

The Subject of the Welcome: On Jacques Derrida's *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas*

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ABSTRACT: *Through a close reading of Derrida's recently published *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas*, the author undertakes to reflect on the significance of the expression "subject of the welcome," which Derrida retrieves from Lévinas's work. The author singles out four essential propositions which could define this hospitable subject: 1. The welcome of the other is a welcome of an infinite; 2. the welcome of the other is a genitive subjective; 3. the welcome is not a gathering; 4. the host is a guest. Those four characteristics manifest a peculiar ex-appropriation of the subject in Lévinas's work, on which the author reflects in two ways: first, by underlying Lévinas's reversal of the tradition of autonomous subjectivity; second, by attempting to think together the position and deposition of the subject through recourse to what Derrida calls the "ex-appropriation" of the subject.*

RÉSUMÉ: *À partir d'une lecture de *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas* de Jacques Derrida, l'auteur s'interroge sur la signification de l'expression "sujet de l'accueil", une expression que Jacques Derrida commente dans ce livre. L'auteur déploie quatre propositions qui pourraient cerner le sens de ce sujet hospitalier. 1. l'accueil de l'autre est l'accueil d'un infini; 2. l'accueil de l'autre est un subjectif génitif; 3. l'accueil n'est pas un recueil; 4. l'hôte (host) est un invité (guest). Ces quatre caractéristiques manifestent une singulière ex-appropriation du sujet dans l'oeuvre d'Emmanuel Lévinas, une ex-appropriation sur laquelle l'auteur réfléchit de deux façons: premièrement, en relevant un renversement de la tradition de la subjectivité autonome chez Lévinas; deuxièmement, en s'efforçant de penser ensemble la position et déposition du sujet à partir de ce que Jacques Derrida appelle "l'ex-appropriation" du sujet.*

Introduction

I would like in this paper to explore some of the issues raised by Jacques Derrida in his recent book on the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas, *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas*¹, and in particular the question or the treatment of the motif of subjectivity, approached in Derrida's text as "subject of the welcome". One brief word of presentation, first, is perhaps necessary to introduce this last work, since it is not yet to my knowledge available in

English. *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas* is Jacques Derrida's third major engagement with the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas, after "Violence and Metaphysics" (1967) and "At this very moment in this work here I am" (1980). This work is distinctive and extraordinary due to the context from which it springs. The first essay, entitled "*Adieu*," indeed consists of the complete text of Derrida's moving funeral oration delivered at the burial of Emmanuel Lévinas, on December 27 1995, at the Pantin cemetery near Paris. The second and main essay, entitled "*Le mot d'accueil*" ("The Word of Welcome" or "The Welcoming Address"), and with which I will be most concerned here, is the text from a lecture given in homage to Emmanuel Lévinas and held on the first anniversary of his death at the Richelieu Amphitheater at the Sorbonne. I would like in what follows to articulate and discuss the redefinition of the subjectivity of the subject as *hospitality*, i.e., as a welcome of the other.

At the beginning of *Adieu*, Derrida attempts to measure or appraise the revolutionary nature of Lévinas's thought, its extraordinary effects and impact. He writes: "Already well beyond France and Europe, we have many signs of [this impact] — so many works in so many languages, translations, courses, seminars and colloquia, etc. The effects of this thought will have fundamentally altered the philosophical reflection of our time" (14). Derrida further details the main aspects of this "revolution of thought," emphasizing its broad scope: It concerns no less than, precisely, Lévinas's reflection on philosophy, its relation to ethics, the way in which one finds in his thought the elaboration of "another thought of ethics, of responsibility, of justice, of the state, etc., another thought of the other itself" (14), etc. Further in "*Adieu*" (23-24), Derrida singles out the two fundamental "philosophical events" brought about by Lévinas: namely, his introduction of phenomenology in France with his 1930's *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*², and his transformation of both the sense and direction of phenomenology by drawing from another intellectual tradition, that of Jewish thought.

But if one had to single out one of the most determinative questions in Lévinas's thinking, it would have to be, at least according to Derrida in this book, that of subjectivity as it is redefined through the pivotal notion of *hospitality* as "subject of the welcome". Indeed, Derrida claims that Lévinas's thought as a whole should be approached from the motif of *hospitality*. Although, as Derrida admits, "the word does not occur frequently and is not emphasized, *Totality and Infinity* is an immense treatise on hospitality" (49). Furthermore, Derrida insists that "Lévinas's entire thought is and wants to be a teaching on... what 'to welcome' or 'to receive' should mean" (153). What is at issue, then, for Derrida in his reading of Lévinas is to develop "an interpretation of welcome or of hospitality" (44), an interpretation that he has himself since developed, we should note, in a new book published recently in

France and entitled: "*De l'hospitalité*" (*Of Hospitality*)³. Behind this question, there is of course an entire contemporary political and social context, an urgency that demands a response. Derrida refers specifically to the problems of immigration, to the precarious status of illegal immigrants, but also to all the populations in transit, displaced people, migrant workers, exiles and those who are "without a home". Derrida speaks of the "persecution of all these hostages: foreigners with or without papers, the exiles, the refugees, those without countries, without State, displaced persons or populations" (117-118). How does this situation alter our understanding of "hospitality", of "being at-home", of "identity" and of being one's own, of what a "nation" is, of our obligations and responsibilities? For Derrida, this situation calls for no less than "a mutation of the socio- and geo-political space, a political and juridical mutation, but above all calls for... an *ethical* conversion" (131, my emphasis). It calls, then, for nothing less than "another international right, another politics of borders, another humanitarian politics, even perhaps a humanitarian engagement which would *actually* take place beyond the interest of nation states" (176). All these tasks have been opened by Lévinas's rethinking of subjectivity, of how this understanding of the welcome or hospitality transforms the concept of subjectivity. It is thus important to dwell on it.

I. Hospitality as the Site of Ethics

First, a word on the scope of the question of hospitality in Lévinas's work: What does "to welcome" or "to receive" mean? The answer to this question, according to Derrida, would give us access to the very meaning of ethics in Lévinas's work. For, according to him, Lévinas offers us a genuine ethics of hospitality, that is to say, an ethics as hospitality. Hospitality, as Derrida approaches it here, is indeed not a "regional" question, for instance a political or juridical issue, or even a specific question within the field of ethics; instead, it pertains to ethics itself in its most authentic sense. Hospitality is not a mere "region of ethics," but is "ethicity itself, the very principle of ethics in its entirety" (94). It is precisely to this extent, as Derrida emphasizes on several occasions in the book, that the very word "ethics" is not, for Lévinas, the final word, in spite of what a certain philosophical *doxa* would suggest. For Derrida, the very term "ethics" should be used with great caution, because of its traditional weight. Hospitality designates what is in question here, and which Derrida had already identified in "Violence and Metaphysics" as "the ethics of ethics," that is, the *ethicality* of the ethical, or, in a formulation that we find in this work, as an "ethics beyond ethics" (15). Lévinas himself referred to this "ethics beyond ethics" with the term "Holiness" or "The Holy" (*sainteté*). At the beginning of *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas*, Derrida thus relates an anecdote that Lévinas confided to him one day during a walk

through the streets of Paris that what interested him most was not ethics - not, for instance, a prescriptive system of rules - but "the holy, the holiness of the holy" (15). "*Hospitality*" provides access to this *possibility* of ethics, to an ethics of hospitality, an ethics *as* hospitality.

Now this reformulation of ethics in its very possibility (*as* welcome or hospitality) opens, we will see, another question, that of the status of the subject, who will be approached as "subject of the welcome".

II. The Subject of the Welcome

How are we to grasp this reconsideration of hospitality as the site of ethics? Derrida begins by determining the scope of this question: it involves nothing less than a radical renewal of the concept of subjectivity. Indeed, Lévinas understands and defines the subject as a *welcome* of the other. When Lévinas defines the subject as *hôte* (in French, *hôte* means both host and guest, and this particular semantic situation will prove crucial to Derrida's interpretation), that is, as a welcome of the other, this does not mean that the subject would have, among other faculties or attributes, the ability to welcome the other. More importantly, this means that the subject, *as such*, is a welcome and hospitality of the other, before any self-positing identity. To define the subject as host or guest, as Lévinas does, amounts to positing that there is not, first, the subject as a pre-given substantial identity that would constitute the basis for a capacity to welcome. The welcome of the other defines the subject. As such, the subject *is* that very welcome, that very openness to the other. Its identity is thus fractured and opened by the irruption or invasion of the other. The first *revolution* brought about by the thought of hospitality, then, concerns the concept of subjectivity. The subject is no longer a self-identity, an ego, a consciousness, even an intentional consciousness. The subject is an openness to the other, insofar as it is a welcome of the other, and defined as host/guest.

I would like to unfold briefly this "revolution" of the concept of subjectivity, the term "revolution" having to be understood also in the literal sense of a spatial turning around or reversal, the concept of the subject being "turned upside down", so to speak. (This aspect will prove crucial when we come to question Lévinas's thinking on this issue read by Derrida). I will single out four fundamental features:

1. The first characteristic that can be identified with respect to the logic of hospitality is that the welcome of the other is a welcome of an infinite. The subject welcomes or receives the other *beyond its own finite capacities of welcoming*. The welcoming of the other, understood as a receiving, exceeds or overflows the capacity to receive. The welcoming exceeds the capacity to welcome. The "faculty" of welcoming is then exceeded by what it welcomes.

The subject is thus open to an other which is higher than itself. The welcome welcomes beyond its capacity to welcome. Hence it is a welcome of an infinite. The subject here designates "the hospitality of a finite threshold which opens to the infinite" (88). The subject is exhausted in the welcome of the other: it neither pre-exists nor survives it. This is why the subject must be conceived of as the welcome of the other, that is to say precisely, the welcome of the infinite.

2. To that extent, secondly, the welcome *of* the other, in the *objective* genitive sense should be understood as being first a welcome *of* the other in the *subjective* genitive sense (the other's welcome). The welcome *of* the other in the objective genitive sense is already an answer to a more prior welcome, that *of* the other in the subjective genitive sense. As Derrida stresses, the "yes" *to* the other is a response to the "yes" *of* the other." This response", he writes, "is called *as soon as* the infinite — always *off from* the other — is welcomed" (51). "*One must begin by responding*" (53). He cites this sentence from Lévinas: "It is not I — it is the other that can say *yes*" (52). Derrida underlines the consequences of this situation with respect to the concepts of decision and responsibility, traditionally attributed to the egological subject. Taking seriously the priority of the yes *of* the other over the yes *to* the other would lead to an entirely different approach to the question of decision and responsibility, which would no longer be the "development of an egological immanence" (53). In fact, as Derrida stresses, a theory of the subject is "incapable" (52) of accounting for any decision, just as autonomy, we could say, is incapable of accounting for responsibility. Here responsibility would no longer be identified with accountability, for it is no longer based on the free project of a spontaneous subject. Another thought of responsibility and decision, outside of the inadequate tradition of autonomous subjectivity, is here announced. Derrida wonders: "Lévinas would probably not say it in this way, but could it not be argued that, without exonerating myself in the least, decision and responsibility are always *of the other*?" In that case, the Lévinasian definition of the subject as "subject of the welcome" would amount to a complete reversal and destruction of the Cartesian/Kantian tradition of the autonomous subject.

3. Thirdly, to the extent that, as Derrida explains, "the welcoming only welcomes to the extent, an extent that is beyond all extent, that it welcomes beyond the capacity of the I" (55), because, in other words, of this constitutive "dissymmetrical disproportion," the welcoming cannot be understood as a *gathering*, in Heidegger's sense (as interpreted, a bit quickly, by Derrida). The welcome (*accueil*) is not a gathering (*recueil*, French rendering of *Versammlung*) in Heidegger's sense. Derrida here contrasts Heidegger and Lévinas, and argues that Lévinas's usage of "welcome" is in

fact in opposition to Heidegger's interpretations of *Versammlung* or *colligere*.⁴ He writes: "The thought of the welcome thus also initiates a discreet but clear and firm contestation of Heidegger, indeed of the central theme of gathering together or recollection (*Versammlung*), of a collecting (*colligere*) that would be accomplished in recollection" (59). Here the "gathering of the *at-home* already supposes the welcome" (59). To welcome does not mean to "collect," "recollect," "gather," or "appropriate," but to be exposed to an other higher than oneself. Derrida concedes that this statement, "the welcome makes possible the recollection of the at home," "defies both chronology and logic". But such is rigorously the meaning of the infinite for Lévinas: "to possess the idea of the infinite," writes Lévinas, "is to have already welcomed the Other" (60).

4. This structure of hospitable subjectivity (the subject being defined as host), in the end, involves a paradoxical situation with respect to the status of the *host*, a peculiar reversal — revolution, once again — of the meaning of the host. For if the subject is from the outset an host, an hospitality in an originary or pre-originary way, if it is not prior to this opening to the other, then there is no longer an "at-home" (*chez-soi*) or an ownership on the basis of which one would welcome. As I alluded earlier, the welcome is not a capacity or a power. The welcome *of* the other is a subjective genitive. Therefore, the subject, as host (*hôte*), immediately turns into a subject as guest (*hôte*). Indeed, in French the term *hôte* designates both host and guest, and Derrida makes ample use of this semantic resource: here, *the host is first and foremost a guest*, for there is no "at-home" from which the subject is able to receive or welcome, if one understands that as a power. Derrida, from the very first lines of the book, opposes such an understanding of hospitality, one that would assume that in order "to be able to welcome, perhaps one supposes that one is at-home, that one knows what one means by being at-home, and that at-home one hosts, one receives or one offers hospitality, thus appropriating a place in order to *welcome* the other, or worse, *welcoming* the other in order to appropriate a place..." (39-40). Against this conception of hospitality as a capacity or power of the subject on the basis of a self-assured proper place, Derrida emphasizes, on the contrary, the originality and radicality of the Lévinasian conception of hospitality. Since the gathering of the at-home already supposes the welcome of the other in the subjective genitive sense, then the host, as a "master in one's own home," becomes the guest as a "stranger in one's 'own' home". Derrida thus explains that "if the at-home with oneself of the dwelling is an '*at-home with oneself as in a land of asylum or refuge*,' this would mean that the inhabitant dwells there also as a refugee or an exile, a guest and not a proprietor" (72).

On the basis of all these motifs, Derrida is able to identify what he calls "the law of hospitality". This law marks or indicates the radical expropriation

that the subject undergoes in its very definition as a welcome of the other. Derrida describes in the following terms what he calls the "implacable law of hospitality":

The host who welcomes, the one who welcomes the invited guest, the welcoming host who believes himself the owner of the house is in reality a guest welcomed in his own home. He receives the hospitality that he offers *in* his own home, he receives hospitality *from* his own home — which ultimately does not belong to him. The host, as *host*, is a *guest* (79).

The inhabitant is a refugee, writes Derrida, an "exile, a guest, and not an owner" (72-73). The house is thus a "land of asylum," and hospitality designates "that originary dispossession, the withdrawal that, expropriating the "owner" of what is most his own, and expropriating the *self* of itself, makes of his home a place of transit" (79). The "at-home" becomes henceforth a "response to a wandering or errancy, a phenomenon of errancy which it stops" (164). In an extraordinary formulation, the meaning of which is undecidable, Derrida writes: the subject of the welcome is *chez lui chez l'autre*, i.e., is in his own home in the home of the other (173), a sentence which can mean simultaneously: The subject is at home in the other; or, at home, the subject is in the other.

Derrida traces and follows this radical expropriation of the self in Lévinas's most extreme, paroxistic formulations. The subject as host/guest, further radicalized in Lévinas's work (in particular in the later text *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*) will thus appear as *hostage*, hostage of the other. Such are, according to Derrida, the two figures of the Lévinasian ethics: "Hospitality without propriety" and the "persecuting obsession" of the hostage. Derrida plays on the proximity between "host" and "hostage," and undertakes to reflect on the passage between these two definitions of the subject, the subject as host and the subject as hostage. A logic of *substitution* here takes the place of a logic of subordination or subjection. But according to Derrida this logic follows the same movement undertaken in *Totality and Infinity*, while radicalizing further the destruction of the concepts of intentionality, activity or will, already challenged in the thought of the subject as host and hospitality. The persecution, substitution, accusation, the putting in question of the subject still designates the situation of the subject as host/guest, but now understood as "persecuted in the very place where it takes place, at the place where, as an immigrant, exile, stranger, perpetual guest, it finds itself assigned to a place before being able to take up one" (104). The host becomes the hostage, and Derrida suggests yet a third possible figure of the subjectivity of the host — perhaps a necessary logical implication of the

definitions of the subject of the welcome — that of the “(g)host”, place of a “visitation of a face” (192). Indeed, as he remarks judiciously: “Does hospitality not *follow*, if only for a second of secondarity, the unpredictable irruption of a visitation?” (116), evoking the traumatic invasion that any hospitality — if it is the welcome *of* an other in the subjective genitive — must already presuppose... This visit of the other “is not a response to an invitation; it exceeds every dialogical relation between a host and a guest. It *must* always have exceeded such a relation. Its traumatizing break in must have preceded what is so easily called hospitality...” (116). In a recent interview, gathered in the edited volume entitled *Questioning Ethics*, Derrida insists: “I try to dissociate the concept of this pure hospitality from the concept of ‘invitation’”. Invitation is the expecting of some guest, without surprise. But hospitality requires “absolute surprise”. Derrida continues: “I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of *any* other”. He concludes: “The other, like the Messiah, must arrive whenever he or she wants”⁶. Hospitality, then, is a receiving or welcoming which has no power over its own welcoming, it is an opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation.

III. Subjectivity and Ex-appropriation

How are we to understand, for ourselves, the logic of these four propositions on the subject of the welcome? Does it not reveal, each time, the radical expropriation of the self by the other, and the peculiar extenuation or exhaustion of subjectivity defined in this way? First, I would like to briefly reflect on the significance and scope of this all-too briefly summarized Lévinasian treatment of the subjectivity of the subject, and in particular on the peculiar movement of reversal or revolution with respect to the traditional concept of the subject, a movement that we have noted at several occasions; second I will attempt to interpret further the significance of this movement proper to Lévinas’s thought by way of an interrogation of the Derridean motifs of appropriation and expropriation.

1. The reversal of subjectivity. It appears quite clearly, in fact Lévinas admits it often, that the definitions of the subject as a “welcome of the other,” as “host,” then as “hostage” have been forged through and imply a peculiar reversal of the intentional willful subjectivity of the modern tradition in Philosophy: We often read that the responsibility for the other goes *against the grain* (*à rebours*) of intentionality and the will. Among many instances of this reversal, let us mention the following: The subject does not posit or constitute the meaning of the other, but is “invaded” by the other. The subject does not intentionally structure the meaning of its world, but is exceeded by the other which affects it. The subject does not initiate, but can only respond.

The subject is not a freedom, but a receptivity. The subject does not thematize, but is exposed to the transcendence of the infinite. The host does not receive, but is received in his own home, which then becomes a land of asylum, a place of transit. The subject, finally, is precisely not a subject, i.e., a substrate or foundation, but is *subjected*, as an hostage, to the other. As one can see, all the “features” of the Lévinasian concept of the subject amount to a peculiar reversal of its traditional sense. Ultimately this situation — which provides both the radicality as well as the limits of Lévinas’s thinking — reveals, para-doxically, the Cartesian-Husserlian heritage of Lévinas. Beginning with the I, he then proceeds to attempt to exceed it towards its outside, towards the exteriority of the other. We know that Lévinas understands the other as *exteriority*. Exteriority to what, if not, of course, to the ego, the self-enclosed ego of the Cartesian tradition? But is alterity exteriority? Only if it is thought in relation to the interiority of the subject. The hypothesis which I submit to reflection is that Lévinas’s thought could be characterized as an exploration of the *underpinnings* of the egological tradition, that it reverses. Paul Ricoeur makes that point: Lévinas’ thought, he explains, is a *reactive* thought, a thought of rupture, of excess, of hyperbole, a kind of symmetrical reversal of the Cartesian and Husserlian tradition in philosophy, opposing it but never really questioning its foundations.⁷ In fact, such a reversal would have the perverse effect of reinforcing it: For instance, to state that the subject is *subjected*, that it is always in the accusative position and never in the nominative, to substitute the “I think” with the accusative “*Me voici*”, “here I am”, to state that the subject is “the called one”, the “persecuted one”, etc... still seems to posit the subject as the “elected one”, the terminus of the call. It calls *me*. And doesn’t that precisely place the subject as the true *subjectum*, which is a past participle, as we know? For it is one thing to reverse this tradition, and quite another to no longer use it as a point of departure: Rather than begin from the ego, in order to then attempt to leave it by appealing to the only concept that remains, namely, that of exteriority, of the outside, it would be a question, as Ricoeur suggests, of going from the ego to the *self*, in order to see in it the givenness of the other in the constitution of a Same, but a Same in the sense of the *ipse* and not the *idem*. This subjection of the subject of the welcome to an immeasurable and excessive obligation shows that the I is exposed to an irreducible otherness, that its authentic Being-oneself is constituted in that very otherness. The I is constituted in an originary alteration of itself. Paul Ricoeur underlines this rightly in *Oneself as Another*, when he evokes the “verticality” of the call of conscience, the “dissymmetry” between the agency that calls and the self which is called. This verticality or dissymmetry manifests the hetero-affectation of the I, and the otherness at the heart of self-appropriation. As we can see, there is no frontal opposition here between the Same and the Other, between

appropriation and expropriation. The Same is constituted in, by, and perhaps even as, the Other. *The self takes place at the place of the other.*

2. This is why it would perhaps be useful, secondly, to reconsider the peculiar play of appropriation and expropriation at the basis of the positing and depositing of subjectivity. What of this movement of expropriation that seems to take place in Lévinas's rethinking of the subject as a subject of the welcome? The reversal of the egological-subjectivist tradition is also a destitution of the subject. Derrida emphasizes this movement of expropriation which seems to direct Lévinas's propositions on the subject of the welcome. In *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas*, Derrida offers a reinterpretation of Lévinas's thought as a whole, approached from the somewhat neglected motifs of *hospitality* and *welcome*. Derrida unveils a "logic of hospitality" (which proved to be a logic of expropriation) at work in Lévinas's text, one which allows to account for Lévinas's fundamental categories. Hence the notions of the "host," the "hostage," the "other as infinite," of an "ethics beyond ethics," are all traced back to a logic of hospitality which reveals the radical *dispossession* and *destitution* of the subject, the *ex-propriation* of any sense of "home," of "ownership," of "proper dwelling," etc. Hospitality designates "that originary dispossession, the withdrawal that, expropriating the 'owner' of what is most his own, and expropriating the *self* of itself, makes of his home a place of transit" (79). Such a reading brings out the true radicality of Lévinas's contention that the "subject" is to be understood in ethical terms, that is to say, as a welcome of the other.

How does that expropriation manifest itself? First, Derrida mentions the peculiar dispossession of the predicates of the subject when defined as host or hostage. For, "as host or as hostage, as other, as pure alterity, a subjectivity analyzed in this way must be stripped of every ontological predicate, a bit like the pure I that Pascal said is stripped of every quality that could be attributed to it..." (191). This stripping of predicates or accidents does not give access to some pure I-hood, here on the contrary the I itself is also stripped of all proper substantial identity, to become nothing but the mark or the trace of the other, as it were. In another passage, Derrida remarks that the introduction by Lévinas of transcendence at the core of the immanence of the subject "has to do with this pre-originary ex-propriety or ex-appropriation that makes of the subject a host/guest and a hostage, someone who finds him/herself, *before* any invitation, elected, invited and visited in his/her home as in the home of the other, who is in his/her own home in the home of the other (*chez lui chez l'autre*)" (173). Does this radical expropriation of any proper self mean, as Paul Ricoeur fears in *Oneself as Another*, the foreclosure of any possibility of Selfhood? Or on the contrary, are we to understand selfhood and expropriation together, in some enigmatic solidarity? Indeed, as we just saw, there is a kind of a paradoxical maintaining of the subject, even as destituted

or persecuted, and perhaps precisely *as* persecuted, or *as* expropriated of itself. How are we to think this paradoxical position/destitution? How are we to think together the expropriation of the subject with its constitution?

Perhaps one way would be to no longer oppose, as the two great genres of Being, the Same and the Other, and no longer oppose the egological solipsistic subject to the subject of the welcome/hostage of the other, as Lévinas does. Perhaps it would be a question of understanding how the I constitutes itself in, from and perhaps *as* the other, taking place, as self, in the place of the other. The inappropriable which is revealed by the inscription of the other in the I in fact manifests that the I comes *to itself* in the place of the other: *chez lui chez l'autre*. This is why Derrida no longer opposes the appropriation of the egological subjectivity to the ex-propriation of the subject of the welcome, but instead speaks of the *ex-appropriation* of the subject, marking that from the expropriation of the other, the self appropriates itself.

In his 1962 Lecture, "On Time and Being," a text with which Derrida is certainly very familiar, Heidegger explained that "Expropriation belongs to Appropriation", indeed, that Appropriation "is in itself *expropriation*" in the sense that "Appropriation expropriates itself of itself". By this expropriation, Heidegger insists, appropriation "does not abandon itself" but instead "preserves its own"⁸. It preserves its own by withdrawing "what is most fully its own". *Expropriation is thus the heart of appropriation*. The I, "as subject of the welcome", is thus given to itself from an infinite and abyssal withdrawal, a "secret" or an "alterity" to which we belong *as we belong to ourselves*. It is perhaps this secret and alterity of myself, which are not, as Jacques Derrida reminds us, *mine*, that bind me the most to myself. Everything takes place as if the relation to oneself, the belonging to oneself, (which Lévinas rightly denies in its unilateral subjectivist sense) is nothing but a relation and a belonging to this secret and this alterity. And this, is what Lévinas — and Derrida reading Lévinas — better than anyone else, have taught us and continue to teach us.

Notes

- 1 Jacques Derrida, *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas*, Paris, Galilée, 1997.
- 2 Emmanuel Lévinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1995.
- 3 Jacques Derrida, *De l'hospitalité*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1997.
- 4 For instance in the essay "Logos," in *Early Greek Thinking*, New York, Harper & Row, 1975.
- 5 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1981.
- 6 *Questioning Ethics*, edited by Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 70.
- 7 Already in *Oneself as Another*, and now in the recently published *Autrement. Lecture d'Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence d'Emmanuel Lévinas*, Paris, PUF, 1997.
- 8 Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, New York, Harper & Row, 1972, p. 23; p. 41.