OF HOSPITALITY

Anne Dufourmantelle

invites

Jacques Derrida

to respond

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Invitation

Anne Dufourmantelle

"An act of hospitality can only be poetic."
—Jacques Derrida

It is Derrida's poetic hospitality that I would like to invoke in these pages, including the difficulty of giving its due to the night—to that which, within a philosophical kind of thinking, does not belong to the order of the day, the visible, and memory. This is to try to come close to a silence around which discourse is ordered, and that a poem sometimes discovers, but always pulls itself back from unveiling in the very movement of speech or writing. If a part of night is inscribed in language, this is also language's moment of effacement.

This nocturnal side of speech could be called obsession. A forger can imitate a painter's brush stroke or a writer's style and make the difference between them imperceptible, but he will never be able to make his own their obsession, what forces them to be always going back toward that silence where the first imprints are sealed. Derrida's obsession,[1] *in this philosophical narrative woven around that fine theme of hospitality, takes its time in drawing the contours of an impossible, illicit geography of proximity. A proximity that would*

Foreigner Question: Coming from Abroad / from the Foreigner

Question d'étranger: venue de l'étranger
Fourth seminar (January 10, 1996)

Jacques Derrida

Isn't the question of the foreigner [*l'étranger*] a foreigner's question? Coming from the foreigner, from abroad [*l'étranger*]?

Before saying *the* question of the foreigner, perhaps we should also specify: question *of* the foreigner. How should we understand this difference of accent?

There is, we were saying, a question of the foreigner. It is urgent to embark on it—as such.

Of course. But before being a question to be dealt with, before designating a concept, a theme, a problem, a program, the question of the foreigner is a question *of* the foreigner, addressed *to* the foreigner. As though the foreigner were first of all *the one who* puts the first question or *the one to whom* you address the first question. As though the foreigner were being-in-question, the very question of being-in-question, the question-being or being-in-question of the question. But also the one who, putting the first question, puts me in question. One thinks of the

When Derrida reads Sophocles, Joyce, Kant, Heidegger, Celan, Levinas, Blanchot, or Kafka, he not only accompanies their texts, giving them a second echo, he "obsesses" them with the theme he is working on, and which thus acts like a photographic developer. Witness that moment where, in a seminar commentary on the final scenes of Oedipus at Colonus *based on the idea of the hospitality given to death and the dead, Derrida stresses its absolute contemporaneity, while the necessity of that strange "visitation" of Sophocles' tragedy is imposed on his listeners. The summons he addresses to*

Theaetetus then asks. The Foreigner: "It is that in order to defend ourselves, we will necessarily have to put to the test the thesis (*logon*) of our father Parmenides and, forcibly, establish that non-being somehow is, and that being, in its turn, in a certain way is not."

This is the fearful question, the revolutionary hypothesis of the Foreigner. He defends himself against the accusation of parricide by denial. He would not dream of defending himself against it if he did not feel deep down that really he is one, a parricide, virtually a parricide, and that to say "non-being is" remains a challenge to Parmenides' paternal logic, a challenge coming from the foreigner. Like any parricide, this one takes place in the family: a foreigner can be a parricide only when he is in some sense within the family. In a minute we will recover some implications of this family scene and this generational difference, indicated by every allusion to the father. Theaetetus's response here is weakened by translation. It registers well the truly polemical, even bellicose character of what is more than a debate ("debate" is the conventional translation for Theaetetus's response) when he says *Phainetai to toiouton diamacheteon en tois logois*: it is obvious, it appears obvious, it certainly seems that that is where one has to fight, *diamacheteon*, engage in a heated combat, *or* that is where one has to carry war into *logoi*, into arguments, into discourses, into the *logos*; and not, as it is peacefully, pacifically put in the Dies translation: "There, obviously, is where we must have the debate" (241d). No, more seriously: "It does seem that that is where there must be armed war, or combat, in discourses or in arguments." The

dead or living authors to roam around with him on the edges of a theme doesn't make him turn his back on "the matters of urgency that assail us at this end-of-millennium," as he puts it himself. On the contrary, he supports confronting them.

There is in this seminar a precision that can be heard. And that comes, I think, from the intimate agreement of thought and speech—their rhythmic agreement—and from the thematic analysis which is the obsession of philosophical reflection; but also from Derrida's taking it to the limit when he works over a

war internal to the *logos*, that is the foreigner's question, the double question, the altercation of father and parricide. It is also the place where the question of the foreigner as a question of hospitality is articulated with the question of being. We know that a reference to the *Sophist* opens [Heidegger's] *Sein und Zeit* as its epigraph.

We ought to reconstitute practically the whole context, if that were possible, and at any rate reread what follows, the sequence that links to the Foreigner's reply. It evokes at once *blindness and madness*, a strange alliance of blindness with madness.

Blindness first of all. To Theaetetus's response ("It seems obvious, *phainetai*, that we must have a war around that"), the Foreigner replies in his turn, to raise the stakes: "It is obvious, *even to a blind person*." He says it in the form of a rhetorical question; it is the simulacrum of a question: "How would this not be obvious and, as one says, obvious even to a blind person, *kai to legomenon dè touto tuphlō*?"

Now for *madness*. The Xenos says he is too weak for this kind of combat, for the refutation of the paternal thesis, in view of a possible parricide; he does not have the necessary confidence in himself. How indeed could he have, a parricide Foreigner, so a *foreign son?* Let me insist on the blinding and maddening obviousness: a "foreign *son*," for a parricide can only be a son. In truth, with the question he is getting ready to put, on the being of non-being, the Foreigner fears that he will be treated as mad (*manikos*). He is afraid of being taken for a son-foreigner-madman: "I am therefore fearful that what I have said may give you the opportunity of looking on me as someone deranged," says the translation

concept up to the point of its turning back toward the enigma that bears it.

That is why it seemed important to us to convey a fragment of the seminars without altering anything. In them you hear that singular rhythm of Derrida's spoken reflecting; so different from the writing, of which he is a patient artisan. And we thought it feasible to single out two seminars because the whole problematic of hospitality was already present in that "enclave" (as a work is included in each of its fragments), as was also the spacing of measured violence and friend-

(literally, mad, *manikos*, a nutter, a maniac), "who is upside down all over (*para poda metaballōn emautōn anō kai katō*), a crazy person who reverses everything from head to toe, from top to bottom, who puts all his feet on his head, inside out, who walks on his head)."

The Foreigner carries and puts the fearful question, he sees or foresees himself, he knows he is already put into question by the paternal and reasonable authority of the *logos*. The paternal authority of the *logos* gets ready to disarm him, to treat him as mad, and this at the very moment when his question, the question *of* the Foreigner, only seems to contest in order then to remind people of what ought to be obvious even to the blind!

That the Foreigner here figures, virtually, a parricide son, both blind and super-seeing, seeing in the blind place of the blind person—here is something that is not foreign to a certain Oedipus we will see crossing the border in a moment. For it will be a question of the arrival of Oedipus, this will be *the* question, from the arrival of this blind Foreigner leaning on Antigone—who sees for him. It is Oedipus, upon his arrival in the city, whom we will summon to appear when the time comes.

In the meantime, to stay a little bit longer with Plato, we could also have reread the *Statesman*. There again a Foreigner takes the initiative with the fearful, even intolerable question. The Foreigner is moreover warmly welcomed, apparently, he is given asylum, he has the right to hospitality; Socrates' first words, from the first sentence of the dialogue, are to thank Theodorus for having introduced him to Theaetetus, certainly, but also, at the same time, the

ship that gives this thinking its uniqueness, its particular genius.

Derrida has himself spoken of the difficulty of taking account of the open speech of the seminar as it relates to hospitality. "What I don't want to say or cannot, the unsaid, the forbidden, what is passed over in silence, what is separated off . . . —all these should be interpreted," he stressed. "In these regions we rediscover the open question of the relationship between hospitality and the question, in other words of a hospitality beginning with the name, the question of the name, or

Foreigner ("*hama kai tes tou xenou*"). And the question that the Foreigner will address to them to open this great debate, which will also be a great combat, is nothing less than the question of the statesman, of man as a political being. Better, the question of the political person, of the statesman, *after* the question of the sophist. For the dialogue the *Statesman* (*Politicos*) would come, in time and in logic, in the chrono-logic of Plato's oeuvre and discourse, after the *Sophist*. Now the Foreigner's leading question in the *Statesman*, after the question of the sophist, is just that—the question of the statesman. The Xenos says (258b): "Well then, after the sophist, it's the statesman (the political man, *ton politikon andra*) that we are going to have to seek out (*diazètein*). So tell me, should we classify him among those who know (*tōn epistemonōn*)?" Yes, replies the young Socrates, the other Socrates. The Foreigner concludes from this that it is therefore necessary to begin by distinguishing between forms of knowlege as we were doing, he says, when we studied the previous character, in other words the sophist.

Sometimes the foreigner is Socrates himself, Socrates the disturbing man of question and irony (which is to say, of question, another meaning of the word "irony"), the man of the midwifely question. Socrates himself has the characteristics of the foreigner, he represents, he figures the foreigner, he *plays* the foreigner he is not. In particular he does it in what is for us an extremely interesting scene—of which Henri Joly reminds us at the start of the fine posthumous book I recommended you read: *La question des étrangers* [*The Question of Foreigners*] (Paris: Vrin, 1992).

else opening up without question. . . ." And also: "One could dream about what would be the lesson of someone who didn't have the keys to his own knowledge, who didn't arrogate it to himself. He would give place to the place, leaving the keys with the other to unlock the words from their enclosure."

It is this "giving place to the place" that, I think, is the promise kept by these words. They also make us understand the question of place as being a fundamental question, founding the history of our culture and unthought in it. It would be consenting to exile, in other

In *The Apology of Socrates* (17d), at the very beginning of his defense, Socrates addresses his fellow citizens and Athenian judges. He defends himself against the accusation of being a kind of sophist or skillful speaker. He announces that he is going to say what is right and true, certainly, against the liars who are accusing him, but without rhetorical elegance, without flowery use of language. He declares that he is "foreign" to the language of the courts, to the tribune of the tribunals: he doesn't know how to speak this courtroom language, this legal rhetoric of accusation, defense, and pleading; he doesn't have the skill, he is *like* a foreigner. (Among the serious problems we are dealing with here is that of the foreigner who, inept at speaking the language, always risks being without defense before the law of the country that welcomes or expels him; the foreigner is first of all foreign to the legal language in which the duty of hospitality is formulated, the right to asylum, its limits, norms, policing, etc. He has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own, the one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the State, the father, etc. This personage imposes on him translation into their own language, and that's the first act of violence. That is where the question of hospitality begins: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country? If he was already speaking our language, with all that that implies, if we already shared everything that is shared with a language, would the foreigner still be a for-

words, to being in a relationship to place, to the dwelling, that is both native (I would say almost maternal), and yet in transit, if thinking occurred to the human. Derrida's meditations on burial, the name, memory, the madness that inhabits language, exile and the threshold, are so many signs addressed to this question of place, inviting the subject to recognize that he is first of all a guest.

eigner and could we speak of asylum or hospitality in regard to him? This is the paradox that we are going to see become clearer.)

What does Socrates say at the moment when, let's not forget it, he is playing for his life and is soon going to lose it in this game? What does he say in presenting himself as *like* a foreigner, at once *as though* he were a foreigner (as a fiction) and *inasmuch as* in effect he does become the foreigner by language (a condition that he is even going to lay claim to, whatever he says about it, by a skillful courtroom denial), a foreigner accused in a language he says he doesn't speak, a defendant required to justify himself, in the language of the other, before the law and the judges of the city? He thus addresses his fellow citizens, the Athenian judges, whom he sometimes calls "Athenians." They speak as (or like) judges, the citizens who speak in the name of their citizenship. Socrates turns the situation on its head: he asks them to treat him like a foreigner for whom marks of respect can be demanded, a foreigner because of his age and a foreigner because of his language, the only language he is used to; it is either that of philosophy, or everyday language, popular language (as opposed to the clever language of the judges or of sophistry, of rhetoric and juridical jargon):

> No, what you will hear will be a straightforward speech in the first words that occur to me, confident as I am of the justice of my cause, and I do not want any of you to expect anything different. It would hardly be suitable, gentlemen, for a man of my age to address you in the artificial language of a schoolboy orator. One thing, however, I do most earnestly beg and entreat of you. If you

Movements of speaking

It is difficult to hear something of the rightness of a way of speaking without taking the measure of its step, which is to say its rhythm, and the time necessary to say it. "The how of truth is precisely truth," wrote Kierkegaard.[3] *I will thus concentrate on listening to the particular "how" of Derrida's thinking, rather than on the sterile exercize of commentary. "The philosopher needs a double hearing," insisted Nietzsche, "in the way*

hear me defending myself in the same language which it has been my habit to use, both in the market square next to the stalls—where many of you have heard me—and elsewhere, do not be surprised, and do not interrupt. Let me remind you of my position. This is my first appearance in a court of law, at the age of seventy, and so I am a complete foreigner to the language of this place [a complete foreigner is *atechnōs oun xenos echo tes enthade lexeos*: *atechnōs*, with an omega, means "simply, completely, absolutely," and this is why it is correct to translate it as "a complete foreigner"; but that means "simply, absolutely, completely" because it means first of all "simply, without artifice, without *techne*, very close to *atechnos*, with a short *o*, which does mean, precisely, inexperienced, without technique, inept, without savoir-faire: I am simply foreign, purely and simply a foreigner with no aptitude, without recourse or resources]. Now if I were really a foreigner [*ei tō onti xenos etugkanon ōn*], you would naturally excuse me if I spoke in the accent and dialect in which I had been brought up [the accent is *phōnè*; the dialect or idiolect is *tropos*, the trope, the turning, the turns of rhetoric that suit an idiom; in short, ways of speaking].[1]

This passage teaches us something else. Joly reminds us of it, as does Benveniste, whom I'll be quoting in a moment: at Athens, the foreigner had some rights. He saw he had a recognized right of access to the courts, since Socrates assumes it: if I were a foreigner, here in the court, he says, you would tolerate not only my accent, my voice, my elocution, but the turns of phrase in my spontaneous, original, idiomatic rhetoric. There is thus a foreigners' right, a right of hospitality for foreigners at Athens. What is the subtlety of Socratic rhetoric, of Socrates the Athenian's plea? It consists of complaining at not even being treated as a foreigner: if

that one might have the gift of second sight, in other words the most subtle of ears." What Nietzsche required for his work was a form of attention sensitive to the body of the words. "O man, you higher man, take care! This speech is for delicate ears, for your ears: What does the deep midnight declare?"[4] *We must learn to perceive what is almost inaudible. Added Nietzsche, "For what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear. Now let us imagine an extreme case . . . the first language for a new series of experiences. In that case, sim-*

I were foreign, you would accept with more tolerance that I don't speak as you do, that I have my own idiom, my way of speaking that is so far from being technical, so far from juridical, a way that is at once more popular and more philosophical. That the foreigner, the *xenos*, is not simply the absolute other, the barbarian, the savage absolutely excluded and heterogeneous—this is Benveniste's point as well, same article as before, when he starts on Greek institutions, after the generalities and the paradoxical filiation of *hostis*, which we have said a lot about in the last few seminars. Following the logic of this argument we were discussing last time on the subject of the reciprocity and equality of "for" in exchange (I won't go back over it). Benveniste emphasizes that "the same institution exists in the Greek world under another name: *xenos* indicates relations of the same type between men linked by a pact which implies precise obligations also extending to their descendants."[2]

This last point—we take its measure right away—is critical. This pact, this contract of hospitality that links *to* the foreigner and which *reciprocally* links the foreigner, it's a question of knowing whether it counts beyond the individual and if it also extends to the family, to the generation, to the genealogy. It is not, here, although the things are connected, a question of the classical problem of the right to nationality or citizenship as a *birth*right—in some places linked to the land and in others to blood. It is not only a question of the link between birth and nationality; it is not only a question of the citizenship offered to someone who had none previously, but of the right granted to the foreigner as such, to

ply nothing will be heard, but there will be the acoustic illusion that where nothing is heard, nothing is there."[5]

The first impression you draw from listening to the seminar is of hearing a musical score being played that makes the very movement of thinking audible. It is as if we were the audience for the thinking of a thought at the very moment of its utterance. Someone who philosophizes out loud in this way does not unwind a smooth, univocal thread; he shows the tears in it. He leaves

the foreigner remaining a foreigner, and to his or her relatives, to the family, to the descendants.

This familial or genealogical right applying to more than one generation enables us to think about how this is not, basically, a question of the extension of the right or the "pact" (to use Benveniste's term; he wants to insist on the reciprocity of the commitment: the foreigner doesn't only have a right, he or she also has, reciprocally, obligations, as is often recalled, whenever there is a wish to reproach him for bad behavior); it is not a question of a straightforward extension of an individual right, of opening out to the family and subsequent generations a right in the first place granted to the individual. No, that reflects, that lets us reflect upon the fact that, from the outset, the right to hospitality commits a household, a line of descent, a family, a familial or ethnic group receiving a familial or ethnic group. Precisely because it is inscribed in a right, a custom, an *ethos* and a *Sittlichkeit*, this objective morality that we were speaking about last time presupposes the social and familial status of the contracting parties, that it is possible for them to be called by their names, to have names, to be subjects in law, to be questioned and liable, to have crimes imputed to them, to be held responsible, to be equipped with nameable identities, and proper names. A proper name is never purely individual.

If we wanted to pause for a moment on this significant fact, we would have to note once again a paradox or a contradiction: this right to hospitality offered to a foreigner "as a family," represented and protected by his or her family name, is at once what makes hospitality possible, or the hospitable rela-

room for astonishment, for what breaks reflection in the seizure of fear.

Why fear? The word seems too violent just to say "what astonishes." And yet that is certainly what it's about, not a fear produced by the devastating or dominating effect of the speech itself, but that space of the unknowable that the speech apprehends and before which it stops us short for a moment, scared. Just as, in a musical score, the markings for silences make the melodic line enter into dialogue with the silence that sustains it, so philosophical speech espouses the precise

tionship to the foreigner possible, but by the same token what limits and prohibits it. Because hospitality, in this situation, is not offered to an anonymous new arrival and someone who has neither name, nor patronym, nor family, nor social status, and who is therefore treated not as a foreigner but as another barbarian. We have alluded to this: the difference, one of the subtle and sometimes ungraspable differences between the foreigner and the absolute other is that the latter cannot have a name or a family name; the absolute or unconditional hospitality I would like to offer him or her presupposes a break with hospitality in the ordinary sense, with conditional hospitality, with the right to or pact of hospitality. In saying this, once more, we are taking account of an irreducible pervertibility. The law of hospitality, the express law that governs the general concept of hospitality, appears as a paradoxical law, pervertible or perverting. It seems to dictate that absolute hospitality should break with the law of hospitality as right or duty, with the "pact" of hospitality. To put it in different terms, absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. The law of absolute hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights. Just hospitality breaks with hospitality by right; not that it condemns or is opposed to it, and

logic of reasoning, all the better, at the right moment, to treat its obviousness harshly. It is customary to call this moment "aporia": the undecidable crossing of the ways.

When we enter an unknown place, the emotion experienced is almost always that of an indefinable anxiety. There then begins the slow work of taming the unknown, and gradually the unease fades away. A new familiarity succeeds the fear provoked in us by the irruption of the "wholly other." If the body's most archaic instinctual reactions are caught up in an encounter

it can on the contrary set and maintain it in a perpetual progressive movement; but it is as strangely heterogeneous to it as justice is heterogeneous to the law to which it is yet so close, from which in truth it is indissociable.

Now the foreigner, the *xenos* of whom Socrates says "him at least you would respect, you would tolerate his accent and his idiom," or the one of whom Benveniste says that he enters into a pact, this foreigner who has the right to hospitality in the cosmopolitan tradition which will find its most powerful form in Kant and the text we have read and reread [*Perpetual Peace*], this foreigner, then, is someone with whom, to receive him, you begin by asking his name; you enjoin him to state and to guarantee his identity, as you would a witness before a court. This is someone to whom you put a question and address a demand, the first demand, the minimal demand being: "What is your name?" or then "In telling me what your name is, in responding to this request, you are responding on your own behalf, you are responsible before the law and before your hosts, you are a subject in law."

That, following one of the directions it takes, is the question of the foreigner as the question of the question. Does hospitality consist in interrogating the new arrival? Does it begin with the question addressed to the newcomer (which seems very human and sometimes loving, assuming that hospitality should be linked to love—an enigma that we will leave in reserve for the moment): what is your name? tell me your name, what should I call you, I who am calling on you, I who want to call you by your name? What am I going to call you? It is also what

with what it does not immediately recognize in the real, how could thought really claim to apprehend the other, the wholly other, without astonishment? Thought is in essence a force of mastery. It is continually bringing the unknown back to the known, breaking up its mystery to possess it, shed light on it. Name it.

So what happens when our eyes halt on the words: "hospitality, proximity, enclave, hate, foreigner . . ."? Even if for an instant we find some "elsewhere" in them, they are soon assimilated to a landscape marked by the seal of our habitus *of thinking and our memory.*

we sometimes tenderly ask children and those we love. Or else does hospitality begin with the unquestioning welcome, in a double effacement, the effacement of the question *and* the name? Is it more just and more loving to question or not to question? to call by the name or without the name? to give or to learn a name already given? Does one give hospitality to a subject? to an identifiable subject? to a subject identifiable by name? to a legal subject? Or is hospitality *rendered*, is it *given* to the other before they are identified, even before they are (posited as or supposed to be) a subject, legal subject and subject nameable by their family name, etc.?

The question of hospitality is thus also the question of the question; but by the same token the question of the subject and the name as hypothesis of descent.

When Benveniste wants to define the *xenos*, there is nothing fortuitous in his beginning from the *xenia*. He inscribes the *xenos* in the *xenia*, which is to say in the pact, in the contract or collective alliance of that name. Basically, there is no *xenos*, there is no foreigner before or outside the *xenia*, this pact or exchange with a group or, to be more precise, with a line of descent. Herodotus said that Polycrates had concluded a *xenia* (pact) with Amasis and that they sent each other presents: *xenien sunethèkato* (verb for pact: they concluded, like a pact, a *xenia*) *pempōn dōra kai dechomenos alla par'ekeivou*, in sending and receiving gifts, reciprocally, from each other. If we reread Benveniste we would find other examples of the same type. To have done with this epigraph, let us just recall a Socratic commonplace. He too occupies, elsewhere, that position of foreigner, and in-

It is likely that at some moments the philosophical use of irony, from Socrates to Kierkegaard, has caused anxiety to thinking. But let us return to the fear provoked by our incursion into an unknown place whose strangeness freezes us before we get used to it stage by stage. Is the anguish provoked enough to keep us alive, in other words to prevent this process of growing accustomed? Is it really possible to speak of alterity, whether only spoken or perceived, without thinking being put to the test for an instant by this act? Ordinarily, it is not put to the test, not the least little bit. It regally thinks

deed in a strange scene of the question, of the inverted question-response, if I can put it like that. Far from himself interrogating or appealing to the law and rights of the city, he is himself questioned, apostrophized by the Laws. They address themselves to him to ask him questions, but false questions, simulated questions, "rhetorical questions." Trick questions. All he can reply is what the Laws, in their prosopopeia, wish and expect him to reply. It is the famous Prosopopeia of the Laws in the *Crito*, which you should read closely for yourselves; I am just going to give a sense of the attack, as it were. Socrates is still, this time after being condemned to death, pretending to behave as a foreigner, ready to leave the city without authorization, to escape Athens by challenging the Laws of the city. These then speak to him to put those catch questions, those impossible questions.

At the start of this passage is the entrance of the Laws, *hoi nomoi*. Entrance staged by Socrates, by Plato's Socrates who thus speaks across the face of the Laws, across the voice of their prosopopeia. Prosopopeia, in other words, the face, the mask, and first of all the voice that speaks across this mask, a *persona*, a voice without a look (in a moment this will be the blind man's portrait and the voice of Oedipus, the foreigner addressing foreigners at the moment when, leaning on Antigone, he arrives in Colonus):

SOCRATES: Look at it like this. Suppose that while we were preparing to run away from here—or however one should describe it—the laws and state of Athens were to come and confront us and ask this question: "Now, Socrates, what are you proposing to do? Can you deny

"the other" (the guest), and moves on to examine another question. Yet sometimes, and Levinas has spoken so well about this, it lets itself lose its bearings.

One of the names for this being at a loss, in philosophy, is astonishment. But astonishment turns us toward that moment when fear yields to being set on the path of familiarity, discovering other fords along the way, other marks to become accustomed to.

Astonishment is the precise name for what Derrida's speaking calls forth in us. It forces us finally to think, and no longer to imagine that we are thinking. I add

that by this act which you are contemplating you intend, so far as you have the power, to destroy us, the laws, and the whole state as well? Do you think that a state can exist and not be turned upside down, if the legal judgments which are pronounced in it have no force but are nullified and destroyed by private persons?" How shall we answer this question, Crito, and others like it? There is much that could be said, especially by a professional advocate, to protest against the invalidation of this law which enacts that judgments once pronounced shall be binding. Shall we say, "Yes, I do intend to destroy the laws, because the state wronged me by passing an incorrect judgment at my trial?" Is this to be our answer, or what?

CRITO: Definitely, Socrates.

SOCRATES: But what if the Laws say: "Socrates, is that what was agreed between us and you, or was it to abide by whatever judgments the state made?"

And if we expressed surprise at such language, they would probably say, "Never mind our language, Socrates, but answer our questions; after all, you are used to the question and answer approach. Now then, what charge are you bringing against us and the state, to be trying to destroy us? Did we not give you life in the first place? Was it not through us that your father married your mother and became your parent? Tell us, is there something you find wrong with those of us laws that deal with marriages?"

"No, there isn't," I would say.

"Well, is there anything you find wrong with the laws that deal with children's upbringing and education, such as you had yourself? Or haven't they been right in their orders, those of us laws which were instituted for this end, for requiring your father to give you a cultural and physical education?"[3]

So Socrates appears in the guise of a foreigner on the outskirts of Athens. He thinks of escaping once he

that it also takes the risk of the other in the play of the seminar. It accepts the risk of being wrongly understood, wrongly interpreted, sanctified, demonized, or else interrupted point-blank, and thus the risk that the discourse can be driven off its course, to inaugurate a dialogue where nothing was planned. I would like to

has been condemned to death but gives up the idea of leaving the city when the Laws address him to interrogate him, really to put false questions to him. With this figure of the foreigner—both to liken them by analogy and to distinguish them, if not to contrast them—we could compare the figure of Oedipus, the outlaw (*anomon*). Not at the moment of departure, the moment when he separates off, leaves or pretends to leave the city, like Socrates, but at the moment when he enters Colonus. We will probably come back to this story at some length; but still by way of epigraph and to leave things in suspense, here are two moments where Oedipus the foreigner, the *xenos*, addresses the inhabitants of this country like foreigners. The foreigner speaks to foreigners, that is what he calls them. The first moment, then, is the arrival of the arrival, Oedipus. A foreigner prepares to speak to the foreigner. Without knowledge. Without the knowledge, the knowledge of the place, and the knowledge of the name of the place: where he is, where he is going. Between the profane and the sacred, the human or the divine. Isn't this always the situation of the absolute arrival? Foreigner's request to foreigner:

OEDIPUS: Child of a blind old man, Antigone—where have we come to now? Whose city is this? Who today will receive the wandering Oedipus with a little hospitality? . . . But if, my child, you see a place to sit, whether on ordinary or sacred ground, stop me and set me down there, so that we can find out where we are. We have come here as foreigners to learn from the natives and do what they say. . . .

Sit me down there, then, and look after the blind man. . . .

salute the audacity that leads a philosophical utterance to make us desert those dwellings of the mind where reason lives as master, when for an instant astonishment makes reason a guest.

Scanning of thought around the night
which holds it. Figures of obsession.

What is this "night" from whose depths a philosophical utterance is outlined? In his very fine book

ANTIGONE: Shall I go now and ask what place it is?

OEDIPUS: Yes, child, as long as it is habitable.

ANTIGONE: It is even inhabited. But I think there is no need. I can see a man right here close to us. . . . So say what you think is a good idea, for here he is.

OEDIPUS: Stranger, hearing from this girl who sees for both of us that you have luckily turned up as a messenger to tell us what we are unclear about. . . .

STRANGER: Before you ask me anything else, get up from that seat. You are on land that is not meant for walking on.

OEDIPUS: What land is it? Is it dedicated to one of the gods, then?

STRANGER: It must not be sat on or dwelt on. It belongs to the goddesses of fear, the daughters of Earth and Darkness.[4]

These are the Eumenides, "who see everything, so the local people will tell you." It will not be long before Oedipus invokes the "respite" promised by Phoebus from all his misfortunes, at the time when, "in a last country," he would find himself offered "shelter and hospitality" from the fearful goddesses. This foreign guest appears like a ghost. He asks pity for the "worthless phantom of the one who was Oedipus." And when the chorus calls him a "wanderer" who is "not a native," Oedipus begs that, even though he is a phantom, he not be taken for an "outlaw" (*anomon*).[5]

The second moment we would choose to select by way of epigraph would be the moment of the chorus. At that point it is not the Laws who speak,

The Heretical Essays, *published secretly in Prague, Jan Patočka put night, which should here be understood as an ontological figure, in opposition to the values of the day. "Man is meant to let grow in him what provokes anxiety, what is unreconciled, what is enigmatic, what ordinary life turns away from so as to get to the present agenda."*[6] *Patočka interpreted the crisis of the modern world and the decline of Europe in terms of a totalitarianism of everyday knowledge. To reason on the basis of the values of the day is to be prompted by the wish to define and subjugate the real solely in order to attain a*

as they do when they address Socrates. The chorus apostrophizes Oedipus. It addresses the foreigner who bears a terrible secret. What he knows threatens to place him outside the law, situates him outside the law in advance: Oedipus who has committed incest and parricide, a well-known scene that we should have to read from another angle. What angle? What is an angle, here, in what is no longer simply a triangle? The angle from which you perceive this, a strange accusation, a counter-accusation, an indictment? To vindicate himself, in a way to plead his case, Oedipus does accuse, he accuses without accusing anyone, he accuses something rather than someone. In fact he denounces the figure of a city, Thebes. The guilty one is Thebes. It is Thebes which, without knowing it, unconcious Thebes, the city-unconscious, the unconscious at the heart of the town, the *polis*, the political unconscious (this is why the accusation incriminates without incriminating: how could you put on trial an unconscious or a city, where neither of the two could answer for their acts?)—it is Thebes, then, which, unawares, bears the responsibility for the crime. The unconscious (of) Thebes would be rendered *unforgivably* guilty of Oedipus's incest, parricide, and being-outside-the-law.

How can the unforgivable be forgiven? But what else can be forgiven?

It is the law of the city that, without wishing or knowing it, drove him to crime, to incest and parricide: this law must have produced the outside-the-law. There is nothing surprising in that, ultimately. This scene of parricide is regularly to be found wherever there is a question of foreignness and hospital-

quantifiable knowledge pledged to technological values. If we separate darkness from clarity, we will suffer its ravages, Patočka predicted; what we should rather be doing is taking our attention right up to the edge of this darkness. Interpreting clarity in terms of its belonging to night as well is also, I think, one of the paths that Derrida's reflections have opened up.

Since those wanderers called Oedipus and Antigone make an appearance in the course of the seminar, I would like to return for a moment to Patočka's reading of Antigone.[7]

ity, as soon as the host, the one receiving, also commands. According to the chain we are now familiar with (*hosti-pet-s*, *potis*, *potest*, *ipse*, etc.), the sovereignty of power, the host's *potestas* and possession, remain those of the *paterfamilias*, the head of the house, the *maître de céans*, as Klossowski calls him. And the same word is translated in two ways, sometimes by *étranger* [stranger or foreigner], sometimes by *hôte* [host]. That is understandable, no doubt. It reminds us of or intimates the necessity of a passage, in culture, between the two meanings of the word *xenos*, but strictly speaking it remains hard to justify.

CHORUS: It is dreadful, stranger, to reawaken a bad thing long laid to rest. All the same I am longing to know. . . .

OEDIPUS: What is this?

CHORUS: . . . about that awful pain, irresistibly appearing, that you became embroiled in.

OEDIPUS: In the name of your hospitality (*xenias*), don't ruthlessly open up what I suffered.

CHORUS: There is a widespread and constant rumor, and I ask, stranger (*xein'*), to hear it truly told. . . .

OEDIPUS: I suffered the worst things, strangers, I endured them even willingly, let the gods be witness. But none of these things were my own choice. . . . By a sinful union the city bound me, in my ignorance, to the ruins caused by my marriage.

CHORUS: Did you really, as I have heard, go into a marriage bed that got a bad name from your mother?

OEDIPUS: Oh! It is death to me to hear that, stranger. These two girls of mine . . . these two children, two misfortunes . . . were born like me from the same mother's labor.

The mythical character in Sophocles' Antigone *captivates us because she keeps herself close to the origins. "She is one of those who love, not one of those who hate," wrote Patočka, but this love is not Christlike. It signifies "love as foreign to the human condition, deriving from the portion of night which is the portion of the gods."*[8] *In the confrontation between Creon and Antigone, Patočka shows that the force of law represented by Creon is really a response to fear, for it is "on fear that the sphere of day depends, the State as he conceives it." This fear under its final mask is the fear of*

CHORUS: So they are both your offspring. . . .

OEDIPUS: And also their father's sisters. . . .

CHORUS: You did. . . .

OEDIPUS: I did not do. . . . I received a gift from the city when I had done it a favor that, miserable one, I should never have accepted.

CHORUS: And then, unhappy one? You murdered. . . .

OEDIPUS: What are you saying? What do you want to know?

CHORUS: . . . your father? . . . You killed.

OEDIPUS: I did kill, but . . . there is some justice on my side. . . . I was driven mad by a destructive power when I murdered and destroyed, but in law I am innocent. It was in ignorance that I came to this.[6]

When he arrives, Theseus takes pity on the blind man. He has not forgotten, he says, that he too "grew up as a foreigner" (562) and put his life at risk "in a foreign land" (563). Like the oath to come, the exchange makes an alliance between two foreigners.

After this long epigraph, let us begin again. Although it is intimately associated with, and although it remains familiarly linked to, the notion of the *hostis* as host or as enemy (an ambivalence that we have been meditating or premeditating at length up to this point), we had not yet broached the strange notion of "foreigner" for itself.

What does "foreigner" mean? Who is foreign? Who is the foreign man, who is the foreign woman? What is meant by "going abroad," "coming from abroad"? We had merely stressed that, if at least we have to give it a determinate scope, a normal usage,

death. "Thus Creon himself testifies, without realizing it, to his dependence in relation to the other, in relation to the law of Night. And as Antigone embodies the law, the portion of night, it is pointless to threaten her with death."[9] *Here Patočka is writing against what has associated our consciousness with the monopolizing of a meaning it thought it could make use of. "Sophocles'* Antigone *represents the reminder of a tiny hope, a reminder that Creon's way of thinking has completely hidden in us: the fact that man does not belong to himself, that his meaning is not Meaning, that*

as it is used most often, *sensu stricto*, when the context does not specify it more (the normal meaning is almost always the most "narrow" meaning, obviously), *étranger* is understood on the basis of the cirmcumscribed field of *ethos* or ethics, of habitat or time spent as *ethos*, of *Sittlichkeit*, of objective morality, especially in the three instances determined by law and Hegel's philosophy of law: the *family*, *bourgeois* or *civil society*, and the *State* (or the nation-state). We had elaborated and interrogated these limits at length, and we asked ourselves a certain number of questions—stemming from but also on the subject of interpretations of Benveniste, especially based on the two Latin derivations: the foreigner (*hostis*) welcomed as guest or as enemy. Hospitality, hostility, *hostpitality*. As always, the Benveniste readings had seemed to us as valuable as they were problematic—let's not go back to that here.

Today, and on that basis, let us broach more directly the meaning of *étranger*, this time from the "Greek world" (to presuppose provisionally its unity or self-identity), but always by doing our best, since it isn't an easy thing, to multiply the two-way journeys, a to-and-fro between the matters of urgency that assail us at this end-of-millennium, and the tradition from which we receive the concepts, the vocabulary, the axioms that are elementary and presumed natural or untouchable. It is often techno-political-scientific mutation that obliges us to deconstruct; really, such mutation itself deconstructs what are claimed as these naturally obvious things or these untouchable axioms. For instance, from the Latin or Greek tradition that we have just mentioned.

human meaning comes to an end as soon as one reaches the shore of Night, and that Night is not a nothingness, but belongs to what 'is' in the proper sense of the term."[10]

Night, for Patočka, is "the opening onto what disturbs." It asks us to go through the experience of the loss of meaning, an experience from which flows the authenticity of philosophical thinking. When Derrida refers to Patočka's reflections on the experience of the front in World War I, what he is laying hold of is the furthest edge of the concept of hospitality.[11] *In the ex-*

So we were trying, the other day, to translate into our hospitality problematic what it is that turns up, what comes our way by e-mail or the Internet. Among the innumerable signs of mutation that accompany the development of e-mail and the Internet—I mean everything that these names stand for—let us first privilege those that completely transform the structure of so-called public space. We have just been speaking about the *xenos* and *xenia* in Greece, and about Oedipus and Antigone as *xenoi* addressing *xenoi* who speak to them, in return, reciprocally, as *xenoi*—and we'll be doing so again, later. But how could Sophocles' semantics, for example, have held up in a public space structured by the telephone, the fax, e-mail, and the Internet, by all those other prosthetic apparatuses of television and telephonic blindness? What we were wondering the other day was what the intervention of a State (it happened the other day in Germany) or a State chorus seeking to ban or censure so-called "pornographic" communications on an Internet site can mean nowadays. Not Klossowski's *Lois de l'hospitalité* [*Laws of Hospitality*], but some texts and images distributed on the Internet. The German government banned two hundred pornographic sites (*Le canard enchaîné* points out in this connection that some censors who detected the pornographic connotations of the word "breast" blocked access to a forum where patients with breast cancer were innocently in dialogue). Let me not take sides right now on the validity of these forms of censorship and their principles, but rather analyze, as a beginning, the facts of a problem. Nowadays, a reflection on hospitality presupposes, among other things, the possibility of a rigorous delimitation of

perience of the front, writes the Czech philosopher, the adversary is no longer the same, he is "our accomplice in the disturbance of the day. So it is here that the abyssal domain of prayer for the enemy opens up: the solidarity of the shaken."[12] *To die so that a truth of the questioning of meaning may survive, and not to give that act the arrogance of a response, is to render to night its reality; the opposite of an abdication.*

It is in this "nocturnal" sense that I would like to speak of the relation between reason and obsession: in other words, "the opening onto what disturbs."

thresholds or frontiers: between the familial and the non-familial, between the foreign and the non-foreign, the citizen and the non-citizen, but first of all between the private and the public, private and public law, etc. In principle, private mail in the classic form (the letter, the postcard, etc.) has to circulate without control within a country or from one country to another. It must be neither read nor intercepted. The same is true, in principle, for the phone, the fax, e-mail, and naturally for the Internet. Censorship, telephone tapping, interceptions, in principle represent either crimes or acts authorized only for reasons of State, of a State responsible for the integrity of the territory, for sovereignty, for security and national defense. So what happens when a State intervenes not only for surveillance but to ban private communications, on the pretext that they are pornographic, which, up to now, hasn't been a danger to public security or the integrity of national territory? I assume, without knowing enough about it, that the argument by which this state intervention claims to be justified is the allegation that the space of the Internet is in fact not private but public, and above all has a public accessibility (nationally or internationally) greatly exceeding, in its usage, in its resources, that of "porn" links by phone or video network. And even more greatly exceeding the readership of Sade, of *Lois de l'hospitalité* and other similar works that are in a way self-censoring, because their number of readers is automatically reduced by the "competence" they require. At any rate, what is at issue, and is by the same token "deranged," deformed, is once again the trace of a frontier between the public and the non-public, between

Obsession, when it works from the inside of thought, or rather if thought has enough force to let itself be shaped by it, makes thought creative in the way that a work of art inaugurates a response to the material that holds it that was unknown until then. It is out of the night that "what obsesses" can come to be spoken.

When an utterance gives the "night" its portion, it makes us hear the words differently. So, to speak of "the near, the exiled, the foreigner, the visitor, being at home in the other's place" prevents concepts like "self and other" or "subject and object" from presenting them-

public or political space and individual or familial home. The frontier turns out to be caught in a juridico-political turbulence, in the process of destructuration-restructuration, challenging existing law and established norms. From the moment when a public authority, a State, this or that State power, gives itself or is recognized as having the right to control, monitor, ban exchanges that those doing the exchanging deem private, but that the State can intercept since these private exchanges cross public space and become available there, then every element of hospitality gets disrupted. My "at home" was also constituted by the field of access via my telephone line (through which I can give my time, my word, my friendship, my love, my help, to whomever I wish, and so invite whomever I wish to come into my home, first in my ear, when I wish, at any time of the day or night, whether the other is my across-the-fence neighbor, a fellow citizen, or any other friend or person I don't know at the other end of the world). Now if my "home," in principle inviolable, is also constituted, and in a more and more essential, interior way, by my phone line, but also by my e-mail, but also by my fax, but also by my access to the Internet, then the intervention of the State becomes a violation of the inviolable, in the place where inviolable immunity remains the condition of hospitality.

The possibilities we are thus invoking are not more abstract or improbable than phone tapping. These phone tappings are practiced not only by police forces or State security services. In Germany, a few weeks ago, I was reading a news item in a daily paper about some appliances for sale on the open

selves under a permanently dual law. What Derrida gets us to understand is that the opposite of nearness is not elsewhere but another figure of nearness. And I think this geography leads throughout the seminar to the revelation of the question "Where?" as being the question of man. A question which, like that of the Sphinx, is addressed to a man on the move, who has no other place of his own than that of being on the way, bound for a destination that is unknown to him, but precedes him with its shadow.

The question "Where?" is ageless, transitive, it gives

market (some 20,000 of them had already been sold when the German law started to get worried). These appliances would make it possible not just to eavesdrop on any phone conversation across a wide perimeter (500 meters in circumference, I believe), but even to record them, which opens up unprecedented options for private spying and blackmail. All these techno-scientific possibilities threaten the interiority of the home ("we are no longer at home!") and really the very integrity of the self, of ipseity. These possibilities are experienced as threats bearing down on the particular territory of one's own and on the law of private property. They are obviously behind all the purifying reactions and feelings of resentment. Wherever the "home" is violated, wherever at any rate a violation is felt as such, you can foresee a privatizing and even familialist reaction, by widening the ethnocentric and nationalist, and thus xenophobic, circle: not directed against the foreigner as such, but, paradoxically, against the anonymous technological power (foreign to the language or the religion, as much as to the family and the nation), which threatens, with the "home," the traditional conditions of hospitality. The perversion and pervertibility of this law (which is also a law of hospitality) is that one can become virtually xenophobic in order to protect or claim to protect one's own hospitality, the own home that makes possible one's own hospitality. (Remember as well the xenotransplantation we were talking about last time.) I want to be master at home (*ipse*, *potis*, *potens*, head of house, we have seen all that), to be able to receive whomever I like there. Anyone who encroaches on my "at home," on my ipseity, on my power of hos-

as essential the relation to place, to dwelling, to placelessness, and in its very function refuses thought in its comprehending relation to the object. The only truth is that of the running ferret in the children's rhyme, a truth found out by its movement and named by the trace.[13] *It's not so much about defining, explaining, understanding, as contending with the object of thought by discovering in this confrontation the territory where the question is inscribed: its rightness.*

This is why "the border, the limit, the threshold, the step beyond this threshold" return so often in Derrida's

pitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage.

Paradoxical and corrupting law: it depends on this constant collusion between traditional hospitality, hospitality in the ordinary sense, and power. This collusion is also power in its *finitude*, which is to say the necessity, for the host, for the one who receives, of choosing, electing, filtering, selecting their invitees, visitors, or guests, those to whom they decide to grant asylum, the right of visiting, or hospitality. No hospitality, in the classic sense, without sovereignty of oneself over one's home, but since there is also no hospitality without finitude, sovereignty can only be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence. Injustice, a certain injustice, and even a certain perjury, begins right away, from the very threshold of the right to hospitality. This collusion between the violence of power or the force of law (*Gewalt*) on one side, and hospitality on the other, seems to depend, in an absolutely radical way, on hospitality being inscribed in the form of a right, this kind of inscription we have said a lot about in the course of previous seminars. But since this right, whether private or familial, can only be exercised and guaranteed by the mediation of a public right or State right, the perversion is unleashed from the inside. For the State cannot guarantee or claim to guarantee the private domain (for it is a domain), other than by controlling it and trying to penetrate it to be sure of it. Of course, in controlling it, which can appear negative and repressive, it can claim, by the same token, to

language, as though the impossibility of marking out a stable territory where thought could be established was provocative of thought itself. "To offer hospitality," he wonders, "is it necessary to start from the certain existence of a dwelling, or is it rather only starting from the dislocation of the shelterless, the homeless, that the authenticity of hospitality can open up? Perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality."

"Where?" says that the first question is not that of the subject as "ipse," but more radically that of the very

protect it, to enable communication, to extend information and openness. The painful paradox stems from this coextensiveness between the democratization of information and the scope of the police and politics: as the powers of the police and politicization are extended, so communication, permeability, and democratic openness extend their space and their phenomenality, their appearing in broad daylight.

The blessing of visibility and daylight is *also* what the police and politics demand. Even the so-called secret police and politics, a particular police and a particular politics that often, and with good reason, present themselves as being the police and politics in their entirety. This was always the case, but today the accelerated deployment of particular technologies increases more rapidly than ever the scope and power of what is called private sociality, far beyond the territory of measurable-surveyable space, where it has never been possible to keep it anyway. So today, through the phone, the fax, e-mail, and the Internet, etc., this private sociality is tending to extend its antennae beyond national-state territory at the speed of light. Therefore the State, suddenly smaller, weaker than these non-State private powers, both infra- and supra-state—the classical State, or the cooperation of classical States—makes excessive efforts to catch and monitor, contain and reappropriate to itself the very thing that is escaping it as fast as possible. This sometimes takes the form of a rearrangement of the law, of new legal texts, but also of new police ambitions attempting to adapt to the new powers of communication and information, in other words also to new spaces of hospitality.

movement of the question out of which the subject happens. It translates the inability to have a land of one's own, since the question is turned back to the very place from which one thought one was sure of being able to begin to speak. It puts the question of the beginning, or rather of the impossibility of the beginning, of an uncontested first origin where the logos *would be inscribed.*

But one can also catch oneself in the vertigo of a kind of wandering, as if cutting oneself off from material roots (via the Internet and other distance tech-

Phone tapping remains almost impossible to control; it is increasing every day even if, technologically, it cuts a somewhat archaic figure. Nowadays it is e-mail that is monitored. Recently, in New York, a German engineer engaged in trafficking in electronic material was arrested. It was possible to arrest him only by intercepting transmissions by fax and electronic mail. This was done for reasons that no one would have dared to contest, probably, since they are those of the secret services and drug squads operating between Hong Kong, Las Vegas, and New York. Apparently this German engineer was moreover a specialist on the subject of monitoring equipment intended, among other things, to interfere with the police's phone tappings. Subscribers to CompuServe received in their electronic mailboxes offers of equipment making it possible to intercept communications, to track them, to pick up conversations, and also to identify phone numbers. Another of these toys makes it possible to clone cellular phones by duplicating the features of a mobile. You then intercept the portable phone number and its serial number with a scanner (the one that was for sale in Germany), you get yourself to be taken for someone else, the subscriber gets the bills, and no trace of the parasite can be found. Let's say "parasite" because what this directs us to open up is indeed the general problematic of relationships between parasitism and hospitality. How can we distinguish between a guest and a parasite? In principle, the difference is straightforward, but for that you need a law; hospitality, reception, the welcome offered have to be submitted to a basic and limiting jurisdiction. Not all new arrivals are received as guests if they

nologies), in other words "no longer having to cross the distance that separates us from the threshold," as Derrida formulates it, gave us a suspended meaning. For contemporary wandering is capable of being a subtle lure. It's a wandering that in reality dooms us to brutal and barbaric assignations beneath which, as Derrida stresses, appears the return of nationalisms and fundamentalisms in their most bloody manifestations.

Now hospitality can only be offered here and now, someplace. Hospitality gives as unthought, in its "night," this difficult, ambivalent relation to place. As

don't have the benefit of the right to hospitality or the right of asylum, etc. Without this right, a new arrival can only be introduced "in my home," in the host's "at home," as a parasite, a guest who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest.

But current technological developments are restructuring space in such a way that what constitutes a space of controlled and circumscribed property is just what opens it to intrusion. That, once again, is not absolutely new: in order to constitute the space of a habitable house and a home, you also need an opening, a door and windows, you have to give up a passage to the outside world [*l'étranger*]. There is no house or interior without a door or windows. The monad of home has to be hospitable in order to be *ipse*, itself at home, habitable at-home in the relation of the self to itself. But what has always been structured like this is nowadays multiplying both the home and the accessibility of home in proportions and modalities that are absolutely unprecedented. Whence the profound homogeneity between the devices of the private, clandestine, non-state network, and those of the police network of state surveillance. Their shared technology makes it impossible for the two spaces and the two types of structure to be mutually impermeable.

Let's take another American example. There now exists something called a "lifetime phone," which saves 99 different combinations of two numbers in the memory of one phone. It is on the market ($1,900), sold by the company of this Bowitz person (the German engineer), but illegal and used by drug traffickers, kidnappers, etc. Well, a federal agent got

though the place in question in hospitality were a place originally belonging to neither host nor guest, but to the gesture by which one of them welcomes the other—even and above all if he is himself without a dwelling from which this welcome could be conceived.

In another way, this is to denounce the subtle forms through which ethics ends up serving other ends than its own. It is as though nowadays throwing together the inessential and the essential in a jumble were an intolerable threat for our society, democratic as it might be. Everything ought to be justifiable at least by an ethical

himself introduced into the network and welcomed "with open arms" by getting himself taken for a trafficker in heroin. The German engineer had even suggested that he launder his heroin money in Hong Kong. The downfall of the mover of this high-tech machinery was his mail, which, for sales purposes, would arrive in practically anyone's electronic mailbox, for instance that of an AT&T employee, himself a CompuServe subscriber, who, after various maneuvers on the part of a private detective to whom he had confided the affair, met Bowitz, saw all the equipment, and eventually alerted the narcotics police and the American secret services. The New York judge made use of the laws authorizing phone tapping for the purpose of intercepting e-mail messages. So the directors of CompuServe, this network medium that was not in itself dishonest, put themselves at the service of the police. The CompuServe spokesperson declares: "It's the first time we had been confronted with a situation of this type. Concerning criminal matters, and in the presence of legal documents, it was natural for us to offer our services." The same person also said: "Pseudonyms and numbers can safeguard anonymity, but, if need be, it is always possible for us to recover the personal details of a subscriber who commits a crime: we always have their credit card number and their address." The credit card, like the code number—that today is the ultimate identity card and one of the major resources of the police. *Mutatis mutandis*, it's a bit like the situation of a mailman or post office employee who, faced with something that either is or is presented to him as criminally suspect, would agree to open the mail, to give mail to the po-

system. As though, for a society doomed to the quantification of what is useful and efficient, the supreme danger lay in the useless, the purposeless, the absolutely gratuitous, and that in the refusal to justify gratuitousness, what is "for nothing," the whole edifice of efficiency values was shown up. This is why the distinction Derrida sets out at the start between The *unconditional Law of hospitality and (in the plural)* laws *of hospitality is primordial. For unconditional hospitality threatens a society that has found in transparency a method of totalizing power by fragmenting responsibil-*

lice; or else, to speak closer to hospitality, the situation (a classic and common one, too) of a hotel manager working with the police. (Let's leave to one side the problems—only analogous, and only analogous in relation to each other—of the confessor and the psychoanalyst.) This can happen in hotels but also in night shelters or hospitals. This absolute porosity, this limitless accessibility of technical devices meant for keeping secrets, for encoding and ensuring secrecy, is the law, the law of the law: the more you encode and record in figures, the more you produce of this operational iterability which makes accessible the secret to be protected. I can hide a letter only by separating myself from it and thus by yielding it to the outside, by exposing it to another, by archiving it, a document thereafter accessible in the space where it is deposited.

This is the paradoxical effect of what we are here calling the pervertibility, the perversion of this state violence or this right, that is always possible and in truth virtually inevitable, bound to happen: the effacement of the limit between private and public, the secret and the phenomenal, the home (which makes hospitality possible) and the violation or impossibility of home. This machine renders impossible the hospitality, the right to hospitality, that it ought to make possible (always according to the contradiction or aporia that we have been formalizing since the start of this seminar).

As to this paradox and this aporia of a right to hospitality, of an ethics of hospitality which is limited and contradictory *a priori*, let us again recall another minor but so major text of Kant's, not the one on the law of universal hospitality with which we

ity. Yet this Law of hospitality must continue to be thought, as a magnetization which "puts to the question" the composure of the laws of hospitality.

To allow in this way for there to be open places that give room for the "purposelessness" of philosophical discourse is already a political gesture, symbolically preserving a space where the essential, too, might be said and might arise.

"The question that the foreigner will address to them to open this great debate, which will also be a great fight, is nothing less than that of the political, of

opened these seminars, but the one on a "supposed right to lie out of humanity" (1797), which we had also analyzed before. The imperative to veracity would be absolutely unconditional. One should always speak the truth, whatever the consequences. For if one granted some right to lie, for the best reasons in the world, one would threaten the social bond itself, the universal possibility of a social contract or a sociality in general. This unconditionality, even before being due to some normative prescription (which it is as well, of course), could be shown to be deduced from a simple, very simple *analysis* of speech, of a rhetorical, constative, descriptive exploration of the address to another, of its normativity or its intrinsic performativity. Just as any utterance implies a performative promising to address itself to someone else as such ("I am speaking to you, and I promise you the truth"), just as any speech act promises the truth (even and especially if I am lying)—well, anyway, I can always lie, of course (and who could swear or prove that Kant himself never lied?), but that will signify quite simply that therefore I'm not speaking to someone else, end of story. And in doing this, I am not recognizing either the essence of speech as giving one's word, or the necessity of founding a social bond. Now what is Kant *doing*, in following this logic, where it can appear *indisputable* (indisputable as testimony, even if it were logically refutable and even if it shocks everyone's good sense as it worried Benjamin Constant; he asked if you should hand over a friend who is staying with you to assassins who are looking for him, a question to which Kant replies without hesitating: "Yes, one should never lie, even to assassins")? Two

man as a political being," states Derrida from the beginning of the seminar. The question of the political is given there as being the question that comes to us from the other, the foreigner. If the political is one of the founding philosophical questions, operating since the first [Socratic] dialogues, in this seminar, as Derrida inscribes it, it is a new question, because it is signified to us from the place of the other, from the repeated, insistent breaking in of his question. From what, in that question, instructs us to respond. To respond to it, as you respond with your word in a duel, because what it is,

operations in one, whence the ambiguity. *On the one hand*, in one single gesture, Kant founds pure subjective morality, the duty to speak the truth to the other as an absolute duty of respect for the other and respect for the social bond; he bases this imperative on the freedom and the pure intentionality of the subject; he reminds us of its basis through an inflexible analysis of the structure of the speech act: he also secures social right as public right. But simultaneously, *on the other hand*, in laying out the basis of this right, and in recalling or analyzing its basis, he destroys, along with the right to lie, any right of keeping something to oneself, of dissimulating, of resisting the demand for truth, confessions, or public openness. Now this demand constitutes the essence not only of law and the police, but of the State itself. In other words, by refusing the basis of any right to lie, even for humane reasons, and so any right to dissimulate and keep something to oneself, Kant delegitimates, or at any rate makes secondary and subordinates, any right to the internal hearth, to the home, to the pure self abstracted from public, political, or state phenomenality. In the name of pure morality, from the point where it becomes law, he introduces the police everywhere, so much and so well that the absolutely internalized police has its eyes and its ears everywhere, its detectors *a priori* in our internal telephones, our e-mails, and the most secret faxes of our private lives, and even of our absolutely intimate relationships with ourselves. This figure of the State or police no longer even needs sophisticated techniques to intercept intimate, criminal, or pornographic conversations. By the same token, the thinker of the cosmopolitan right to uni-

is a fight. This question that the foreigner puts to us I hear as a "utopia," in the Greek sense of the topos, *the place. Utopia, that "no place" prophetically conceived by Thomas More, would nowadays be that "out of place" from which a question is imposed on us. Yet in our period exhibiting man as a political being strikes a note of sovereign insolence, to the extent that our culture seems to be in the process of making the political vanish completely into a theatrical effect—and I am not speaking about political thought, but about the very act constitutive of the political, and which, since*

versal hospitality, the author of *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), is also, without there being anything fortuitous in this, the one who destroys at its source the very possibility of what he posits and determines in this way. And that is due to the juridicality of his discourse, to the inscription in a law of this principle of hospitality whose infinite idea should resist the law itself—or at any rate go beyond it at the point where it governs it. And there is also nothing fortuitous, it seems to me, if in "On a supposed right to lie out of humanity," the privileged example (and one put forward by Benjamin Constant himself, initially, in the great tradition of biblical narratives that we previously reconstituted, of the story of Lot in particular) refers to a situation of *hospitality*: should I lie to murderers who come to ask me if the one they want to assassinate is in my house? Kant's response—and his way of arguing is laborious but also confident (we could come back to this in the discussion if you like)—is "yes," one should speak the truth, even in this case, and thus risk delivering the guest to death, rather than lie. It is better to break with the duty of hospitality rather than break with the absolute duty of veracity, fundamental to humanity and to human sociality in general.

Does this mean that the Kantian host therefore treats the one who is staying with him as a foreigner? Yes and no. He treats him as a human being, but he sets up his relationship to the one who is in his house as a matter of the law, in the same way as he also does the relationships linking him to murderers, the police, or judges. From the point of view of the

the beginning, has been the only act by which one or a number of persons, by virtue of a power conferred on them by others to represent them, can hinder, accomplish, or suspend an economic process by referring it to other values which are not quantifiable ones. But hasn't the madness of political utopia done enough harm in the twentieth century for us to beware of it in future! In fact, by turning into ideology, utopia has acquired a language linking it to the implacable logic of economic "efficiency," which it claimed to be against. Utopias from Marxism to fascism that are inscribed in

law, the guest, even when he is well received, is first of all a foreigner, he must remain a foreigner. Hospitality is due to the foreigner, certainly, but remains, like the law, conditional, and thus conditioned in its dependence on the unconditionality that is the basis of the law.

So the question returns. What is a foreigner? What would a foreign woman be?

It is not only the man or woman who keeps abroad, on the outside of society, the family, the city. It is not the other, the completely other who is relegated to an absolute outside, savage, barbaric, precultural, and prejuridical, outside and prior to the family, the community, the city, the nation, or the State. The relationship to the foreigner is regulated by law, by the becoming-law of justice. This step would take us back to Greece, close to Socrates and Oedipus, if it wasn't already too late.