

THE POLITICS OF FRIENDSHIP*

“O my friends, there is no friend.” In addressing you in this way, perhaps I have not yet said anything. Perhaps I have not even addressed myself to you. Not only because the two parts of this sentence, on the one side and on the other side of a comma or a pause, seem incompatible with each other, destined to annihilate themselves in their contradiction, but mainly because I have not yet said anything in my own name. I have contented myself with quoting. Spokesman for another, I have reported his words, which belong to a foreign or perhaps somewhat archaic language. I have, then, signed nothing, booked nothing to my own account.

“O my friends, there is no friend.” This is not merely a citation which I am reading at present; it was already the quotation by another reader of the country I come from, Montaigne, “it is a saying which,” he says, “Aristotle was used to repeating.”¹ In other words, I have quoted the quotation of a saying already quoted by Aristotle, a saying whose origin seems to lose itself in the anonymity of time immemorial. Nonetheless, it is not one of those proverbs without an assignable origin, and whose aphoristic mode rarely takes the form of an apostrophe.

By beginning in this way—quoting the quotation of a quotation—as I just said, I have perhaps not assumed the responsibility in my own name for any utterance. Perhaps I have not even yet addressed myself to you, really to you. But are things that simple? Am I completely irresponsible for what I have *said* when I am not responsible for *what* I have said? Am I not responsible for the *fact that* I have said (for the fact of having spoken) when I do not hold myself responsible for *what* I have said, for the content of what I have said and which I, in fact, have contented myself with reporting? Defined by what are commonly called conventions, a certain number of artificial signs attest to the following: even if I have not yet said anything determinate *in my name* when I uttered, in order to begin, without any further introduction, “O my friends, there is no friend,” one has the right (but what is this right?) to suppose that I am nonetheless

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¹ “. . . il faut employer le mot qu’Aristote avoit tres-familier: O mes amis, il n’y nul amy.” “De l’amitié,” in *Essais*, Book I (Paris: Pléiade, 1959), p. 226.

speaking in my name. You hold me responsible, *personally responsible*, for the simple fact that I am speaking, and, for example, for the fact of quoting Montaigne in order to begin in place of and before saying anything else. And by holding me *personally responsible*, you are, in a rigorous sense, implying some knowledge of what 'person' and 'responsibility' mean.

What is happening at this very moment? This could give rise to a description of a "pragmatic" type. Such a description would confirm that, having been invited (but how and, exactly, by whom finally?) to speak to you when you are assembled to listen to me, then to discuss with me, in short, to *respond to me*, I have already responded to an invitation and, consequently, I am in the process of addressing myself to you who are beginning to respond to me. You are doing so in a way which is still *virtual* with respect to the content of the response, but you are already doing so *actually* with respect to that first response constituted by the attention given or at least promised to a discourse. (You should note in passing that, with this distinction between virtuality and act, I am already virtually installed in the dominant code, in the very constitution of one of the great canonical discourses of philosophy on friendship, the very one which Montaigne was quoting, Aristotle's. The distinction between *dynamis* and *energeia* is never far away, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, when the issue is the distinction between the "good men who are friends in the rigorous sense of the term" and "the others who are so only accidentally and by analogy with the first" [VIII, ch. 4], or again when, after having defined the three "forms of government," Aristotle declares that "friendship appears [there] in the same proportion as justice," or, if man is a "political being" [IX, ch. 10], "political friendship" is only a kind of friendship, that which he calls "concord" [*homonomia*]. We should reconstitute these sequences.) You are already holding me responsible for what I say, for the simple fact that I am speaking, even if I am not yet assuming the responsibility for the sentences I am citing.

Supposing, *concesso non dato*, that one can translate these Greek words today by 'friendship', I still do not know if what exists between us is *philia* or *homonomia*, nor how one should distinguish here among us, among each one of us, who together would compose this as yet quite indeterminate "us." But perhaps you will concede the following, which is something like the first result of a practical demonstration, the one that has just taken place: before even having taken responsibility for any given affirmation, we are already caught up in a kind of asymmetrical and heteronomical curvature of the social space, more precisely, in the relation to the Other prior to any

organized *socius*, to any determined “government,” to any “law.”² Please note: prior to any determined law, as either natural law or positive law, but not prior to any law in general. This heteronomical and asymmetrical curvature of a sort of originary sociality is a law, perhaps the very essence of the law. What is taking place at this moment, the disquieting experience we are having, is perhaps just the silent unfolding of that strange violence that has since forever insinuated itself into the origin of the most innocent experiences of friendship or justice. We have begun to respond. We are already caught, surprised [*pris*, *surpris*] in a certain responsibility, and the most ineluctable of responsibilities—as if it were possible to conceive of a responsibility without freedom. We are invested with an undeniable responsibility at the moment we begin to signify something (but where does that begin?). This responsibility assigns us our freedom without leaving it with us, if one could put it that way. And we see it coming from the Other. It is assigned to us by the Other, from the Other, before any hope of reappropriation permits us to assume this responsibility in the space of what could be called *autonomy*. This experience is even the one in which the Other appears as such, that is, appears without appearing.³ That which comes before autonomy must, then, also *exceed* it, that is, succeed it, survive it, and indefinitely surpass it. In general, when dealing with the law (*nomos*), one believes one can simply oppose autonomy and heteronomy. Perhaps one would have to deform this oppositional logic and prepare, from very far away, its “political” translation.

What can this excessive assignation of responsibility have to do with that which is called friendship? I say advisedly ‘that which is called friendship’, and I underscore this precaution. It resembles once again a quotation, as if I were forcing myself to remember unceasingly that, before knowing what friendship is and what we mean to say here and now with this word, we should first deal with a certain use of the word ‘friendship’. We should mention these uses, as well as the interpretations and experiences (for experiences are also interpretations) that friendship has occasioned. For we should not forget that we are speaking first of all from within the tradition of a certain concept of friendship, within a given culture, let us say ours, in any case the one on the basis of which a certain “we” tries its luck here. Now, neither this tradition nor the concept of friendship within it is homogeneous. Our principal concern will even be to

² Here, of course, I am referring to the title of this panel.

³ Cf. my “Violence and Metaphysics,” in *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass, trans. (Chicago: University Press, 1978).

recognize the major marks of a tension within it, perhaps even ruptures, and, in any case, scissions.

Let us listen once again to Montaigne listening to Aristotle listening to the Other, but let us translate and interpret him as well: "O my friends, there is no friend." The painful and plaintive irony of the address also states the certitude of a strange affirmation. The phrase springs forth like a sort of *apostrophe*; in effect, someone is turning toward his friends, "O my friends . . . ," but the apostrophe carries within it a predicative proposition, it envelops an indicative declaration. Ascertaining a fact, it also utters a general truth: "there is no friend." The general truth of the *fact* would seem to contradict *by an act* the very possibility of the *apostrophe*, the possibility for it to be *serious*: there must indeed be friends in order for me to address myself to them in this way, if only so as to say to them "there is no friend." The contradiction would be as vivid and present as a simple logical absurdity; in the best of cases, it would be the playful exercise of a paradox, if the structures of the two utterances were symmetrical and if they belonged to a presently *homogeneous* ensemble. This is not necessarily the case. The *apostrophe*, whose form surpasses and comprises in itself the alleged determination of fact, resembles at one and the same time an act of recalling and an appeal [*au rappel et à l'appel*]. It resembles an appeal, because it makes a sign toward the future: be my friends, for I love or will love you (friendship, as Aristotle also said, consists rather in loving than in being loved [VIII 9, 25-30], a proposition on which we have not yet finished meditating), listen to me, be sensitive to my cry, understand and be compassionate; I am asking for sympathy and consensus, become the friends to whom I aspire. Accede to what is at the same time a desire, a request, a promise, and, one could also add, a prayer. And let us not forget what Aristotle said about prayer (*eukhè*): it is a discourse (*logos*), but it is a discourse that, somewhat in the manner of a performative, is neither true nor false [*all'ouïte alethès ouïte pseudés*].⁴ There are no friends, that we know, but I beg you, make it so that there will be friends from now on. What is more, how could I be your friend, and declare my friendship for you (and the latter consists more in loving than in being loved) if friendship did not remain something yet to happen, to be desired, to be promised? How could I give you my friendship where friendship would not be lacking, that is, if it already existed—more precisely, if the friend were not lacking? For the *apostrophe* does not say: "there is no friend-

⁴ Cf. my "Comment ne pas parler," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), p. 572, n. 1.

ship," but rather "there is no friend." Perhaps this is because we have an idea of friendship and what it should be, in the ideality of its essence or telos, and thus *in the name of friendship* we must conclude, alas, that, if there is friendship, "there is no friend." (And this is just what Montaigne means to say in the context determined by the most thematic of his intentions, which dominates this passage up to a certain point: it is while thinking about "common friendships," "ordinary and customary" ones, that we are obliged to sigh with regret. These common friendships are not "the most perfect of their kind": that is why "there is no friend.") But, if there is no friend at present, then precisely let us make it so that there will be friendships from now on, friendships that are "the most perfect of their kind." Here is what I am calling you to, answer me, it is our responsibility. Friendship is never a given in the present; it belongs to the experience of waiting, of promise, or of commitment. Its discourse is that of prayer and at issue there is that which responsibility opens to the future.

But the apostrophe 'O my friends' turns also toward the past. It recalls, it makes a sign toward that which must be supposed so as to let oneself be understood, if only in the nonapophantic form of prayer. You have *already* shown me this minimal friendship, this preliminary consent without which you would not understand me, would not listen to my appeal, or be sensitive to what is hopeful in my cry. Without this absolute past, I could not, for my part, have addressed myself to you in this way. We would not be together in a sort of minimal community—but one which is also incommensurable with any other—speaking the same language or praying for translation within the horizon of the same language, even were it so as to manifest a disagreement, if a *sort* of friendship had not already been sealed before any other contract: a friendship prior to friendships, an ineffaceable, fundamental, and bottomless friendship, the one that draws its breath in the sharing of a language (past or to come) and in the being-together that any allocution supposes, including a declaration of war. Will one say, in a rather Aristotelian move, that this friendship has merely an *accidental* and *analogical* relation with friendship in the strict or proper sense, or with the friendship that is "perfect of its kind" (Montaigne)? The question thus becomes: "What is friendship in the proper sense?" "Is it ever present?" "What is the essence of friendship?" If we are not close to answering this question, it is not only because of the very great number of philosophical difficulties still in front of us and which we are going to try to approach. In a preliminary and principial manner, at the same time simple and abyssal, it is because the question 'what is?' (*ti estin*), the question of essence or truth, has unfolded itself, as the question

of philosophy, on the basis of a certain experience of *philein* and *philia*.⁵ The very possibility of the question, in the form of ‘what is . . . ?’, seems always to have supposed this friendship prior to friendships, this *anterior* affirmation of being-together in the allocation. Such an affirmation can no longer be simply integrated, above all it cannot be *presented* as a being-present (substance, subject, essence, or existence) within the space of an ontology, precisely because it opens this space.

Behind the logical game of contradiction or paradox, perhaps the ‘O my friends, there is no friend’ signifies first and last this surpassing of the present by the undeniable future anterior which would be the very movement and time of friendship. Undeniable future anterior, the absolute of an unpresentable past as well as future, which is to say of traces that one can only ever deny by summoning them into

⁵ There is not enough space to link this question to the elaboration of it which Martin Heidegger proposes, notably in *Was ist das—Die Philosophie?* (Pfüllingen: Neske, 1956). As we know, this elaboration also concerns the moment in which the *philein* of Heraclitus’s *philein to sophon*, after having been determined as original accord (*ein ursprünglicher Einklang, harmonia*) would have become a tension toward searching, a jealous and tense inquisition (*strebende Suchen*) “determined by *Eros*.” It is only with this eroticization of the questioning about being (“*Was ist das Seiende, insofern es ist?*”) that thought (*das Denken*) would have become philosophy. “Heraclitus and Parmenides were not yet philosophers.” The “step” toward philosophy would have been prepared by the Sophists and finally achieved by Socrates and Plato. Taking a careful reading of this interpretation as our guide, we might attempt to follow the very discreet thread of an incessant meditation on friendship in the path of Heidegger’s thought. This meditation passes, in particular, by way of the unexpected and isolated allusion to the “friend’s voice (*Stimme des Freundes*) that every *Dasein* carries within itself” (*Being and Time*, §34). Let us not forget that the existential analytics of *Dasein*, that “carries” (*trägt*) this voice in itself, is neither an anthropology, a sociology, nor an analytics of the subject, consciousness, psyche, or the self—it is neither a morals nor a politics. All these disciplines presuppose the analytics. This loads the allusion to the friend’s voice—and thus to friendship itself—with a very particular ontological meaning, in a chapter on “*Dasein und Rede, Die Sprache*.” This strange “voice,” at once both internal and from elsewhere, has perhaps some relation to the “voice” of conscience (*Gewissen*) of which Heidegger also proposes an existential analytics (§57). Since the sex of this “friend” is not determined, I would also be tempted to graft onto this reading the questions I have elsewhere posed on the subject of the word *Geschlecht* and of sexual difference in Heidegger [cf. “*Geschlecht*” and “*Geschlecht II*” in *Psyche*, pp. 395–451, in *Research in Phenomenology*, XIII (1983), John P. Leavey, Jr., trans.; and in *Deconstruction and Philosophy*, John Sallis, ed. (Chicago: University Press 1987)]. These same questions should lead, by way of the *Gespräch* of the thinker with the poet, *Gespräch* that always supposes some sort of friendship, toward two types of texts: on the one hand, those which are addressed to Hölderlin [“*Wo aber sind die Freunde?*” in *Andenken*; cf. Heidegger’s text which has the same title in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1951)]; on the other hand, those which are addressed to Georg Trakl, to the figures of “the friend who follows the stranger,” of the brother and sister, precisely around this motif of the *Geschlecht* (“*Die Sprache im Gedicht*,” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* [Pfüllingen: Neske, 1959]).

the light of phenomenal presence. A temporal torsion thus knots up the predicative proposition ('there is no friend') within the apostrophe ('O my friends'). The torsion of this asymmetry envelops the theoretical determination or the knowledge within the performativity of a prayer that it will never exhaust. This asymmetry leads us back to what I shall call the *question of the response*.

How should the *question of the response* be linked to the question of responsibility—and why should friendship be made into a privileged place for this reflection? A brief grammar of the response, or rather of "responding," will permit us a preliminary glimpse. I sketch such a grammar on the basis of my language, French, but I do not believe that, in this case, the concepts are thoroughly limited by language (even though idiomatic English here and there will require that we translate *répondre* by 'answer', the reader should not forget to hear the Latin root of 'responsibility'). Not that they are valid in *general*, beyond every language (syntax and lexicon), but I believe, in this context, they are translatable into the set of European languages which authorize *us* here to interrogate something such as *our* culture and our concept of responsibility. Which is to say that this grammar, however schematic, will be a bit more than a grammar.

One says "answer for," "answer to," "answer before" [*répondre de, répondre à, répondre devant*]. These three modalities are not juxtaposable; they envelop and imply each other. One *answers for*, for oneself or for something (for someone, for an action, for a thought, for a discourse), *before*, before another, a community of others, an institution, a tribunal, a law. And always one *answers for*, or *before*, by answering first *to*. This last modality thus appears more original, more fundamental, and hence unconditional.

1. One *answers for oneself*, for what one is, says, or does, and this beyond the simple present. The 'oneself' or 'myself' thus supposes the unity, in other words the memory, of the one responding. This is often called the unity of the subject, but one can conceive such a synthesis of memory without necessarily having recourse to the concept of *subject*. Since this unity is never secured in itself as an empirical synthesis, the recognition of this identity is entrusted to the instance of the name. "I" am held responsible for "myself," which is to say, for everything that can be imputed to that which bears my name. Imputability supposes freedom, to be sure, but it also supposes that that which bears my name remains the "same": not only from one moment to the next, from one state to the other of that which bears it, but also beyond even life or presence in general, for example, the presence to itself of that which bears it. The instance here of what is called the "proper name" is not necessarily limited to the phenome-

non of the legal name, the patronymic, or the social designation, although this phenomenon is, most frequently, its determining manifestation. We shall see that this question of the proper name is essential to the problematic of friendship. I find at least one indication in Montaigne's reflection. He says that his friendship for Etienne de la Boétie preceded their meeting. More precisely, this meeting or acquaintance [*acointance*] took place long "before I had seen him, and gave me the first knowledge of his name, thus leading this friendship on its way."

There is, beyond my whole discourse, and what I can specifically say about it, some unknown, inexplicable and fatal force, the go-between of our union. We sought each other before we had seen one another, and through the reports we heard about each other, which caused a greater striving in our feelings than that occasioned by the sense of the reports, I believe through some ordinance of heaven: we embraced each other through our names ("De l'amitié," p. 225).

2. One *answers first to* the Other: to the question, the request, the prayer, the apostrophe, the appeal, the greeting, or the sign of the Other. This dimension of responding, as responding *to*, is more original than the others, as we have noted, for two reasons. On the one hand, one does not answer for oneself and in one's own name, one is not responsible except before [*devant*] the question, request, challenge, "instance," or "insistance" of the Other. On the other hand, the proper name that structures the "answering for oneself" is in itself for the Other, whether because the Other has chosen it (for example, the name I am given at birth, which I never chose and which introduces me into the space of the law—and the law is the theme of this session), or whether because, in any case, it implies the Other in the very act of naming, its origin, its finality, its use. Responding always supposes the Other in the relation to oneself; it preserves the sense of this asymmetrical "anteriority" even within the seemingly most inward and solitary autonomy of reserve [*quant à soi*], of one's heart of hearts, and of the moral conscience jealous of its independence—another word for freedom. This asymmetrical anteriority also marks temporalization as a structure of responsibility.

3. *Answering before*: this expression seems at first to modalize 'answering to'. One answers before the Other because first one answers to the Other. But this modalization is more than or other than a specification by example. A decisive round is being played out here, and we should record all its effects. In the idiom, the expression 'before' generally indicates the passage to an institutional instance of

alterity. It is no longer singular, but is universal in its principle. One answers to the Other who can always be singular, and who must remain so in a certain way, but one answers before the law,⁶ a tribunal, a jury, some agency (instance) authorized to represent the Other legitimately, in the form of a moral, legal, or political community. Here we have two forms or two dimensions of the *respect* implied by any *responsibility* (I note in passing that these two words, 'respect' and 'responsibility', which are linked and constantly incite each other, appear to refer in the first case to distance, to space, and to the look [*regard*], and, in the second case, to time, to the voice, and to listening. Their co-implication can be sensed at the heart of friendship, one of whose enigmas comes from this distance or this respectful separation which distinguishes it, as a feeling, from love. This co-implication calls for a rigorous rereading of the Kantian analysis of respect in friendship.⁷ There is no friendship without "respect of the Other," but this respect, although inseparable from a "morally good will," should not be simply confused with purely moral respect, the respect owed only to its "cause," the moral law, of which the person is but an example.)

Of these two dimensions of the relation to the Other, the one maintains the absolute singularity of the Other and of "my" relation to the Other, as well as the relation of the Other to the Other which I am for him. But the relation to the Other also passes through the

⁶ Cf. my "Devant la loi," in *La Faculté de juger* (Paris: Minuit, 1985) [in *Kafka and the Contemporary Critical Performance*, A. Ronell, trans., A. Udoff, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987)] and *Parages* (Paris: Gallilée, 1986).

⁷ Cf. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Here I can only indicate the program of a reading. The principal text that Kant devotes to friendship is immensely complex. It constitutes precisely the "Conclusion of the Elementary Doctrine" (of ethics) in the "Doctrine of Virtue" (*The Metaphysics of Morals*, §46/7). Kant also quotes there, in a slightly different form, Aristotle's saying ("My dear friends, there exist no friends!"). In its perfection, that is, as an unrealizable but practically necessary Idea, friendship supposes both love and respect. It must be equal and reciprocal. To seek it is a duty because, although friendship does not produce happiness, the two feelings that compose it envelop the "dignity of being happy." But one of the difficulties, in the very idea of friendship, comes from the contradictory character and thus the unstable equilibrium of the two feelings that are opposed in the mode of "attraction" that tends toward fusion (love) and "repulsion" that holds at a distance (respect). A reflection on the Kantian ethics and politics of friendship should be organized around the concept of "secret." It seems to me to dominate §47 and to mark, in a problematic way, the ideal of friendship as communication (*Mitteilung*) and egalitarian sharing. Such a reflection would consider first the definition of the "friend of mankind." Every friend must first of all be the "friend of mankind." The latter is not only the philanthropist. The friend of mankind supposes equality among men, the idea of being obligated by this very equality. Is it just by chance that the familial schema imposes itself once again here, and in these terms (father/brothers)? "Here one represents to oneself all men as brothers submissive to a universal father who wants the happiness of all."

universality of the law. This discourse about universality which can find its determination in the regions of morality, law, or politics, always appeals to a third party, beyond the face-to-face of singularities. The third party is always witness for a law that comes along to interrupt the vertigo of singularity. Do we have here two models of friendship, of which the one would find its motto in Montaigne's response ("If one presses me to say why I loved him, I feel that can only be expressed by responding: Because it was he; because it was me"—*op. cit.*); and the other in Zarathustra's sentences when it is a question of interrupting the jealous narcissism of the dual relation, which always remains enclosed between "me" and "me," "I" and "me," of preventing it from sinking into the abyss ("I and me are always in too jealous [too zealous, *zu eifrig*] a dialogue: how could one endure this situation if there were no friend? For the hermit, the friend is always the third party: the third party is the cork that prevents the dialogue of the two from sinking into the abyss."⁸ But is this an alternative? Are there really two different, even antagonistic or incompatible relations? Do not these two relations imply each other at the moment they seem to exclude each other? Does not my relation to the singularity of the Other as Other pass through the law? Does not the law command me to recognize the transcendent alterity of the Other who can only ever be heterogeneous and singular, hence resistant to the very generality of the law? But this co-implication, far from dissolving the antagonism and breaking through the aporia, aggravates them instead—at the very heart of friendship.

Sharing [*le partage*] (singularity/universality) has always divided the experience, the concept, and the interpretation of friendship. It has determined other oppositions there (secret, private, invisible, unreadable, apolitical, or even without a concept versus manifest, public, exposed to witnesses, political, homogeneous with the concept). Between the two terms of the opposition, there is the *familial* schema (I am using the word 'schema' in the Kantian sense: between intuitive singularity and the generality of the concept). On the one hand, friendship seems to be essentially foreign or unamenable to the *res publica* and thus could not found a politics. But, on the other hand, as one knows, from Plato to Montaigne, from Aristotle to Kant, from Cicero to Hegel, the *great philosophical and canonical discourses* on friendship (but my question goes precisely to the philo-

⁸ "Ich und Mich sind immer zu eifrig im Gespräche: wie wäre es auzuhalten, wenn es nicht einen Freund gäbe?"

"Immer ist für den Einsiedler der Freund der Dritte: der Dritte ist der Kork, der verhindert, dass das Gespräch der Zweie in die Tiefe sinkt." "Dem Freunde" in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

sophical canon in this domain) will have linked friendship explicitly to virtue and to justice, to moral reason and to political reason. These discourses will have even set the moral and political conditions for an authentic friendship—and vice-versa. Obviously, these discourses differ among themselves and would call for long and careful analyses. Such analyses should take care, in particular, not to identify too quickly morality with politics, in the name of the law: it is sometimes in the name of morality that friendship has been removed from the divisions and criteria of politics.

These oppositions seem to dominate the interpretation and the experience of friendship in our culture: a domination which is unstable and under internal stress, but which is therefore all the more imperious. What relation does this domination maintain with the *double exclusion* that can be seen at work in all the great ethico-politico-philosophical discourses on friendship, namely, on the one hand, the exclusion of friendship between women, and, on the other hand, the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman? This double exclusion of the feminine in the philosophical paradigm of friendship would thus confer on it the essential and essentially sublime figure of virile homosexuality. Within the familial schema, whose necessity I mentioned earlier, this exclusion privileges the figure of the brother, the name of the brother or the name of brother, more than that of the father—whence the necessity of connecting the political model, especially that of democracy and of the Decalogue, with the rereading of Freud's hypothesis about the alliance of brothers.⁹ Again Montaigne on his friendship with La Boétie: "In truth, the name of brother is a beautiful and delectable one, and for this reason we made it, he and I, our alliance."

These exclusions of the feminine would have some relation to the movement that has always "politicized" the model of friendship at the very moment one tries to remove this model from an integral politicization. The tension here is within politics itself. It would be necessary to analyze all discourses that reserve politics and public space for man, domestic and private space for woman. For Hegel, this is also the opposition between day and night, and hence a certain number of other oppositions as well.¹⁰ What is Nietzsche's place in this "history"? Does he profoundly corroborate an old tradition ("That is why woman is not yet capable of friendship: she only knows

⁹ I underscored the difficulties and the paradoxes of the Freudian hypothesis in "Devant la loi."

¹⁰ On all these problems and once again on the ethico-political question of the woman, the sister, and the brother in Hegel, see my *Glas* (Paris: Galilée, 1974) [John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand, trans. (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1987)].

love”)?¹¹ Or is he trying to think a friendship that goes beyond Judeo-Christian and philosophical history (“I am not teaching you the neighbor [*das Nächsten*] but rather the friend. Let the friend be for you the feast of the earth and the foreshadow of the superhuman. I am teaching you the friend and his overflowing heart”)?¹²

If the great canonical meditations on friendship (for example, Cicero’s *De amicitia*, Montaigne’s *De l’amitié*, Maurice Blanchot’s *L’amitié*) are linked to the experience of mourning, to the moment of loss—that of the friend or of friendship—if, through the irreplaceable element of the name, they always advance into the testamentary shadow in order to *entrust and refuse* the death of the unique one to a universalizable discourse [“. . . my friends, there is no friend” (Aristotle-Montaigne), “But what have become of the friends?” (Villon), “*Wo aber sind die Freunde?*” (Hölderlin)], if they thereby *found and destabilize* at the same time, if, because they menace them, they restore a great number of oppositions (singular/universal, private/public, familial/political, secret/phenomenal, etc.) and I would be tempted to say all oppositions, the relative invariance of this model fractures itself and opens itself onto its own abyss. By returning to all motifs I have just sketched (the morals and the politics of friendship, death, the name, fraternity, etc.), by reconsidering all the oppositions I have just situated, I would have liked to try to recognize two major ruptures in what one could, as a matter of convenience, call the *history of friendship*. (But a certain friendship could make the most traditional concept of historicity quake.) The

¹¹ “Deshalb ist das Weib noch nicht der Freundschaft fähig: es kennt nur die Liebe.” One must underscore here the ‘not yet’, because it also extends to man (*Mann*), but first of all and once again to the “brother” of Zarathustra as to the future of a question, an appeal or a promise, a cry or a prayer. It does so in the performative mode of the apostrophe. There is as yet no friendship, no one has yet begun to think friendship. Nevertheless, in the experience of a sort of bereaved anticipation, we can already name the friendship that we have not yet encountered. We can already think that we do not yet have access to it. May we be able to do it! That is the exclamation point, the singular clamor of this “claim.” Here is the “Oh my friends, there is no friend” of Zarathustra: “Woman is not yet capable of friendship. But tell me, men, who among you is capable of friendship? . . . There is camaraderie: may there be friendship!” (Aber sagt mir, ihr Männer, wer von euch ist denn fähig der Freundschaft? . . . Es gibt Kameradschaft: möge es Freundschaft geben!). But since woman has not yet acceded to friendship because she remains—and that is love—either “slave” or “tyrant,” the friendship to come continues to mean for Zarathustra: liberty, equality, fraternity. In short, the motto of a republic.

¹² “Nicht des Nächsten lehre ich euch, sondern den Freund. Der Freund sei euch das Fest der Erde und ein Vorgefühl des Uebermenschen.

“Ich lehre euch den Freund und sein übervolles Herz” (“Von des Nächstenliebe”). With the love of the distant one, Zarathustra advises love of the future—and beyond humanity, love of things and fictions (*die Liebe zu Sachen und Gespenstern*).

Greco-Roman model appears to be marked by the value of *reciprocity*, by homological, immanentist, finitist, and politicist concord. Montaigne (whom we are reading here as the example of a paradigm) doubtless inherits the majority of these traits. But he breaks the reciprocity therein and discreetly introduces, so it seems to me, heterology, asymmetry, and infinity ("he surpassed me by an infinite distance;" "I would have certainly entrusted myself more willingly to him than to me"; "For even the discourses which Antiquity has left us on this subject seem to me to be slack in seizing the feeling which I have about it").

Shall one say that this fracture is Judeo-Christian? Shall one say that it depoliticizes the Greek model or that it displaces the nature of the political? Can the same type of question be put regarding Nietzsche and Blanchot (other examples where friendship should defy both historicity and exemplarity)? In a different way, to be sure, both call the friend by a name that is no longer that of the neighbor [*prochain*], perhaps no longer that of a man.¹³

JACQUES DERRIDA

École des Hautes Études

[Translated by Gabriel Motzkin]

¹³ The "Who?" of friendship moves off into the distance beyond all these determinations. In its "infinite imminence," it even exceeds the interest of knowledge, science, truth, proximity, even life and even the memory of life. It is not yet an identifiable "I," either public or private.

"We ought to renounce trying to know those to whom we are linked by something essential; I mean, we ought to welcome them in the relation with the unknown where they welcome us, as well, in our distance. Friendship, that relation without dependence, without episode and yet into which enters all the simplicity of life, passes by way of the recognition of the common strangeness that does not allow us to speak of our friends, but only to speak to them; it does not allow us to make them the theme of conversations (or of articles), but is the movement of the understanding in which, speaking to us, they keep, even in moments of the greatest familiarity, their infinite distance, that fundamental separation on the basis of which that which separates become relation. Here, discretion is not in the simple refusal to refer to what one has learned in confidence (how disgraceful that would be, even just to think about it), but it is the interval, the pure interval that, from me to this other who is a friend, measures everything there is between us, the interruption of being that never authorizes me to dispose of him, nor of my knowledge of him (even were it to praise him) and that, far from preventing any communication, relates us to one another in the difference and sometimes the silence of speech [*parole*]." At the death of the friend, the "measureless movement of dying," "the event" of death reveals and erases at the same time this "truth" of friendship: "no, not the deepening of the separation, but its effacement; not the enlarging of the caesura, but its leveling and the dissipation of that void between us where, long ago, there developed the frankness of a relation without history. The result is that, at present, what was close to us not only has ceased to approach, but has lost even the truth of the extremely distant. . . . We can, in a word, remember. But thought knows that one does not remember: without memory, without thought, it already struggles in the

ON THE MARGINS OF POLITICS*

THE general question raised by Jacques Derrida's subtle variations on Levinasian and Heideggerian themes is how best to be postmetaphysical in thinking about ethics, law, and politics. Is it by pursuing a deconstructionist strategy that remains at the level of metaphysics in order to disrupt and displace it? I think not, and want to indicate why by (all too briefly) suggesting another reading of the phenomena he alludes to, one that draws on just those domains of social research and practical philosophy which Heidegger devalued in relation to ontology (cf. fn. 5). A more specific question is whether "friendship" is the best place to start thinking about ethics, law, and politics. It might seem so if one's overriding concern is to escape the conceptual compulsion to identify (being with thought, the individual with the universal, etc.) which drives traditional metaphysics. I want to argue that there are other, less metaphysically motivated, ways of thinking about social relations so as not to exclude or forcefully assimilate what is different.

We become individuals in and through being socialized into shared forms of life. In this sense, the "Other" (here: culture, society) does indeed "come before autonomy." Because we become who we are by growing into a network of social relations, we are always "already caught up in . . . a curvature of social space." This is, however, "prior to any organized socius" only in the sense that the lifeworld is prior to formal law and formally organized spheres of life. Everyday life is itself highly organized and structured. And, as Harold Garfinkel and others have made clear, it is our shared understanding of social structure which informs the normative expectations we bring to social situations. (To pick up on Derrida's example: it is our knowledge of what it means to be invited to address a scholarly organization, to assemble for that purpose, to present a formal response to a

realm of the invisible where everything falls back into indifference. That is its profound grief. It must accompany friendship into oblivion." [Maurice Blanchot, *L'Amitié* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 326–330.] The epigraph to the book are these words of Georges Bataille: "friends even to that state of profound friendship where a man abandoned, abandoned by all his friends, meets up in life with the one who will accompany him beyond life, himself without life, capable of free friendship, detached from any ties."

* Abstract of a paper to be presented in an APA symposium on Law and Society, December 30, 1988, commenting on a paper by Jacques Derrida, this JOURNAL, this issue, 632–644. All phrases appearing in quotation marks are citations from that paper.