asking for forgiveness, it is because forgiveness remains denied [*refusé*], and therefore apparently impossible.

Regarding the guilt of the survivor, which is not only that of the concentration camp survivor, but, first of all, of any survivor, of anyone who is mourning, of all work of mourning—and the work of mourning is always an "I survive," and is therefore of the living in general—regarding the originary guilt of the living as survivor who must therefore be forgiven simply for the fact of living and of surviving the death of the other, I will quote a long parenthesis of Levinas in his "Cours sur la mort et le temps" (in the book *Dieu, la mort et le temps*). You will see again that the logic of substitution and of hostage is here operative. This is a parenthesis where Levinas again speaks in his own name, as it were, while in the process of pedagogically exposing Heidegger:

> (Sympathy and compassion, to suffer for the other or "to die a thousand deaths" for the other [*l'autre*], have as their condition of possibility a more radical substitution for an other [*autrui*]. This would be a responsibility for another in bearing his misfortune or his end *as if one were guilty of causing it* [*comme si on en était coupable*; underscored in italics: one thus asks for forgiveness, "as if"? —J. D.]. This is the ultimate proximity. *To survive as a guilty one*. In this sense, the sacrifice for another

> [*autrui*] would create an other relation with the death of the other: a responsibility that would perhaps answer the question of why one can die. In the guiltiness of the survivor, the death of the other [*l'autre*] concerns me [*est mon affaire*]. *My* death is my *part* in the death of the other, and in my death I die the death that is my fault. The death of the other is not only a moment of the mineness of my ontological function.)[46]

This survivor's guilt for the death of the other, this forgiveness asked a priori by the living as survivor—this is what, making us *a priori* guilty of the death of the other, transforms this death into something other than a natural death: forgiveness begged confesses [*avoue*] guilt and transforms the death of the other into the equivalent of a murder. When someone dies (when I mourn him, that is to say, when it is someone whom I am supposed to love, whom I am supposed to hold dear, someone close or one of my own, in all the senses of these words), then my sadness and my guilt signify that I am responsible for this death, that I feel responsible, as one says, for this death which is therefore a murder. They signify that I have killed, symbolically or not, the other, or, in any case, that I have "let him die." As soon as I feel responsible for a death, it means that I interpret it as a murder. There always is at least nonassistance to an endangered person in the phantasm that links us to the death of our own [*qui nous rapporte à la mort des nôtres*]. I say "our own" not because I know or can determine first what this means (loved ones, family, compatriots, etc.). No, it is the opposite, rather. My own, our own, are those who never die of natural death since I accuse myself of having killed them or having let them die. My own are the victims of murder, those who do not die of natural death, since, actively or passively, I feel I have lent my hand to their death. This is also what one calls love. Thus I would define my own, those whom I hold dear: they are those who always die by my fault, those of whom I ask forgiveness for their death which is my fault. Such, at least, is the ineluctable empire of the phantasm at the origin of meaning.

One also finds in Blanchot and in Levinas this thought of death that is always a murder. In Blanchot I do not remember where—even though I have quoted this sentence I no longer know where.[47] In Levinas, still in the "Cours sur la mort et le temps," "In the death of another, in his face that is exposition to death, it is not the passage from one quiddity to another that is announced; in death is *the very event*

46. Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo; slightly altered (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 39; *Dieu, la mort et le temps* (Paris: Grasset, 1993), 50. Levinas is here commenting on *Being and Time*, §47.

47. *Translator's Note:* Derrida may be referring here to Blanchot as he is quoted in "Living On: Border Lines": "There is death and murder (words which I defy anyone to distinguish . . .)" (J. Derrida, "Living On: Border Lines," trans. James Hulbert, in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom et al. (New York: Continuum, 1979)/*Parages* (Paris: Galilée 1986), 163, quoting Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995], 71).

of passing (our language says, moreover, "he has passed" ["*il passe*"]) with its own acuteness that is its scandal (each death is the first death). One must think of all the murder there is in death: every death is a murder, is premature, and there is the responsibility of the survivor."[48] But the impossibility of forgiveness, let us not hide this from ourselves, must be thought yet otherwise, and unto the most radical root [*la racine la plus radicale*] of its paradox, in the very formation of a concept of forgiveness. What a strange concept! Since it does not resist the impossibility of what wants to be conceived in it, since it explodes or implodes in it, it is an entire chain of concepts which explodes with it, and even the concept of concept that thus finds itself undergoing the test and ordeal of its essential precariousness, of its finitude and its deconstructability.

The impossibility of forgiveness offers itself to thought, in truth, as its sole possibility. Why is forgiveness impossible? Not merely difficult for a thousand psychological reasons, but absolutely impossible? Simply because what there is to forgive must be, and must remain, unforgivable. If forgiveness is possible, if there is forgiveness, it must forgive the unforgivable—such is the logical aporia. But, in spite of appearances, this is not only a cold and formal contradiction or logical dead end. It is a tragedy of compassion and of inter-subjectivity as destiny of the hostage, hôte, and madness of substitution of which we speak with Levinas and Massignon. If one had to forgive only what is forgivable, even excusable, *venial*, as one says, or insignificant, then one would not forgive. One would excuse, forgive, erase, one would not be granting forgiveness. If, in the process of any given transformation, the fault, the evil, the crime are attenuated or extenuated to the point of veniality, if the effects of the wound were less hurting, were even accompanied by some surplus of jouissance, then that which itself becomes forgivable frees itself of all guilt [*se met hors de cause*] and needs no forgiveness. The forgiveness of the forgivable does not forgive anything: it is not forgiveness. In order to forgive, one must [*il faut*] therefore forgive the unforgivable, but the unforgivable that remains [*demeuré*] unforgivable, the worst of the worst: the unforgivable that resists any process of transformation of me or of the other, that resists any alteration, any historical reconciliation that would change the conditions or the circumstances of the judgment. Whether remorse or repentance, the ulterior purification of the guilty has nothing to do with this. Besides, there is no question of forgiving a guilty one, a subject subject to transformation beyond the fault. Rather, it is a matter of forgiving the fault itself—which must remain unforgivable in order to call for forgiveness on its behalf. But to forgive the unforgivable—is this not, all logic considered, impossible? If it remains thus impossible, forgiveness must therefore *do the impossible*; it must undergo the

48. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 72/ *Dieu, la mort et le temps*, 85.

test and ordeal of its own impossibility in forgiving the unforgivable. It must therefore undergo the test and ordeal, merge [*se confondre*] with the very test and ordeal of this aporia or paradox: the possibility, if it is possible and if there is such, the possibility *of* the impossible. And the impossible of the possible.

Here perhaps is a condition that forgiveness shares with the gift [*une condition que le pardon partage avec le don*]—and therefore with hospitality, which gives without return or else is nothing. Beyond the formal analogy, this perhaps also means that one affixes its condition of impossibility to the other: the gift to forgiveness or forgiveness to the gift, hospitality to forgiveness and forgiveness to hospitality—hospitality as the opposite of abandonment. Not to mention that one must also be forgiven for the gift (which cannot avoid the risk of causing pain, of doing wrong [*risquer de faire mal, de faire le mal*], for example in giving death) and that a gift remains perhaps more unforgivable than nothing in the world [*plus impardonable que rien au monde*].

The question that imposed itself on me one day (what is "to give in the name of the other?" "Who knows what we do when we give in the name of the other?") to suggest that here was perhaps the only chance of the gift—doesn't it let itself be translated by forgiveness? If I forgive in my name, my forgiveness expresses what I am capable of, me, and this decision (which is therefore no longer a decision) does no more than deploy my power and abilities, the potential energy of my aptitudes, predicates, and character traits. Nothing is more unforgivable, more haughty [*hautain*] sometimes, more self-assured than the "I forgive you." (We shall encounter again this theme of height [*hauteur*].) I can no more decide, what is called deciding, in my name, than I can forgive in my name but only in the name of the other, there where alone I am capable neither of deciding nor of forgiving. What must be [*il faut*], therefore, is that I forgive what is not mine to forgive, not the power of giving or forgiving: what must be is that I forgive beyond me [*il faut que je pardonne au-delà de moi*] (this is close to what Levinas says, that I must welcome the infinite, and this is the first hospitality, beyond the capacity of the I—which is obviously the impossible itself: how could I do what I cannot do? How to do the impossible? Only the other in me can do it, and decide—this would be to let him do it [*le laisser faire*], without the other doing it simply in my place: here is the unthinkable of substitution. Perhaps, one must [*peut-être faut-il*] think substitution from these limit-experiences, possible-impossible, the impossible of the possible, that are the decision, the gift, forgiveness—and what I want to signal here is that the allusions, at least, to forgiveness in Levinas and Massignon are remarkable). And that this, this gift, this forgiveness, this decision, would be done in the name of the other does not exonerate in any way my freedom or my responsibility, on the contrary.

The impossibility of the possible, the possible of the impossible: here is a definition that resembles what one often gives for death, Heidegger in particular. And there is nothing fortuitous in this. We have to think this affinity, therefore, between the impossibility named death and the impossibility named forgiveness, between the gift of death and the gift of forgiveness as possibility of the impossible, possibility of the impossible hospitality. It is a little as if "hospitality," the name *hospitality*, came to name [*surnommer*], but also to give a kind of proper name to this opening of the possible onto the impossible, and reciprocally: when hospitality takes place, the impossible becomes possible but *as* impossible. The impossible, for me, for an "I," for what is "my own" or is properly my own in general.

For where is forgiveness more impossible, and therefore possible *as* impossible, than beyond the border between one living and one dead? How could the living forgive the dead [*comment un vivant pourrait-il pardonner à un mort*]? What sense and what gift would there be in a forgiveness that can no longer hope to reach its destination, except inside oneself [*sinon au-dedans de soi*], toward the other [*vers l'autre*] that is welcomed or rescued as a narcissistic ghost inside oneself? And reciprocally, how can the living hope to be forgiven by the dead or by a specter inside itself? One can follow the consequence and consistency of this logic to the infinite.

Well then, I wage that this limit which cannot be crossed [*infranchissable*]—and nonetheless is crossed insofar as it cannot be crossed [*et franchie pourtant comme infranchissable*], in the enfranchisement of the uncrossed that cannot be crossed [*dans l'affranchissement de l'infranchissement de l'infranchi*]—is the very line that our two Jews have crossed, with or without confession, without repentance, regarding their mutual accusation. To avow, to share, to confide in each other this test and ordeal which cannot be crossed [*cette épreuve infranchissable*] of the unforgivable, to describe oneself as unforgivable for not forgiving—this is perhaps not forgiveness, since forgiveness seems impossible, even there where it takes place, but it is to bear with [*compatir avec*] the other in the test and ordeal of the impossible.

This would be here—here we are—the ultimate compassion. And this compassion is perhaps also the very test of substitution: to be one at the place of the other, the hostage and the hôte of the other; therefore the subject of the other, subject to the other, there where not only cannot places be exchanged—insofar as they remain unexchangeable and where everything withdraws from a logic of exchange—but where this unicity, this irreplaceability of the nonexchange poses itself, affirms itself, tests and suffers itself, in substitution. I am *like* [*comme*] the other, there where I cannot be, and could never be *like* him, in his resemblance, his identification or in his place. There where there is room [*place*] for the replacement of what remains irreplaceable. There is where we say I, him, her and me, here is what says

"I," the same and the other, and this cease only at death. What also allows to think that this play of substitution, which resembles an exchange of place between two inexchangeable absolutes, is perhaps also the first intrusion of the third in the face-to-face, this intrusion of which we have underscored that it was at once ineluctable and a priori, archi- or preoriginary, an intrusion not occurring to the dual but *connaissant* with it, knowing it and being-born-together with it, insinuating itself in it from the first instant—and immediately poses, without waiting, the question of justice linked to the third. But in one stroke, as we saw, betraying, by demand of justice, the fidelity to the other's singularity, the absolute and infinite, finite-infinite singularity of the other. This is what I have called the congenital perjury of justice, justice [*le juste*] as perjury. But this is also where I have to ask for forgiveness for being just, to ask forgiveness of the other, of every other; where, for justice, I have to take account of the other of the other, of another other, of a third. Forgiveness for infidelity at the heart of fidelity, for perjury at the heart of sworn faith [*foi jurée*]—it would suffice to say "at the heart," period. Perjury is a heart, it is at the heart of the heart, and it is from this tragedy, which "discords" the heart in its very accord [*qui désaccorde le coeur dans l'accord même*], that the prayer of mercy [*miséricorde*] rises, even for the nonbeliever, and even if he knows nothing of it. As soon as there is substitution, and as soon as there is a third [*un troisième*], I am called by justice, by responsibility, but I also betray justice and responsibility. I have to ask, therefore, for forgiveness even before committing a determinable fault. One can call this original sin prior to any original sin, prior to the event, real or mythical, real or phantasmatic, of any original sin. Since it is from this substitution that subjectivity (in the sense Levinas gives to it) is determined, subjectivity as hôte or subjectivity as hostage, one must indeed think this subjectivity-substitution as a being-under, being-below [*un être-sous, être-dessous*]: not being-under and being-below in the sense of the classical subject, of the *subjectum* or *substantia* or *hypokeimenon*, as what is extended, lying, standing under its predicates, its qualities, attributes or accidents. Rather, as what is put under, submitted [*soumis*], subjected [*assujetti*], under the subjection of the law that is above it, at this height of which Levinas speaks, the height of the Most-High as the height of the other or of God. And this is indeed submission, subjection, sub-jection of one who is who he is only insofar as he asks for the forgiveness of the other: "on one's knees," as one says, while entrusting himself [*se livrant*] to the sovereignty of the other who is higher. This verticality of the body and of the asymmetric gaze that gazes at the other without exchanging looks [*sans croiser le regard*], of the face-to-face that does not exchange looks with, nor sees, the face of God—this is the orientation of subjectivity in substitution, which can ask for forgiveness but can never grant itself [*s'accorder*] the assurance of granting [*accorder*] forgiveness. One must [*il faut*] ask for forgiveness

but even if one must [*il faut*] forgive, one must do so without knowing, without having or pretending to have the assurance. "I beg your pardon" is a decent statement—"I forgive you" is an indecent statement because of the haughty and complacent height it denotes or connotes. Who am I, who do I pretend to be to thus grant myself the right to forgive?

If forgiveness can be asked for by me but granted only by the other, then God, the God of mercy, is the name of he who alone can forgive, in the name of whom alone forgiveness can be granted, and who can always abandon me, but also—and this is the equivocal beauty of this word *abandonment*—the only one to whom I can abandon myself, to the forgiveness of whom I can abandon myself.

Thus, I have to ask the hôte for forgiveness because, unable to ever receive and give him enough, I always abandon him too much, but inversely, in asking the other for forgiveness and in receiving from him the forgiveness of him, I abandon myself to him.

This is also what one calls love, and, first of all, mystical love, which gives itself without giving anything else but itself; which abandons itself while asking for forgiveness at the height of the other, for forgiveness kneeling, for forgiveness on one's knees, the kneeling of prayer—essential prostration to begged forgiveness—and forgiveness granted from God.

If you read again some of Massignon's letters, you will find—this time in what he calls "the Islamico-Christian front of prayer"—the structure, the inter-subjective, inter-substitutive but dissymmetric scene, and the lexicon of this love-gift, forgiveness, abandonment [*amour-don, pardon, abandon*] in kneeling prostration. I will give a few examples taken from *L'hospitalité sacrée*.

> The offering of a soul by another that offers it still. That night, while praying in front of a burning Paschal cierge to gain the ability to love that other soul more than oneself, so that it grows in beauty and in wisdom before God, surpassing in grace the fragile vow, the fraternal clumsiness prostrated in the night. . . . [January 28, 1946]

> This grief came to you suddenly, taking [your mother] away from you, she who was the luminous center of your family life. One must kneel in silence before the mysterious divine will who had given her to you—as a deposit—for so many years. . . . [May 31, 1946]

> To bring oneself to the divine presence and to invoke it from the bottom of one's heart. To compose a space for the "fiat," kneeling in front of Mary. To consider her trusting humility, her maternal intercession in our poor lives as sinners. To beg her to say for us, for all of us, sinners "*fil badaliya*," this humble, divine word of all vocation: "Fiat." [October 6, 1946]

> This is the moment when God's gift [*le don de Dieu*], the Holy Spirit brings us to conceive of abandon with Mary's approval. I have found that I am nothing. I cannot go to Him with my intelligence, I know nothing: nor with my feeling, I feel nothing. I touch him directly with abandon, in an instant, and it is enough. Why ask him for a sign? Why ask to be a martyr? To be burned? Why ask for ecstasy? Abandon is more than ecstasy. It is what already makes us—the becoming that we are—immortal . . . (in Arabic: *islam*). [January 4, 1947]

> The sword's blow of conversion entirely enlightened me, for a brief moment, with the gaze of my Judge. Silently, coming from his mouth, his liberating word was at least bringing me into the communion of the Church where he had left me alone, searching among his faithful creatures for who would extend to me the adorable and living sign of his mercy—his pierced hand; for who would grant me the consoling word of forgiveness: "I love you." [January 31, 1947]

> "To find oneself again [*se retrouver*]": We have learned, haven't we, everything that this poignant word contains of intoxicating immortality to share together. For to love is to find and to find oneself again, it is to enter into solitude, there where faith, hope, and charity become—in our hearts abandoned by all perishable and infinitely poor things—the burning love of the three divine Persons. The three guests of Abraham went to burn Sodom. . . . [May 28, 1947][49]

Besides, if one were to look, in ethics according to Levinas, for the trace of this "forgiveness to be asked for [*ce pardon à demander*]" from the threshold of existence, which is from the first, for every mortal, a surviving [*une survie*], one would find it very early in his texts, as early as *De l'existence à l'existant*, for example (written in captivity between 1940 and 1945). I have not been able to extract all the passages that explicitly name forgiveness but here are a few examples. In *De l'existence à l'existant*, the lexicon of "forgiveness" as originary structure, in a way, surges in an unusual but necessary manner, there were it is a question of freedom and of time. Before speaking, as he already does, of the face-to-face, Levinas redefines freedom in its rapport to time, to the present and to the instant, the limit of freedom: "The freedom of the present finds a limit in the responsibility for which it is the condition."[50]

As soon as the present of freedom at once conditions responsibility and finds itself limited, even negated by it, I am responsible before the other, at the heart of my freedom and even before, if one may say so, being free, in order to be free. Here is

49. Quoted in *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 232–40.

50. Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 79; [*De l'existence à l'existant* (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 135.

what Levinas precisely calls, already, a paradox: "This is the most profound paradox in the concept of freedom: its synthetic bond with its own negation. A free being alone is responsible, that is, already not free."[51] No doubt one must be free [*sans doute faut-il être libre*] in order to ask for forgiveness and free to grant it. But the paradox of a freedom limited by an originary responsibility before the other is that the relation of the I to the other before whom one is responsible is a rapport of infinite and originary duty and indebtedness, therefore incommensurable, irredeemable [*inacquittable*] and therefore delivered over to the "asking for forgiveness," "asking to be forgiven," saved or redeemed by forgiveness as soon as I say "I" and "I am free" or "responsible." From the most solitary threshold of solitude, I am constituted by this request for forgiveness, this "asking for forgiveness" or by this "being forgiven" for existing, this having to be forgiven—as survivor. Such that the rapport to forgiveness is no longer a secondary, contingent, moment in a kind of chapter of ethics, it is rather constitutive of my being-myself [*mon être-moi-même*] in my rapport with the other. I have to ask for forgiveness for being myself, before asking for forgiveness for what I am, for what I do or what I have. This "forgiveness to be asked for" belongs to a kind of "*cogito*," "*ego cogito*" before the "*ego cogito*": as soon as I say *I*, even in solitude, as soon as I say *ego cogito*, I am in the process of asking for forgiveness or of being forgiven, at least if the experience lasts for more than an instant and temporalizes itself. Such at least is the way I read the following passage, "Solitude is accursed not of itself, but by reason of its ontological significance as something definitive. Reaching the other is not something justified of itself; it is not a matter of shaking me out of my boredom. It is, on the ontological level, the event of the most radical breakup of the very categories of the ego, for it is for me to be somewhere else than my self [already substitution —J. D.]; it is *to be pardoned*, to not be a definite existence. The relationship with the other is not to be conceived as a bond with another ego, nor as a comprehension of the other which makes his alterity disappear, nor as a communion with him around some third term."[52]

The word *ontological*, it seems to me, here means that everything that is being, like "being forgiven" or "to be forgiven" is a category that is not only psychological or moral, but rather ontological. Yet, this is an event (this is the word: "ontologically the even of the most radical rupture of the very categories of the ego . . . ") that, insofar as it is ontological, breaks with traditional ontology and finally, Levinas will says this later, with ontology itself in the name of ethics, metaphysics, or first philosophy.

This thought of forgiveness, from this time on, is therefore a thought of time as the structure of the ego. The "I" temporalizes itself in the leap, the salvation and the

51. Levinas, *Existence*, 79/ *De l'existence*, 135.

52. Levinas, *Existence*, 85/*De l'existence*, 144; emphasis added.

surviving, the resurrection from one instant to the other. This temporal structure as leap, promised salvation, redemption and resurrection, implies the "forgiveness," or the having to be forgiven, or the having to ask for forgiveness. I will read a passage where this phenomenology of temporalization and of responsible freedom inscribes forgiveness in a thought of salvation, of redemption, of the Messiah and above all of resurrection: resurrection is the miracle of each instant.

> The economic world then includes not only our so-called material life, but also all the forms of our existence in which the exigency of salvation [*l'exigence du salut*] has been traded in, in which Esau has already sold his birthright. The world is the secular world, where the "I" accept wages. Religious life itself, when it is understood in terms of the category of wages, is economic. Tools serve this yearning for objects as wages. They have nothing to do with ontology; they are subordinate to desire. They not only suppress disagreeable effort, but also the waiting time. In modern civilization they do not only extend the hand, so that it could get at what it does not get at of itself; they enable it to get at it more quickly, that is, they suppress in an action the time the action has to take on. Tools suppress the intermediary times; they contract duration. Modern tools are machines, that is, systems, arrangements, fittings, coordinations: light fixtures, telephone lines, railroad and highway networks. The multiplicity of organs is the essential characteristic of machines. Machines sum up instants. They produce speed; they echo the impatience of desire.
>
> But this compensating time is not enough for hope. For it is not enough that tears be wiped away or death avenged; no tear is to be lost, no death be without a resurrection. Hope then is not satisfied with a time composed of separate instants given to an ego that traverses them so as to gather in the following instant, as impersonal as the first one, the wages of its pain. The true object of hope is the Messiah, or salvation [*L'object veritable de l'espoir, c'est le Messie, ou le salut*].
>
> The caress of a consoler which softly comes in our pain does not promise the end of suffering, does not announce any compensation, and in its very contact, is not concerned with what is to come with *afterwards* in economic time; it concerns the very instant of physical pain, which is then no longer condemned to itself, is transported "elsewhere" by the movement of the caress, and is freed from the vice-grip of "oneself," finds "fresh air," a dimension and a future [*avenir*]. Or rather, it announces more than a simple future [*avenir*], a future [*avenir*] where the present will have the benefit of a recall. This effect of compassion, which we in fact all know, is usually posited as an initial datum of psychology, and other things are then explained from it. But in fact it is infinitely mysterious.
>
> Pain cannot be redeemed. Just as the happiness of humanity does not justify the mystery of the individual, retribution in the future [*avenir*] does not wipe away the

> pains of the present. There is no justice that could make reparations for it. One should have to return to that instant, or be able to resurrect it. To hope then is to hope for the reparation of the irreparable; it is to hope for the present. It is generally thought that this reparation is impossible in time, and that eternity alone, where instants distinct in time are indiscernible, is the locus of salvation [*le lieu du salut*]. This recourse to eternity, which does not seem to us indispensable, does at any rate bear witness to the impossible exigency for salvation which must concern the very instant of pain, and not only compensate for it. Does not the essence of time consist in responding to that exigency for salvation? Does not the analysis of economic time, exterior to the subject, cover over the essential structure of time by which the present is not only indemnified, but resurrected? Is not the future [*avenir*] above all a resurrection of the present [*une resurrection du présent*]?
>
> *Time and the "I"*
>
> We believe that time is just that. What is called the "next instant" is an annulment of the unimpeachable commitment to existence made in the instant; it is the resurrection of the "I." We believe that the "I" does not enter identical and unforgiven [*identique et impardonné*]—a mere avatar—into the following instant, where it would undergo a new experience whose newness will not free it from its bond with itself—but that its death in the empty interval will have been the condition for a new birth. The "elsewhere which opens up to it will not only be a "change from its homeland" [*un "dépaysement"*] but an "elsewhere than in itself ["*ailleurs qu'en soi*"], which does not mean that it sank into the impersonal or the eternal. Time is not a succession of instants filing by before an I, but the response to the hope for the present, which in the present is the very expression of the "I," and is itself equivalent to the present. All the acuteness of hope in the midst of despair comes from the exigency that the very instant of despair be redeemed. To understand the mystery of the work of time, we should start with the hope for the present, taken as a primary fact. Hope hopes for the present itself. Its martyrdom does not slip into the past, leaving us with a right to wages. At the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible.
>
> There then is no question of denying the time of our concrete existence, constituted by a series of instants to which the "I" remains exterior. For such is the time of economic life, where the instants are equivalent, and the "I" circulates across them to link them up. There time is the renewal of the subject, but this renewal does not banish tedium; it does not free the ego from its shadow. We ask then whether the event of time cannot be lived more deeply as the resurrection of the irreplaceable instant [*l'irremplaçable instant*]. In place of the "I" that circulates in time, we posit the "I" as the very ferment of time in the present, the dynamism of time. This dynamism is not that of dialectical progression, nor that of ecstasy, nor that of duration, where the present

encroaches upon the future [*avenir*] and consequently does not have between its being and its resurrection the indispensable interval of nothingness. The dynamism of the "I" resides in the very presence of the present, in the exigency which this presence implies. This exigency does not concern perseverance in being, nor, properly speaking, the impossible destruction of this presence, but the unraveling of the knot which is tied in it, the definitive, which its evanescence does not undo. It is an exigency for a recommencement of being, and a hope in each recommencement of its non-definitiveness. The "I" is not a being that, as a residue of a past instant, attempts a new instant. It is this exigency for the non-definitive. *The "personality" of a being is its very need for time* as a miraculous fecundity in the instant itself, by which it recommences as other.

But it cannot endow itself with this alterity. The impossibility of constituting time dialectically is the impossibility of saving oneself by oneself and of saving oneself alone [*l'impossibilité de se sauver par soi-même et de se sauver tout seul*]. The "I" is not independent of its present, cannot traverse time alone, and does not find its recompense in simply denying the present. In situating what is tragic in the human in the definitiveness of the present, and in positing the function of the I as something inseparable from this tragic structure, we recognize that we are not going to find in the subject the means for its salvation. It can only come from elsewhere, while everything in the subject is here.[53]

Forgiveness is therefore inscribed in the becoming-responsibility of freedom—that is to say, in the very movement of temporalization as well. Here is what all classical philosophy of time, until Bergson and Heidegger, will have missed. They have missed forgiveness, all these philosophers of time; in sum, they have not thought forgiveness. And thereby [*et du coup*], they have missed time, they have lacked the time to think time, which thinks only from [*depuis*] forgiveness. It is their fault, the ontological fault of ontology. Levinas does not say that it is an unforgivable fault, but one can say it while smiling in his place [*mais on peut le dire en souriant à sa place*]:

Traditional philosophy, and Bergson and Heidegger too, remained with the conception of a time either taken to be purely exterior to the subject, a time-object, or taken to be entirely contained in the subject. But the subject in question was always a solitary subject. The ego all alone, the monad, already had a time. The renewal which time brings with it seemed to classical philosophy to be an event which it could account for by the monad, an event of negation. It is from the indetermination of nothingness, which the instant which negates itself at the approach of the new instant ends up in, that the subject was taken to draw its freedom. Classical philosophy left

53. Levinas, *Existence*, 90–93/ *De l'existence*, 155–59.

aside the freedom which consists in not negating oneself, but in having one's being *pardoned* by the very alterity of the other. It underestimated the alterity of the other in dialogue where the other frees us, because it believed there existed a silent dialogue of the soul with itself. In the end the problem of time is subordinate to the task of bringing out the specific terms with which dialogue has to be conceived.[54]

One will find these motifs, somehow transformed, but faithfully so, a long time later, at least in *Totalité et infini*, precisely in the passages devoted to "The Ethical Relation and Time."[55] Here, in a gripping manner, it is at the heart of the analysis of betrayal, of an essential betrayal, linked to essence and to the possibility of the will, that the figure of forgiveness appears as an essential figure of history, of what does and undoes history.

This is the paradox and the essence of time itself proceeding unto death, where the will is affected as a thing by the things—by the point of steel or by the chemistry of the tissues (due to a murderer or to the impotency of the doctors)—but gives itself a reprieve and postpones the contact by the against-death of postponement. The will essentially violable harbors treason in its own essence. It is not only offendable in its dignity—which would confirm its inviolable character—but is susceptible of being coerced and enslaved as a will, becoming a servile soul. (. . .) And yet in its separation from the work and in the possible betrayal that threatens it in the course of its very exercise, the will becomes aware of this betrayal and thereby keeps itself at a distance from it. Thus, faithful to itself, it remains in a certain sense inviolable, escapes its own history, and renews itself. There is no inward history. The inwardness of the will posits itself subject to a jurisdiction which scrutinizes its intentions, before which the meaning of its being coincides totally with its inward will. The volitions of the will do no weigh on it, and from the jurisdiction to which it opens comes pardon, the power to efface, to absolve, to undo history. The will thus moves between its betrayal and its fidelity which, simultaneous, describes the very originality of its power. But the fidelity does not forget the betrayal . . . and the pardon which ensures [the will] this fidelity comes to it from the outside. Hence the rights of the inward will, its certitude of being a misunderstood will, still reveal a relation with exteriority. The will awaits its investiture and pardon. It awaits them from an exterior will, but one from which it would experience no longer shock but judgment, an exteriority withdrawn from the antagonism of wills, withdrawn from history. This possibility of justification and

54. Levinas, *Existence*, 95/*De l'existence*, 160–61; *Translator's Note:* Levinas's emphasis is not reproduced in Lingis' English translation.

55. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 220ff; *Totalité et infini* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 195ff.

pardon, as religious consciousness in which interiority tends to coincide with being, opens before the Other, to whom I can speak. I speak a word that, in the measure that it welcomes the Other as Other, offers or sacrifices to him a product of labor, and consequently does not play above economy. Thus we see expression, the other extremity of the voluntary power that is separated from its work and betrayed by it, nonetheless referring to the inexpressive work by which the will, free with regard to history, partakes of history.[56]

This inscription, so necessary, of forgiveness in betrayal and of betrayal in forgiveness, is what enables saying to the other or of hearing oneself tell the other and hearing the other tell oneself [*s'entendre dire par l'autre*, hearing oneself told by the other] and hearing, understanding what is thus said: you see, you start again, you don't want to forgive me, even on the day of Atonement, but me too, me neither, a "me" neither, we are in accord, we will forgive each other nothing, it is impossible, let us not forgive each other, agreed [*d'accord*]? And then comes the complicitous burst of laughter, the mad laughter, laughter becoming mad, demented laughter [*le rire dément*].

Le rire dément, demented laughter, laughter denies. Yes, laughter denies. It is mad, this demented laughter, and it denies lying [*et il dément mentir*]. This laughter is, like every laughter, a kind of denegation of lying which lies still while denying lying or while avowing lying—or, if you prefer, which says the truth of lying, which says the truth in lying, thus recognizing that a logic of the symptom will always be stronger than an ethic of truthfulness [*véracité*]. Whatever I would want to say, sincerely or not, this will mean [*cela voudra dire*] or rather this will signify without *vouloir-dire* more and something else than what I want to say, through my body, my history, the economy of my existence, of my life or of my relation to death. And here is another lie to be forgiven.

These two Jews are also just and righteous, in their own manner, righteous ones who are just enough [*des justes assez justes*] to avow, to avow to the other and avow to the other in themselves that they are incapable of forgiving, that they are not just enough, not even sincere enough, since they continue to lie at the moment of avowal. The extreme vigilance is always at fault—this is why forgiveness is always to be asked for and why it always leaves something to be desired, why, besides, it belongs from the beginning to the scene of desire, to the disproportion of desire and of love: I love you, forgive me, *pardon*, I love you. Forgive me for loving you, forgive me for loving you too much, that is say, not enough, for loving you as the

56. Levinas, *Totality*, 229–32/*Totalité*, 205–208.

other, for loving the other in you, of missing you, failing to reach you [*de te manquer*, also: for your missing me] always, etc.

And yet, the avowal, even the reciprocal and almost simultaneous avowal of the common and mutual fault (as in the Jewish story), deserves compassion, we said, and a kind of forgiveness granted by one knows not who, a forgiveness which takes place even there where nobody can forgive anyone [*là où personne ne peut pardonner à personne*], the granting of a granted forgiveness [*l'accord d'un pardon accordé*] by an X, a great Third, God, if you will, that renders substitution possible. For it is not by chance, nor contingent, nor avoidable, that it would be always and finally of God that we ask for forgiveness, even when we are linked by a scene of forgiveness, to one or the other [*à tel ou tel*] on earth, as we recalled last time when evoking "Our Father who art in Heaven":

> Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts *as* we have also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.[57]

This paradoxical agreement in the compassion that I imagine or dream between the two Jews in the synagogue—is it not peace? Yes, it is peace, it is life: at bottom, this is the great forgiveness [*le grand pardon*], if there is one, but on a day of great forgiveness, one must always say "the great forgiveness, if there is one"—to the grace of God. And what is more comical than the great forgiveness as test and ordeal of the unforgivable? What is more alive, what better reconciliation? What an art of living! How to do otherwise, besides, what better to do, as soon as one lives or survives? Without having chosen? This is the definition of today [*c'est la definition d'aujourd'hui*], of a today, a *sursis de vie*, this reconciliation in the impossible.

But I want to suppose that these two Jews, in their infinite compassion for each other, at the very moment when they decide that they do not know how to stop [*au moment même où ils arrêtent qu'ils ne savent pas s'arrêter*], at the very moment when they recognize that they cannot disarm nor stop [*désarmer*], as life itself never disarms nor stops [*ne se désarme jamais*], these two Jews will have forgiven each other, but without saying so to each other. They have at least spoken to each other, even if they have not spoken forgiveness. They have told each other—in silence, a silence of innuendo [*sous-entendu*] where misunderstanding [*le malentendu*] can always find space to reside—that forgiveness granted does not signify

57. *Translator's Note:* Matthew 6:9–13; Derrida emphasizes "as [*comme*]."

"reconciliation" (Hegel) nor "work itself," "the deep work of time" discontinuous, delivered and delivering of continuity by the interruption of the other, in view of the "messianic triumph" "forewarned against the revenge of evil" (Levinas).

For here is the last aporia of forgiveness, the most artful perhaps, the most gifted to provoke laughter to the point of madness.

On the one hand, when someone forgives someone else (for example, the worst possible wound, or, still more simply, what may repeat it even perversely, the recall of a wound), well then, one must above all not tell the latter. The other must not hear [*il ne faut pas que l'autre entende*], one must not say, that one forgives, not only in order not to recall the (double) fault but also not to recall or to manifest that something was given (forgiven, given as forgiveness), something was given back again, that deserves some gratitude or risks obligating the one who is forgiven. At bottom, nothing is more vulgar and impolite, even wounding, than to obligate someone by telling them "I forgive you," which implies an "I give you" and already opens a scene of acknowledgment [*reconnaissance*], a transaction of gratitude, a commerce of thanking that destroys the gift. Similarly, one must never say: "I grant you hospitality" or "I invite you." When one says "I invite you," it means: I pay and we are inscribed in the circular commerce of the most inhospitable exchange possible, the least giving. When one invites, not only mustn't one send invitation cards and say "I invite you," it is me who invites. Not only must one not say this, but one must also not think it nor believe it, nor make it appear—to oneself or to the other. One must therefore say nothing [*il faut donc se taire*], one must say nothing of forgiveness [*il faut taire le pardon*] where it takes place, if it takes place. This silence, this inaudibility that calls itself, that is allowed by, death. As if one could forgive only the dead (acting, at least, as if the other were dead ("for laughs"), as if he were in a situation of no longer being here ever to hear, at the moment of receiving forgiveness), and as if one could forgive only the dead while playing dead oneself [*tout en faisant soi-même le mort*] (as if one were not forgiving, as if one were not letting the other know or, at the limit, as if one did not even know oneself). From this point of view, two living beings cannot forgive each other nor declare to each other that they forgive each other insofar as they are living. One would have to be dead to believe that forgiveness is possible. The two Jews had the depth, the rigor, and the honesty of noticing that, better, of declaring it.

But, *on the other hand*, and inversely, what would a silent forgiveness be, an unperceived forgiveness, an unknown forgiveness, granted unbeknownst to the one receiving it? What would be a forgiveness of which the forgiven one would know nothing? It would no longer be forgiveness. Such silence, in forgiveness, would be as disastrous [*néfaste*] as what silence would have wanted to avoid. A forgiveness that would address itself only to the other dead (once dead, and even if his specter survives "in me"), wouldn't that be a gesticulation of comedy, a miserable simulacrum, at most a phantasm destined to consol oneself for not having known how to forgive on time? A reconciliation with oneself with which the other has nothing to do? If there were to be forgiveness, I would therefore have to forgive when it is still time, *before* the death of the other. And of course *before* my death: what would forgiveness be that would come from the dead? It is true that this forgiveness from dead to dead, from one bank of death to the other, is, in fact, the most common recourse—our life is made of it—a spectral and phantasmatic recourse, a forgiveness of *procedure*, a historical forgiveness there where forgiveness must remain irreducible to history, a forgiveness that loses itself in oblivion and denatures itself in excuse and veniality, as soon as from living to living, true forgiveness, forgiveness of the unforgivable, remains forbidden. A priori, and thus *forever* forbidden.

What, then? Do precisely what is *always* forbidden, forbidden *forever*? Forgive, there where it is forbidden, there where it is possible *because* impossible? And worse yet, do what is forbidden on a day of great forgiveness [*un jour de Grand Pardon*]? There is no worse sin, more dangerous profanation, so close to the moment when God inscribes you—or does not—in the book of the living.

Let us summarize the properly scandalous aporia, the one upon which we cannot but stop while falling upon it: impossible, possible only *insofar as* impossible, impossible concept of the impossible which would start to resemble a *flatus vocis* if it were not what one desires the most in the world, as impossible as the forgiveness of the unforgivable—forgiveness remains, impossible, in any case [*de toutes les façons*]: between two living, between the dead and the living, between the living and the dead, between two dead. It is only possible, in its very impossibility, at the invisible border between life and death (for one has seen, one can forgive only there where the forgiven and the forgiving are not there to know it) but this border of scandal does not let itself be crossed: neither by the living nor by the dead [*ni par du vivant ni par du mort*].

It is not even crossed, though there lies perhaps the undiscoverable site which all these questions watch [*veillent*], by the specter [*par du spectre*]. At what moment does Abraham waken the memory of his being foreign abroad, to the stranger [*son être-étranger à l'étranger*]? For Abraham calls himself again, he recalls that he is destined by God to be a hôte (*ger*), an immigrant, a foreign body abroad, a strange body to the stranger [*un corps étranger à l'étranger*] ("Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house. . . . your offspring shall be hôtes in a land that is not theirs. . . ." [Genesis 12:1, 15:13]).

Presenting himself thus as a stranger without a home, watching [*veillant*] the body of his dead Sarah (the woman who laughs at the announcement of a birth while pretending that she didn't laugh), Abraham asks for a site for her. A last

demeure. He wants to be able to give her a burial worthy of her, but also a site that would separate him from her, like death from life, a site "facing me," says one translation, "out of my sight," says another (Genesis 22:4). And for this, one knows the scene; he wants to pay, the husband of Sarah, the woman who laughs, he insists firmly, he does not want that this be given to him, under any condition, not at any price [*à aucun prix*]. Besides, Abraham too had laughed, at the announcement of the same news, the late birth of Isaac (*Yiṣḥaq*: he laughed. Isaac, the coming of Isaac, causes both of them to shake with laughter, one after the other; Isaac is the name of he who *comes* to make them laugh, laugh at his coming, at his very coming, as if laughter had to greet a birth, the coming of a happy event, a coming [of, from, to (*du*)] laughter: come-laugh-with-me). The moment came to laugh—this was also the moment Elohim named Sarah. He gave her a name [*il la surnomma*], deciding rather that Abraham, who just received an other name (changed from Abram to Abraham), would no longer call her Sarai, my princess, but Sarah, princess.

To this question in the form of an aporia, I know no appeasing answer. Not even mad laughter. Nothing is given in advance for forgiveness, no rule, no criteria, no norm. It is the chaos at the origin of the world. The abyss of this non-response, such would be the condition of responsibility—decision and forgiveness, the decision to forgive this concept, if there ever is one. And always in the name of the other.

(Last vertigo, last breath: forgiving in the name of the other: is this only forgiving in one's/his place [*à sa place*], for the other, in substitution? Or is it forgiving the other one's/his name, that is to say what survives of him, forgiving [in] the name of the other [*pardonner au nom de l'autre*] as [to] his first fault?)

The answer must be each time invented, singular, signed—and each time once only [*et chaque fois une seule fois*] like the gift of a work, a donation of art and of life, unique and replayed until the end of the world [*et jusqu'à la fin du monde rejouée*].

Given and dealt again [*redonnée*]. To the impossible, I want to say unto the impossible.

If one wanted systematically to pursue a search about forgiveness in Levinas, and from the point of view of hospitality, it is to the theme of cities of refuge [Deuteronomy 19] that one would have to return.[58] These cities are not sites where one forgives the involuntary murderer who is welcomed. Rather, one grants him respite, an excuse, a relative and temporary absolution. I do not want to go over this again here, we have read the texts closely enough. I would have been tempted, however, to insist on the fact that, in Levinas' eyes—and this is why, though he lauds

58. *Translator's Note:* See Emmanuel Levinas, "Cities of Refuge," in *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures,* trans. Gary Mole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 34–52; "Les villes-refuges" in *L'au-delà du verset: Lectures et cours talmudiques* (Paris : Minuit, 1982).

those cities, he still finds the law equivocal—there is no innocent murder, and one is guilty even of murders committed by accident (you remember), which would mean that any murder, any transgression of the "thou shall not kill" is unforgivable (war? State of David? Messianic peace? And animal sacrifice . . . ?)

I just recalled the word *ger* (stranger, *hôte*) which names in Abraham or Ibrahim he who is destined by God to be a hôte (ger), an immigrant, a foreign body abroad. But it seems that in Arabic, and in the Islamic world (I say "it seems," and I speak only very indirectly because my competence in Arabic is no less than my competence in Hebrew, and I move forward here, prudently, only under the control of those who know and will correct me or will help me on occasion), it seems, I say, that one could make the link between *ger* and the names *giwār* and *dakhīl*. *Giwār*, noun of action, means both protection and neighborliness, protection of him who is *gār*, protected, customer, subtantive that is often linked to the Hebrew usage of *ger* (protected by the tribe and the community). An expert on Semitic languages, Theodor Nöldeke, asserts that the two words are used in the "same juridical sense (*im wesentlich demselben rechtlichen Sinne*: in a legal, juridical sense that is essentially the same)."[59] The two words also share a connotation of holiness when they are both invoked, it seems, to refer to the protection of a holy site or to what is protected by a holy site or by a deity. I have learned also that the Phoenician cognate of these two words, appearing in many proper names, designates whoever is protected by the holiness of a site, by sacred hospitality, in sum. Charles Virolleaud, eminent expert and pioneer in the study of *Ras sarma*, writes the following: "*Gr* already appears in the fourteenth century B.C.E. in a poem where one reads *gr bt il*, which I have translated in 1936 in my *La légende de Danel*, 'the *hôte* of the house of God.' . . . Cyrus H. Gordon rendered this as 'a person taking asylum in a temple.'" What is clear, in any case, is that the hôte or stranger is holy, divine, protected by divine blessing.

A last remark to conclude for today. It does seem that the meaning of "protected" privileged by Nöldeke, without putting into question the origin and the socioreligious value of the term, underscores its conservation as a phenomenon of the nomadic tradition, of the nomadic customary law. This would also be the case for *dakhīl* (interior, intimate, hôte to whom protection is due, stranger, passing traveler. The right of the *dakhīl* would be a right of asylum witnessed everywhere in the Semitic world). However, although some Arab lexicographers see here a derivation of the meaning "to pause at the place of a hôte" from the prior sense of "deviate," it may still be about, and here I quote from the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, "the almost universal semantic link between 'stranger, enemy' (cf. Latin *hostis*) and '*hôte*,

59. Theodor Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: K. J. Trubner, 1910), 38.

customer," since the root *gwr* has in both languages also the sense of hostility, injustice. Gesenius suggests the link to Akkadian *geru*, but it is rather *gār*, enemy, that would be appropriate."

We are back, then, as nomadic as sedentary, to the sites of our *hostipitality*. We will depart again in order to err again, going from substitution to substitution: "substitution frees the subject from boredom [*la substitution affranchit le sujet de l'ennui*]" says Levinas.[60] Let us hope.

SESSION OF MARCH 5, 1997

In the indirect and diverted trace of a motif from the Arabo-Islamic culture of hospitality, we were in the process of attending to the double motif of pervertibility and deviation, of swerving off the road, the migratory errancy of the foreign errant [*l'errant étranger*] who makes a halt and who has the right to hospitality for three days. Between the two motifs, let us first note this, between the pervertibility of an hospitality that can both poison the hôte and therefore also poison itself, corrupt itself, pervert itself, between deviation, digression (from oneself) and corruptibility, there is an obvious and unavoidable passage. It is inscribed in the very meaning [*valeur*] of stranger, foreign, or foreigner [*étranger*], that is to say what is foreign to the proper, foreign to and not proper to, not close to or proximate to [*non proche à*]. The stranger is a digression that risks corrupting the proximity to self of the proper.

Mais que veut dire l'étranger? But what does the stranger mean? What does the foreigner want to say? What does he mean, and does he want to speak, the stranger? What impression does the usage of this worn word [*l'usage de ce mot usé*] leave behind? Do the logic and rhetoric which make use of this worn word have a sense, one sense and a pure one [*un sens un et pur*], which does not pervert itself nor contaminate itself immediately?[61]

We are still facing the question of the stranger, that which comes to us from the stranger, there where he interrogates us first, even puts us into question, and the question of what the stranger wants to say/mean [*et celle de ce que* veut dire "*l'étranger*"].

Que veut dire l'étranger?

60. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 124; *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 160.

61. *Translator's Note:* At this point in the lecture, Derrida recommends Sophie Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen, L'étranger dans le discours de la Révolution française* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997). On the difficulties of reading "la question de l'étranger" see Anne Dufourmantelle and Jacques Derrida, *On Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

Here the temptation emerges of going back on the tracks of seminars from ten years ago (Georg Trakl, and *Unterwegs zur Sprache (La parole dans le poème, Die Sprache im Gedicht: Est ist die Seele ein Fremdes auf Erden*, the soul is, in truth, a foreigner on the earth . . . the step of the stranger resonates through the silver night, *und es läutet der Schritt / Des Fremdlings durch die silberne Nacht*).

One would have to go over—this time by letting ourselves be guided by our meditation on hospitality—all that we tried to think in an earlier lecture about the difference between the stranger and the others, the blow [*Schlag, la frappe*] of *Geschlecht* as human species and as sex, sexual difference, the rapport between brother and sister.[62] We wouldn't have time, and I don't have the courage. Were we to do it, however, and I do invite you to try for yourselves, one would perhaps have to read with one hand Heidegger and Trakl (and I believe there is already more than one hand) and with the other a text by Levinas entitled "The Foreignness to Being," which says something of the reference to Trakl[63]:

> Let us finally venture to raise some questions with regard to Heidegger. Is man's foreignness in the world [*l'étrangeté de l'homme au monde*] the effect of a process that began with the Presocratics, who spoke of the openness of being without preventing the forgetting of this openness in Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes? The soul exiled here below, which Plato transmits to metaphysical thought, already attests to the forgetting of being. But does the notion of the subject reflect only what Heidegger calls the history of being, whose metaphysical forgetting marks the epoch of the history of philosophy? Does the crisis of inwardness mark the end of this foreignness, ex-ception or exile, of the subject and of man? Is it for stateless man the return to a fatherland on the earth [*est-ce pour l'homme apatride le retour à une patrie sur terre*]?
>
> Are not we Westerners, from California to the Urals, nourished by the Bible as much as by the Presocratics, foreigners in the world [*étrangers au monde*], but in a way that owes nothing to the certainty of the *cogito*, which, since Descartes, is said to express the being of entities? The end of metaphysics does not succeed in dissipating this foreignness to the world. Are we standing before non-sense infiltrating into a world in which hitherto man was not only the shepherd of being, but elected for himself? Or shall the strange defeat or defection of identity confirm the human election—my own, to serve, but that of the other for himself? The verses of the Bible do not here

62. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit*, trans. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). *Translator's Note:* On Heidegger, Trakl, *Schlag* and *Geschlecht*, see Jacques Derrida, "*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger's Hand," trans. John P. Leavey Jr. in *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*, ed. John Sallis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), esp. 185ff.

63. Emmanuel Levinas, "No Identity," trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), esp. 148.

have as their function to serve as proofs; but they do bear witness to a tradition and an experience. Do they not have a right to be cited at least equal to that of Hölderlin and Trakl? The question has a more general significance: have the Sacred Scriptures read and commented on in the West influenced the Greek scripture of the philosophers, or have they been united to them only teratologically? Is to philosophize to decipher a writing hidden in a palimpsest?

In Psalm 119 we read: "I am a stranger on the earth [*étranger sur la terre*], do not hide from me your commandments." Would historical criticism show this text to be a late one, and would it already date from the Hellenistic period, in which the Platonic myth of the soul exiled in the body would have been able to seduce the spirituality of the West? But the psalm echos texts recognized as prior to the century of Socrates and Plato; in particular Leviticus 15:23: "No land will be alienated irrevocably, for the earth is mine, for you are but strangers, domiciled in my land." It is not here a question of the foreignness of the eternal soul exiled among passing shadows, nor of a displaced state which the building of a house and the possession of land will enable one to overcome, by bringing forth, through building, the hospitality of sites which the earth envelops. For like in Psalm 119, which calls for commandments, this difference between the ego and the world is prolonged by obligations toward the others. They echo the Bible's permanent *saying* [*dire*]: the condition (or the uncondition) of being strangers [*d'étrangers*] and slaves in the land of Egypt brings man close to his neighbor [*rapproche l'homme du prochain*]. In their uncondition of being strangers men seek one another. No one is at home. The memory of this servitude assembles humanity. The difference that opens between the ego and itself, the non-coincidence of the identical, is a fundamental non-indifference with regard to men. . . .

A stranger to itself, obsessed by others, dis-quiet, the ego is a hostage [*le Moi est otage*], a hostage in its very recurrence as an ego ceaselessly missing itself. For it is thus always closer to the other, more obliged, aggravating its own insolvency. This debt is absorbed only by being increased; such is the pride of non-essence! It is a passivity no "healthy" will can will; it is thus expelled, apart, not collecting the merit of its virtues and talents, incapable of recollecting itself so as to accumulate itself and inflate itself with being. It is the non-essence of man, possibly less than nothing. "It may be," Blanchot also wrote, "that, as one is pleased to declare, 'man is passing.' Man is passing, man has even always already passed, in the measure that he has always been appropriated to his own disappearance. . . . This then is not a reason to repudiate humanism, as long as it is recognized in the least deceptive mode, never in the zones of inwardness, power and law, order, culture, and heroic magnificence." (. . .) Man has to be conceived on the basis of the self putting itself, despite itself, in place of everyone, substituted for everyone by its very non-interchangeability [*substitué à tous de par sa non-interchangeabilité même*]. He has to be conceived on the basis of the

condition or uncondition of being hostage, hostage for all the others [la condition ou l'incondition d'otage—d'otage de tous les autres] who, precisely qua others, do not belong to the same genus as I, since I am responsible even for their responsibility. It is by virtue of this supplementary responsibility that subjectivity is not the ego, but me [*la subjectivité n'est pas le Moi, mais moi*].[64]

Concerning the Arabo-Islamic tradition of hospitality,[65] aside from the three or four paths I just outlined (pre-Islamic nomadism, conditionality, deviation or halt and pervertibility), I would like to bring some additional, though clearly insufficient, details about some essential motifs that would obviously call for wider research. I always bring such details with shyness and prudence dictated by my incompetence, and while inviting those who can to make more precise, to discuss and enrich, these poor preliminary threads.

As to pre-Islamic hospitality, I would like to evoke, as I should have done earlier, the figure of the poet Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī, who lived in the second half of the sixth century, and who seems to me interesting, among other things because of the scene of posthumous hospitality with which he is associated. At bottom, since the beginning, we have been trying to think not only the link between hospitality and death, mourning, spectrality, hospitality to the dead and hospitality of the dead.

> ḤĀṬIM AL-ṬĀʾĪ b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd, Abū Saffāna or Abū ʿAdī, poet who lived in the second half of the 6th century A.D., traditionally the most finished example of the pre-Islamic knight, always victorious in his undertakings, magnanimous toward the conquered and proverbial for his generosity and hospitality. . . . In the *adab* books there are a number of traditions giving instances of his generosity, and it is even said that after his death he used to entertain travelers who asked for hospitality; he would rise from his tomb, slaughter a camel, and his son ʿAdī would be ordered in a dream to replace the dead animal. This tomb was probably on a hill where he had lived. Four stone figures stood on either side of his tomb, young girls with their hair loose, representing mourners.[66]

64. Ibid., 148–50.

65. *Translator's Note:* At this point, Derrida's notes provide the following:

Summary of previous session:
Islam (commented quotes) around a few themes.
Origin in nomadic law and its transformation in Qur'anic law. Qur'an citations

1. *Conditionality (three days)*
2. *the idea of deviation (path and road: chance, etc.)*
3. *pervertibility (and therefore perfectability), from which "sickness" ("lovesickness" in Song of Songs, quoted by Levinas. Analysis of lexicon of "pathology" (of the pathological in general, in opposition to the autonomous [l'autonomique] in Autrement qu'être, where Levinas cites the Song).*

Sketch of a question: cloning and substitution.

66. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 274.

One would first have to engage the enormous semantic, historical, sociopolitical and, first of all, religious web that is organized and developed here around a few radiating notions.

1. Beginning with the notion of *da'wa*, from the root *da'a* (to call, invite: *heissen*, and thus, first, invitation). In the Qur'ān XXX, 24: a call to the dead in order to take them out of their tomb at the time of the last judgment:

> He bringeth forth the living from the dead, and He bringeth forth the dead from the living, and He reviveth the earth after her death. And even so will ye be brought forth. And of His signs is this: He showeth you the lightning for a fear and for a hope, and sendeth down water from the sky, and thereby quickeneth the earth after her death. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for folk who understand. And of His signs is this: The heavens and the earth stand fast by His command, and afterward, when He calleth you, lo! From the earth ye will emerge [*thumma idhā da'akum da'watan min al-ard*].[67]
> DA'WA, pl. *da'awāt*, from the root *da'ā*, to call, invite, has the primary meaning call or invitation. In the Kur'ān, XXX, 24, it is applied to the call to the dead to rise from the tomb on the day of Judgement. It also has the sense of invitation to a meal and, as a result, of a meal with guests.... The *da'wat al-mazlūm*, prayer of the oppressed, always reaches God. The *da'wa* of the Muslim on behalf of his brother is always granted. The word is applied to a vow of any kind. It can also have the sense of imprecation or curse.... In the religious sense, the *da'wa* is the invitation addressed to men by God and the prophets, to believe in the true religion: Islam ... Muḥammad's mission was to repeat the call and invitation: it is the *da'wat al-Islām* or *da'wat al-Rasūl*. As we know, the Infidels' familiarity with, or ignorance of, this appeal determined the way in which the Muslims should fight against them. Those to whom the *da'wa* had not yet penetrated had to be invited to embrace Islam before fighting could take place.... The word *da'wa* is also applied to propaganda, whether open or not, of false prophets.... In the politicoreligious sense, *da'wa* is the invitation to adopt the cause of some individual or family claiming the right to the imāmate over the Muslims.[68]

2. Then the notion of *dhimma*, which names this kind of permanent contract, constant and indefinitely renewed commitment which obligates the Muslim community to grant hospitality to the members of the other revealed religions,

67. *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran*, XXX, 19–25.
68. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 2, 168.

conditional and strongly conditioned hospitality: hospitality is owed and granted only on the condition that non-Muslims respect the superiority of Islam.

> *DHIMMA*. The term used to designate the sort of indefinitely renewed contract through which the Muslim community accords hospitality and protection to members of other revealed religions, on condition of their acknowledging the domination of Islam.... The bases of the treatment of non-Muslims in Islam depend partly on the attitude of the Prophet, partly on conditions obtaining at their conquest. Muḥammad is known to have first tried to integrate the principal Jewish groups at Medina into a rather loose organization, then opposed them violently, and finally, after the expansion of his authority across Arabia, concluded agreements of submission and protection with the Jews of other localities such as Khaybar, and with the Christians of *e.g.* Nadjrān; this last action alone could and did serve as precedent in the subsequent course of the Conquest. The essential Kur'ānic text is IX, 24: "Fight those who do not believe ... until they pay the *djizya* ... " which would imply that after they had come to pay there was no longer reason for fighting them.[69]

We will return to this on the way, no doubt. Earlier, however, I was thinking about the lovesickness of which we spoke last time in the fervent echo or the melancholy wake of the *Song of Songs*, the *Poem of Poems*, as if the poetical of the poetical [*le poétique du poétique*] of all declaration of love had to do with this sickness of the other, if not of the foreigner in me, of another in me, outside of me, of the other who angers me and puts me out of myself [*qui me met hors de moi*], the other who puts me out of myself in me, of the other always both more ancient and more to come than me, whom I thus mourn [*dont je porte ainsi le deuil*] as a mourning of me [*comme le deuil de moi*], as if I carried with me the mourning of me carried by the other, there where would thus begin an ageless hospitality, or a hospitality of all ages, a hospitality which could only survive itself before its time, and of which the poem would say, in sum, from one to the other in me: I love you, I am sick of love from you, sick of love for you, for while wholly wanting, with all my desire, to die before you so that I don't see you die, for you know that one of us will see the other die, well then, while wholly wanting, with all my hopeless desire, to die first, I would also want to survive you, to have at least the time to be there to console you at the time of my death, to assist you and so that you would not be alone [*seul(e)*] at the time of my death: I would want to survive you just enough to help you, the time that it will take, to bear my death. "I love you" would thus signify

69. Ibid., 227–28.

this impossible grammar, a grammar that one can find at once tragic and comic, as time itself: I would want to survive you at my death, to survive me in you, to guard in me your mourning of me, etc. And this "I love you, and therefore I guard you/keep you in surviving you" is unforgivable, therefore I ask you for forgiveness there where it is possible to ask for and to grant forgiveness, there where only, you recall, it is unforgivable.[70]

This is what I was saying to myself, when I arrived, about the possible/impossible hospitality (writing from now on: im-possible: in/possibilizing). Another thought of the possible and of the virtual . . . avowing the im-possible (for example the unforgivable—does it make the impossible possible? I cannot forgive you, I cannot give you, I cannot receive you, etc.).

Another example of the im-possible: to be present or absent for the hôte, close or far (*fort/da*). Absent as present, present as absent (example of the plane: how much time is needed to speak of the hôte as hôte? No rule: invention, but invention of the possible: impossible.

Being-present as absent to the hôte? Must one be there (living, or surviving, or not)? *Unheimliche*: absence as presence. Must one be present or not, and how, to the hôte? The hôte always passing through (road and itinerary, iterability: come: come back [*viens: re-viens*]). But must one hold back [*re-tenir*] the passing hôte? When does holding back and retaining [*retenir*] him become detaining [*détenir*] the other as hostage? (to hold, to hold the other, to entertain and support [*entre-tenir*] the hôte (entertain and sustain[71]: art of conversation, without labor nor program, no constraint nor commerce: leisure, gratuitousness, grace, art salon, music salon, etc.)

Moments of hospitality follow each other but do not resemble each other.

The question: does hospitality presuppose improvisation? Yes and no.

The unforeseen [*l'imprévu*], providential hospitality, the messianic "unawares [*à l'improviste*]."

Greetings (who greets first?). "A-dieu": what does the *à* signify? Analyze at length: Latin (*ad, toi,* intentionality, direction, sense, movement, to come, opening, etc. Ah, but also belonging [*appartenance*] and dative: I am God's, for and to God [*à Dieu*], yours, for and to you, the infinite, for and to the infinite. Therefore, substitution and

70. *Translator's Note:* At this point, Derrida has the following note:

> Comment on the first strophe of the Song of Songs in both [French] translations while insisting upon the differences in time and in mode (future indicative or subjunctive and future perfect) and the name/the thing, the symbolical/the physical . . . and above all "rightly do they love you [c'est avec raison qu'on t'aime (Dhormes)/Les rectitudes t'aiment (Chouraqui)]" (*Song of Songs* 1:5). Straightforwardness [*droiture*] and face-to-face, love and betrayal (reason of the infinite, reason and sickness, . . .).

71. The words *entertain* and *sustain* are in English in the text.

cloning, series and irreplaceability: is a clone identical or different only *solo numero* (homozygotic twin). Without entering the scientific debate (contestation as to the novelty, the consequences, etc.). Ask whether this changes anything for ethics of substitution (Levinas-Massignon), birth and death, letting be born, letting die.

Two questions: 1. Where and when does the living begin? Let live, let be born, let die, leaving in peace: a seminar on hospitality is a mediation and an exercise of language or of writing about all the possible statements that one can let "hold" (to hold dear, to maintain, retain, entertain and support, detain [*tenir à, maintenir, retenir, entretenir, détenir*] but also "letting [*laisser*]" (*lassen, let*, which do not play in the same way with their Latin root *laxare*, to let go, to loosen, to relax [*lâcher, relâcher, détendre*], Italian *lasciare*, with its enormous semantic tree: not to prevent, letting be or *laisser faire*, to let pass, to wait, to allow, to abandon (and therefore also: to lose or bequeath, to transmit or to give) to abandon oneself, but also to maintain ("let them together [*laissez les ensemble*]"). 2. Second question: Where does the human begin (the "thou shalt not kill": the human or the living? abortion: subject *hôte*-hostage? Father and infinite fecundity. Clone without father?

SESSION OF MAY 7, 1997

What is a substitution? Can one speak of substitution as such [*La substitution*]? Does it have an essence, an essence that would be one? A unique model, unsubstitutable to itself? Can one ask the question What is it? on the subject of substitution? Can one ask this question there where the very proximate words substance or subjectivity (to wit, what is *under* [*ce qui se tient* sous], what comes under [*ce qui vient sous*], the *hypokeimenon* that situates itself "below," places itself or poses itself underneath, takes places and occurs [*prend place et à lieu*] under qualities, attributes or predicates) not only calls (for) the ontological question, the question What is? What is the being of? but already gives an answer to this question: substance is the very being of that which is because it sustains every thing that occurs. Why does the substitute, why does the substitution of the substitute appear thus to resist the prerogative of philosophical or ontological interrogation?

I do not know why—(I entrust you with this symptom in confidence, I give it to you, and you will do with it as you please)—I do not know why the first example that came to my mind to illustrate the concept of substitution, the first among all the examples of substitution for which one could infinitely substitute any other (and an example is always a kind of substitutable substitute: when I say "for example," I immediately say that I could substitute an other example; if I say "you, for example," I imply that it could be someone else; which is why it is such a terrible

phrase that says to someone "you, for example," since it inscribes chance and substitution, possible replaceability in the address to the other. It is often the violent address of who has the authority and power to take hostage: "you, for example," says the teacher in his class at the time of asking a question and verifying knowledge, while authoritatively designating someone summoned to respond, someone who can no longer avoid and must say "present," "here I am." "You, for example, tell me what does 'substitution' mean?" or the attitude of the occupier designating hostages: "you, for example, get out of the lineup," etc.). Well, I admit then that the first example that came to my mind, if one can say so, to my consciousness, when I thought of giving you an example of substitution, is the example of child substitution: when one steals a child from his parents and substitutes another instead. For some, this is the utmost violence possible, an exceptional and exceptionally cruel violence. For others, this welcoming [*accueillir*] the substitute child, the child who replaces another or who is taken from his parents in order to be welcomed [*accueilli*], to be taken in [*recueilli*] by others, is the gift of hospitality *par excellence*. One is more hospitable toward the adopted child than toward the so-called natural or legitimate child. And one can also attempt to demonstrate, as we have in the past, that there is no such thing as a natural and immediate filiation: every child is a substituted substitute [*tout enfant est substitut substitué*].

Let us leave this for now, but this example will catch up with us quickly. I wanted therefore to entrust you with this example, the first that came to my mind whereas there are so many other possible examples of substitution, by definition (the sign, the representing, prosthesis, money, everything that comes in the place of, etc.). But immediately after having lent my attention to the fact that the first example of substitution that came to my mind was the child, I wanted to search the dictionary, as I do often, as a matter of duty and to verify, to search for example. First in *Littré*, I looked for the examples given, the exemplary phrases too, cited in order to illustrate what one calls substitution. What, then, do I find as a first definition or as first example? Child substitution. As if child substitution were not an example among other, a substitution for which one could substitute as many others as one would want, but were rather substitution par excellence, the exemplary substitution, paradigmatic or arche-substitution, irreplaceable substitution, there where the logic of substitution seems, on the contrary, to place under question the irreplaceability of *arkhè* and of the originary.

If the first substitution remained child substitution, then any substitution would amount perhaps to re-produce, to figure, to recall some child substitution, what would lead one to think or dream that the child itself was the *first* substitute. One is all the more encouraged in the direction of this dream when, as

if by chance, the same *Littré*, after this first example of substitution, child substitution, the first citation is from Rousseau, the very same Rousseau who said—you will recall this phrase from *Emile* that we have commented on at length: "there is no substitute for a mother's love,"—which implies that it is irreplaceable, nonsubstitutable.[72] Then the same Rousseau, thinker of the substitutive supplement, said in the *New Héloïse*, "It would seem life is a possession one receives only on condition of passing it on, a sort of substitution which must pass from generation to generation [*une sorte de substitution qui doit passer de race en race*]."[73]

This sentence inscribes in any case the process of substitution in a *genealogy*, in a genealogical sequence of the genealogic, even of the genetic. Substitution would be, first of all, a living replacement of life by life, of the living by the living, of a living by another: a living one for another [*un vivant pour un autre*] (which is not far from the sacrifice of life and thus from "dying for the other"—we will return to this). To replace something with something, a number or a figure [*un nombre ou un chiffre*] with another in a homogenous series, would not be a substitution, in any case not a grave substitution. A substitution worthy of the name would be not of something but of someone with someone, even with something [*la substitution non de quelque chose mais de quelqu'un par quelqu'un, voire par quelque chose*]. Unless the most terrifying stakes lied, with this equivocation, the ineluctable substitution of someone with something [*la substitution ineluctable de quelqu'un par quelque chose*] (fetishism would be only a figure of this), with substitution itself, as if substituting someone with someone always amounted to contaminating the logic of the *who* with the logic of the *what*, or ethics with arithmetic (one would have to write *arithméthique*, with an *h*). One *for* the other: the three senses of the "for" (all of which inter-cross, over-determine or ally themselves, more or less underground in Levinas in order to speak substitution: the prosthetic sense (one thing put—or putting itself—in the place of the other, for the other), the dative sense (one giving itself, devoting itself, sacrificing itself for the benefit of the other, for the other), the phenomenological or ontophenomenological sense (the "for the other [*pour autrui*]," the appearing or being "for the other"). These three "for" intercross as in the expression "witness for the other [*témoin pour l'autre*]"; "no one is a witness for the witness" (Celan).

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72. *Translator's Note:* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'Education* in *Œuvres complètes* 4 (Paris : Gallimard, 1969), 257, *Emile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: Everyman's Library, 1950), 13. See also *De la grammatologie*, (Paris: Minuit, 1967)/*Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) 209/E145.

73. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie or the New Heloise*, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 6 (Hanover, N. H. : Dartmouth College/University Press of New England, 1997), 539.

There is nothing fortuitous in that, immediately after the arche-example of the child—of substitution of child if not of substitution as child—the same dictionaries would mention substitution as a legal matter, but not just any legal matter. After all, in the (French) legal code, the *substitut* is he who is granted the right to replace the other in the latter's functions, and more precisely, in French law, the justice [*magistrat*] in charge of replacing the attorney general. There is a long tradition, a French and literary tradition, which complains and accuses, complains of *substituts*, of deputies [*représentants*] of the law as *substituts*. Molière compares them to clawed beasts [*animaux à griffes*], these clerks [*greffiers*]—another figure of life, of animal life. "How many beautiful animals the claws of which you must pass: sergeants, attorneys, advocates, registrars, deputies [*substituts*], assessors, judges and their clerks!"[74] (There would be much to say about zoological figuration, the animal representation of men of law in general, the representation of the space of law as animal space, from Molière to Kafka). As for Rousseau, who has composed a great list of charges against the substitute in politics, against the elected who alienates the popular voice and the general will, he also writes in *The Social Contract* that: "everyone knows what happens when the King appoints agents [*quand le roi se donne des substituts*]."[75]

There is nothing fortuitous, then, in the mention of substitution as a matter of law, not just any legal matter but of it as it concerns inheritance, family succession, the parental chain or filiation, substitution as filiation—jurisprudence concerning here those who are called upon to substitute for the first heirs. Substitution also signifies, in the case of the child, succession. It then designates the disposition according to which one calls upon the heirs to succeed—themselves, in a way—in such manner that the first child, the first heir will be unable to alienate the property promised or subject to substitution. This word has an entire legal history, from Roman law, where substitution often designates the replacement of the heir (*substituere heredem*, to designate an heir replacing the first designated heir, even the eldest), a history into which we will not delve but that I had to recall because, even though the word substitution belongs to as many codes as one wills, and for reasons which we will discuss, to codes of law, law of things and law of persons [*droit des choses et droit des personnes*] (to substitute is to replace something or someone, even someone with something: one would perhaps say "killing" in so doing, killing to substitute a thing for someone, a dead thing for a living one), nevertheless, therefore, its privileged link to law and right, to rights of inheritance and of family succession, did deserve to be noted, for reasons that will not cease to

74. Molière, *Les fourberies de Scapin* II, 8; trans. G. Graveley in *Six Prose Comedies of Molière* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 349.

75. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, trans. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 4, 177.

reappear and to be important to us. Besides, most literary examples given by *Littré* for the verb "to substitute" are also borrowed from estate law [*droit de succession*]. Of course, this presupposes that the chain of successive inheritors would be sufficiently alike to substitute for each other, with the required family resemblance, but would not substitute each other serially, as in a series of clones. You see the question returning. Bossuet was not naming clones but apostles when he said, "They [the apostles] will leave heirs behind; they will not cease to substitute successors for each other and this race will never end." The word "generation [*race*]," as in Rousseau's phrase quoted earlier, does indicate nevertheless the call to a genealogy or to a quasi-genetics that reproduces itself infinitely as the same, that inherits itself thanks to substitution, to a kind of autosubstitution. What can this mean: an autosubstitution? Can one, must one, substitute oneself to oneself? What then does oneself mean in this case? Obviously, the "generation" in question, as a site of substitution, defines a space of inheritance as space of the same. To the same extent, the simple reproduction of the identical by autosubstitution (the phantasm of cloning) forbids the inheritance, which it otherwise seems to make possible; it interrupts parental filiation, which seems to announce itself with substitution. One finds in the vocation to inheritance which announces itself under the word *substitution* and under the operation of substituting, this crossing of natural and reproductive automaticity, and of perversion or institutional artificiality, of natural or institutional reproduction—unless substitution were the very thing that ruins or threatens this opposition between nature and institution. At the heart of the logic of substitution or of the supplement, there is, therefore, apparently, this crossing of natural reproduction and technological reproductibility, of natural series and institutional deviation, of bio-engineering and freedom, of so-called natural filiation and adoption as legal fiction.[76] One finds all this in this sentence by Vertot (in his *Révolutions Romaines* XIV, 282) quoted again in *Littré*: "One found [in Caesar's will] that he had adopted Octavius, the son of his sister's daughter, as his son and primary heir, and that he substituted to him, in the case of death with progeny, Decimus Brutus, one of the main conspirators." And there is Montaigne: "In case one of them [i.e., instituted heirs] were to die [*vienne à défaillir*, that is to say, to miss or lack, to default for one reason or another, one of which being death, disappearance by death; and the substitute always replaces a fault, supplements a disappearance —J. D.], I substitute he who survives him for his share." I quote this sentence because of the allusion to surviving, because the substitute, as inheritor (and that too is the dream of a certain cloning) ensures the surviving, even the indefinite surviving of what it replaces et repeats at once, what it serves as.

76. *Translator's Note:* Derrida adds the English "legal fiction" to the French "fiction légale."

The word *substitution* has occupied us much in the previous sessions. I say "the word" rather than the concept, because under this word one can substitute more than one concept of substitute and of substitution. The word and the presumption of a concept or a logic of substitution, a certain substitution, in any case, enabled us to link to each other these thoughts of hospitality that are at once ethics of substitution and ethics of holy or sacred hospitality—of Jewish filiation or of Christian and Islamic filiation, such as they are represented, under the common sign of Abraham, the father of nations, by the discourses of Levinas and of Massignon. Yes, under the sign of Abraham, of father Abraham, the absolute Patriarch, since the reference to Abraham the foreigner but also to Abraham the hôte, who receives the hôtes or messengers of God in Mamre, this reference to inheritence, to memory and to the founding example of the patriarchal hôte Abraham, was central and unerasable in both discourses, on both "prayer fronts," to recall Massignon's phrase, the Christiano-Islamic prayer front and the Jewish prayer front. But from the perspective of hospitality, these thoughts of substitution were turning toward Abraham the hôte or the stranger, to whom Yahweh said; "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house" (Genesis 12:1) and be a stranger. Or yet Abraham, to whom Yahweh said later, "Know this for certain, that your offspring [*ceux de ta race*] shall be aliens [*des hôtes*, or strangers: it is always the word *ger* that designates the stranger received in a land, the immigrant, the alien [*métèque*][77] —J. D.] in a land that is not theirs" (Genesis 15:13), words that Abraham will recall at the time of Sarah's death, in Hebron, when addressing the Hittites to ask for a burial ground: "I am a stranger and an alien [*je suis hôte*] residing among you [Chouraqui says: "I am an alien [*je suis un métèque*], a resident with you" —J. D.]; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight [Chouraqui: "and I will bury my dead in front of me"—here too, if we had time for a digression, we would insist on the taking root in a foreign land not by way of birth but by way of death and burial, displacement upon which we reflected last year around *Oedipus at Colonus*—and here too, it is a question, if not of a secret burial, at least of a burial with which one parts in order for it to be distant from the bereaved ("in front of me," says Chouraqui) or invisible to him ("out of my sight" says Dhormes) —J. D.]" And every time, one has the impression that the work of mourning and of fidelity will only be possible if the other is separated from the bereaved, out of me [*hors de moi*], before me or, if not out of me, out of my sight; as if the work of mourning, often presented as an interiorization, an idealizing incorporation, that is to say also a substitution of the image of the other with the other in me, had a chance to operate, had a chance to shelter the memory or the I of the other in me only to the extent that the dead other remains in his place out of me—in me, out of me. If mourning is hospitality, a burial in oneself and out of oneself, it is necessary [*il faut*] for both burials, and therefore for both hospitalities, to remain quite distinct, separated, split, that the decomposition of the body (external hospitality of physical burial) occur elsewhere in order to let the idealizing memory appropriate the hôte dead in oneself, in an operation that is entirely one of substitution. In both founding references to Abraham that I have just cited, however, it is a question of hospitality to the stranger Abraham, in a foreign land [*à l'étranger*] (the two messengers of God in Mamre). It is not a question of sacrifice, nor of sacrificial substitution like the moment of Isaac's sacrifice, to which I will return once more.

77. *Translator's Note:* The word *métèque* in its common French usage is a pejorative for foreigner. Etymologically, it is related to the Greek *metoikos*, one who changes home.

However, in the scene of Genesis 23, Sarah's burial, as a scene of hospitality—since Abraham opens by saying, "I am myself an alien among you" when he asks for a burial ground—this scene which follows the so-called interrupted sacrifice of Isaac, that is the substitution of the ram for the son ["Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son (22:13)—"in place of (*à la place*)," says Dhormes, "at the site (*au lieu de*)," says Chouraqui, his "unique son," "your only one" as God said: it is a matter of substituting an animal for the unique beloved, the preferred unique one —J. D), the scene of Sarah's burial, Sarah whom Yahweh had, you recall, "visited" (Dhormes), "sanctioned" (Chouraqui), in order to give her Isaac in her old age—the scene of Sarah's burial can also be read as a scene of sacrifice and of substitution. Indeed, Abraham absolutely insists on paying for the field and the cave, the site of burial that the Hittites absolutely insist on giving him. In this extraordinary scene (that I will read in part) in which one insists on paying, the others on giving without being paid, one has the feeling that Abraham insists on sacrificing what he calls "the full price" or "four hundred shekels of silver," in order at once to mourn Sarah and to owe nothing. Both parties want to cancel the debt with a gift, but a sacrificial gift, a gift that presupposes some sacrifice. And it is Hebron, the site of Sarah's burial but also of Abraham's, upon which the scene of sacrificial appropriation has not ceased perpetuating itself until now, just yesterday, through so many *substitueries*.[78]

Let us start again. What is a substitution? What does one say when saying "substitution"? What does one do when substituting? If, to this question, I substitute, as I

78. *Translator's Note:* This untranslatable neologism combines "substitution" with "tueries," killings.

must, its development, to wit, "who substitutes what?" it risks still not being enough: one must [*il faut*] add, "Who substitutes what to what? To what, and to whom?

In all the substitutions I have just performed (regarding the subject and the object of the verb, "Who substitutes? And what? And to what or to whom?), you will have noted the suspended indecision between the "what" and the "who." It matters to us first and foremost. Besides, if one opens the *Littré* at the definition for *substitution*, one will read just this alternative between the "who" and the "what"; more precisely, between the person and the thing. You will also notice that the living said to be animal is here absent, who is neither a person nor a thing, but who nonetheless occupies, as you know and as we will explore, the most significant place regarding sacrificial or fetishistic substitution. I read *Littré*, therefore: "Substitution: action that consists in putting a thing, a person *in the place of* [*à la place de*] another. A child substitution."

In the place of—locution which names the occupied space, the destined location [*emplacement*], natural or not, even the lodging, the habitat, the *lieu* (one also says, for substitution, "*ceci au lieu de cela*"), "at the place of" ["*à la place de*," "*au lieu de*," "*en lieu et place de*"], this can also be said "for [*pour*]": this *for* that, the one *for* the other, and so on. And this *for* is in itself sufficiently equivocal, indicating both substitution and gift, the dative ("one for the other" is both substitution and dative destination); this *for* is equivocal enough to offer us some resistance, entering and not entering in an economy of gift and sacrifice, entering it in order to [*pour*] exceed it.

Let us reconsider this flat definition: "action that consists in putting a thing, a person in the place of another." Through the indefinite multiplicity of the examples of substitution, which one can justly substitute for all the others (signs instead of things, words instead of sense, a word for another, prostheses serving as what they replace, representatives [*représentants*] and lieutenants of everything,[79] representations in general), we see some invariables settling. First, the number or the multiplicity, at least two, at least a series of two, one plus one, even one plus one plus one infinitely. This "one +"—its substitute may be what one calls a "what" and not a "who," even a "what" instead of a "who," where one usually hears, in the word *what*, an inert object-thing, without consciousness and without speech, without humanity, and in the word *who*, a human *existant* (person, subject, I, ego, conscience, unconscious, although the "id [*ça*]" of the unconscious could be situated under the category of the "what"). Here too, one would encounter difficulties—

79. *Translator's Note:* Aside from etymological connections (*lieu-tenant*, place-holder), a lieutenant is, according to the *OED*, "one who takes the place of another; usually, an officer civil or military who acts for a superior; a representative, substitute, vicegerent."

and this is, no doubt, the heart of the problem—in situating the living in general, for example, in the figure of what one commonly calls the animal, in this alternative of the "what" and the "who." We will return to this. For the moment, I want to underscore a warning. Since we are going very quickly, coming back to the problem of Abrahamic hospitality, the hôte and the hostage, the thought of hospitable substitution, for example, in Levinas and Massignon, the difference between the "what" and the "who" does not amount simply to the difference between the thing (what) and the person (who), the object (what) and the subject (who), the not-conscious and the not-free (what) and the conscious or the free (who), not even, above all, between the common and the proper, even between on the one hand the common, the general, the generic or the homogenous (what) and, on the other hand, the singular, the heterogeneous or the exceptional. It is of this last distinction that we must be suspicious, for one could indeed think that when Levinas and Massignon speak of substitution—what they have in mind—the terms of substitution are not common, substitutable things which enter into a homogeneous series (as if I replaced a stone or a brick by another resembling it, or even a numerical identity, three with four, a white ball by a black ball, a ballot paper by a ballot paper). When they speak of substitution, it is a matter of an absolutely singular and irreplaceable existence that, in a free act, substitutes itself for another, makes itself responsible for another, expiates for another, sacrifices itself for another outside of any homogeneous series. Substitution is not the indifferent replacement of an equal thing by an equal or identical thing (as one can, for example, imagine—ideological phantasm—that a clone can replace the individual from which it comes or another identical clone, the difference between the two being null, save the number; the difference between them being only in the number, *solo numero*, as one says). No, the Abrahamic substitution implicates [*engage*] exceptional, elected existences that make themselves or expose themselves of themselves [*s'exposent d'elles-mêmes*], in their absolute singularity and as absolutely responsible, the gift or the sacrifice of themselves. That they would be implicated [*engagées*], that they would give themselves as pledge [*comme gage*] does not mean that substitution would be a free and voluntary act. It is also a grace and a certain passivity, a reception or a visitation, but in any case, it is not the passivity of an effect to which an inert thing would be submitted. It is a matter of another passivity, anything but a mechanical reproduction or this biotechnological reproductibility of phantasmatic cloning.

To underscore this point better, in order to settle it before moving on to complicate things further, I would like to quote and comment successively on some passages by Massignon and Levinas regarding substitution (in passing we will encounter some

motifs that will matter to us and that we could problematize, such as compassion, sacrifice, fraternity, and above all, expiation. These significations of sacrifice and expiation, which cross all the Abrahamic thoughts of substitution, would suffice to make them into something else than arithmetologies of cloning series.

> "The why? We are told that the Badaliya is an illusion, since one cannot put oneself in the place of another, and that it is a lover's dream. One must answer that it is, that it is not a lover's dream, but a suffering that one receives without having chosen it and of which one conceives the grace, the hidden visitation from the bottom of the anguish of compassion which grabs us, and that it is the entrance to the Kingdom of God and that this suffering grabs us. Indeed, it appears powerless, but because it demands everything Someone who is on the Cross shares it with us, and He will transfigure it on the Last Day. This is suffering together human pain often not apparent for beings such that they have no pitiable companions such as us."[80]

Since we are talking about Massignon, and about the Abrahamo-Arabo-Islamic prayer front, I would like, during a brief digression, to answer a concern that you might share with me, I imagine, regarding the ellipsis, if not the exclusion, in any case the active silence within which this Badalya suppresses [*tait*], walls in, chokes all fraternity with those who have, after all, some right to figure in an Abrahamic prayer front—to wit, the Jews. Why are they so visibly absent from the compassion and the substitution of Massignon? Without advancing too much, but also without withdrawing, I could say that the general sociological configuration of this trajectory (Bourgeois French Catholicism, the filiation of "Huysmans, Claudel, Father de Foucauld," etc.), to which one could add other characteristics, leaves us with the feeling of some probability of anti-Semitism, one that would be vaguely sociological and atmospheric. I would have stayed with this hypothesis and with this probability, I would have kept this statistical feeling for myself had I not found under Massignon's own pen, on the significant date of March–April 1938, just before the war, therefore (and one must be very attentive here), the two following confidences, which are also two confessions, both close to expiation and both turning toward Abraham, toward a still incomplete prayer to Abraham:

> One must know how to harden the will (regarding France and the Christians of the East), back to the wall, face-to-face with danger. I am thinking less of external perils than of the internal danger—where, to thank us for having given them asylum, so may Jewish refugees are working toward our destruction. Singular destiny of this

80. Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 293.

> unsatisfied people, non-social and yet predestined (when will I conclude my third prayer of Abraham!). [March 15, 1938]

> The intrigues of Jewish refugees in France have pushed me into a crisis of anti-Semitism in which I fought with the Maritains and with Georges Cattawi. [April 15, 1938)[81]

We were saying that the substitution of which Massignon and Levinas speak, in the name of hospitality, is not the simple, objective and technological replacement of a homogenous element by another homogenous element in a series, through the effect of a simple, functional calculation, as one replaces a chessboard piece by another which comes in its place, something which a calculating machine could do, like the computer against which Kasparov was recently playing. There is no general equivalence for the substitution of which Massignon and Levinas speak, no general equivalence, no common currency, which would ensure this exchange as replacing two comparable values. And yet, and yet (Christ for Massignon, money for Levinas, the third, justice, whoever, subject in the current sense, election, etc.)

One would also have to make an additional step while in a way displacing the axiomatic certainty with which we have opposed the ethical substitution to arithmetic substitution. The criteria of exceptionality, of irreplaceable singularity, of unicity, does not seem to me sufficient.

At bottom, in every substitution, whatever its terms, the units or identities, the conceptual equivalence of the contents, the homogeneity of seriality, in every substitution, one finds singularity and exceptionality of the units of the substitutions. Even if I replace a grain of sand by a grain of sand, an hour by another, a hand by another (to recall the Kantian example of dissymmetry), each unit, each identity, each singularity is irreplaceable in its factual existence; it is even elected in a certain manner, even if this election becomes precarious or unconscious. It is therefore not the criteria of irreplaceability, of singularity and unicity (*solo numero*) which distinguishes the "ethical" substitution—let us call it that, to go quickly—from simple, arithmetic substitution. One must take into account, if one can say so, with these values of compassion, expiation and sacrifice, another deal or hand [*une autre donne*]. And with it, we will find ourselves again at the heart of the question of hospitality, of hostipitality [*hostipitalité*].

For it does not suffice that the subject of substitution (the term, the *X* subject to substitution) be unique, irreplaceable, elected to come or to offer itself in the place of the other, irreplaceable for being replaced. It is also necessary [*il faut aussi*]

81. Massignon, *L'hospitalité sacrée*, 206–207.

that this irreplaceable be aware of *itself* [*se sente*], that it be aware and be aware of itself [*qu'il sente et se sente*], and therefore that it be a self with a rapport to itself, which is not the case of every unique and irreplaceable being in its existence. This self, this ipseity, is the condition of ethical substitution as compassion, sacrifice, expiation, and so on.

The question is, therefore, once again: What is a self? An ipseity? What is it if auto-affection, auto-motion, the fact of being able to move oneself, to be moved [*s'émouvoir*] and to affect oneself, is its condition, in truth, the definition? It is the proper of what one calls the living in general, and not only of man but also of the animal, of the compassion for the animal. It is the measure of this question that we will address next time, first in a discussion, the problems of the double, cloning, genealogy and kinship, filiation and sacrifice (animal and/or human) and "thou shall not kill."

I ask you therefore to prepare this discussion.

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