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Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy

Jacques Derrida

I shall speak then of/in an apocalyptic tone in philosophy.¹

The Seventy have bequeathed us a translation of *gala*. It is called the Apocalypse.

In Greek, *apokalupsis* would translate words derived from the Hebrew verb *gala*. I am referring here, without drawing any authority from them, to some indications of André Chouraqui to which I shall return. But I must forewarn you even now: the (hi)stories or enigmas of translation I hear spoken of, that I intend to speak about, and in which I shall get myself entangled for reasons more serious than my incompetence, they are, I believe, without solution or exit.

That will be my theme. More than a theme, a task (*Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, Benjamin's just assignation) I shall not discharge.

The other day Jean Ricardou asked me, we were talking then about translation, to say a little more about what I had sketched out on a grace given beyond work, thanks to [*grâce au*] work, but without it. I was talking then of a *gift* "given there" ("*il y a*," *es gibt*), but above all given there without having, *in the final account*, to merit it in responsibility. We must translate and we must not translate. I am thinking of the *double bind* of YHWH when, with the name of his choice, with his name one could say, Babel, he gives *to translate and not to translate*. And no one, forever, since then, eludes the double postulation.

Well, to Jean Ricardou I shall reply as follows and do so in the form of an elliptical thanks for what I am given here, given to think or simply

An earlier version of this translation appeared in the journal *Semeia*. We are grateful to the editors for permission to print this revised translation.

given, beyond the thinkable, that is to say — that would be to say in German — beyond all memory and some thanks, given by our hosts at Cerisy, by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and by Jean-Luc Nancy, by all you with so much work and grace, so much grace in your work: proof against translation, grace would perhaps come when the writing of the other absolves you, from time to time, from the infinite *double bind* and first of all, such is a gift's condition, absolves itself, unbinds itself from this double bind, unburdens or clears itself, it, the language of writing, this given trace that always comes from the other, even if it is no one. To clear oneself of the gift, of the given gift, of giving itself, is the grace I now know you have and in any case that I wish for you. This grace is always improbable, it can never be proved. But must we not believe it happens? That was perhaps, yesterday, belief itself. Another way of saying: for what you have given me during these ten days I not only thank you, I pardon you. But who can authorise himself to pardon? Let's say that I ask pardon for you, of you yourselves for you yourselves.

Apokaluptō no doubt was a good word [*bon mot*] for *gala*. *Apo-kaluptō*, I disclose, I uncover, I unveil, I reveal the thing that can be a part of the body, the head or the eyes, a secret part, the sex or whatever might be hidden, a secret thing, the thing to be dissembled, a thing that is neither shown nor said, signified perhaps but that cannot or *must* not first be delivered up to self-evidence. *Apokekalummenoi logoi* are incident remarks. So it is a matter of the secret and the *pudenda*.

The Greek language shows itself hospitable here to the Hebrew *gala*. As André Chouraqui recalled in his short 'Liminaire pour l'Apocalypse' of John (of which he recently offered a new translation),² the word *gala* recurs more than one hundred times in the Hebrew Bible. And it seems in effect to say *apokalupsis*, disclosure, discovery, uncovering, unveiling, the veil lifted from about the thing: first of all, if we can say this, man's or woman's sex, but also their eyes or ears. Chouraqui specifies that

Someone's ear is discovered in lifting up the hair or the veil that covers it in order to whisper a secret into it, a word [*parole*] as hidden as a person's genitals. YHWH can be the agent of this disclosure, this uncovering. The arm or the glory of YHWH can also be uncovered to man's gaze or ear. So nowhere does the word *apocalypse* [concludes the translator referring here as well to the Greek as the Hebrew] have the sense it finally takes on in French and other languages, of fearsome catastrophe. Thus the Apocalypse is essentially a contemplation (*hazôn*) [and in fact Chouraqui translates what we are accustomed to call the Apocalypse of John by *Contemplation of Yohanân*] or an inspiration [*neboua*] at the sight, the uncovering or disclosure of YHWH and, here, of Yeshoua the Messiah [157].

Perhaps it would be necessary, and I thought for a moment of doing this, to collect [*lever*] or bring out [*relever*] all the senses pressing

around this Hebrew *gala*, faced with the columns and colossi of Greece, faced with the galactic under all the *milky ways* whose constellation had recently fascinated me. Curiously, there again we would have found significations like those of stone [*pierre*], of stone rolls, of cylinder, of parchment rolls and books, of rolls that envelop or furnish, but above all (and this is what I retain for the moment) the idea of laying bare [*mise à nu*], of specifically apocalyptic unveiling, of the disclosure that lets be seen what to then remained enveloped, secluded, held back, for example, the body when the clothes are removed or the glans when the foreskin is removed in circumcision. And what seems the most remarkable in all the Biblical examples I was able to find and must forgo exposing here is that the gesture of denuding or of affording sight — the *apocalyptic* movement — is more serious here, sometimes more guilty and more dangerous than what follows and what it can give rise to, for example copulation. Thus when, in Genesis 9:21, Noah gets drunk and uncovers himself in his tent, Ham sees his father's genitals, and his two brothers to whom he reports this come to cover Noah again but turn away from him in order not to see his genitals. Even there the unveiling is not the most guilty moment of a copulation. But when YHWH, speaking to Moses, declares a certain number of sexual prohibitions, the fault does indeed seem to consist essentially in the unveiling that affords seeing [*donne à voir*]. Thus, in Leviticus 20:11, 17:

The man who lies with his father's wife
has uncovered his father's sex.
Both of them are put to death. . . .

The man who takes his sister,
his father's daughter or his mother's daughter,
he sees her sex,
she sees his sex:
it is incest.

But the terrifying and sacred gravity of this apocalyptic uncovering is not any the less, of course, in the case of the arm of YHWH, of his glory, or of ears open to his revelation. And the disclosure not only opens to vision or contemplation, not only affords seeing but also affords hearing/understanding.

For the moment I forgo interpreting all the accords between *gala* and the *apocalyptic*, the Hebrew and the Greek. These accords are numerous and powerful; they support a great concert of translations, even if they do not exclude dissonances, deviations, or inadequations.

Preferring to let them resound all alone, I have chosen to speak to you rather of/in an apocalyptic tone recently adopted in philosophy. No doubt I wanted thus to mime in citation but also to transform into a genre, and then parody, deport, deform the well-known title of a perhaps less well-known pamphlet of Kant, *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen Vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie* (1796). The established

French translation: *D'un ton grand seigneur adopté naguère en philosophie* (tr. L. Guillermit, Vrin, 1975). ["Of an Overlordly Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy."] What happens to a title when made to undergo this treatment? when it begins thus to resemble the category of a genre, here a genre that come down to mocking those who give themselves a genre?

In making this choice, I also hoped to go meet those who, in one of the seminars these ten days, have precisely organised their work by privileging the reference to a certain Kantian caesura in the time of philosophy.

But I also let myself be seduced by another thing. The attention to tone, which is not just style, seems rather rare to me. Tone has been little studied for itself, supposing that is possible or has ever been done. A tone's distinctive signs are difficult to isolate, if they even exist in complete purity, which I doubt, above all in a written discourse. By what is a tone marked, a change or rupture of tone? And how do you recognise a tonal difference within the same corpus? What traits are to be trusted for analysing this, what signposting [*signalisation*] neither stylistic, nor rhetorical, nor evidently thematic or semantic? The extreme difficulty of this question, indeed of this task, becomes more accentuated in the case of philosophy. Isn't the dream or the ideal of philosophical discourse, of philosophical address [*allocution*], and of the writing supposed to represent that address, isn't it to make tonal difference inaudible, and with it a whole desire, affect, or scene that work (over) the concept in contraband? Through what is called neutrality of tone, philosophical discourse must also guarantee the neutrality of at least the imperturbable serenity that should accompany the relation to the true and the universal. Consequently, will it be possible to listen to or detect the tone of a philosopher, or rather (this precision is important) the *soi-disant* or *bugus* philosopher?

And if someone promised us to do this, would not s/he be engaging to pick out all the traits that, in a corpus, are not yet or no longer philosophical, all the regrettable deviations in relation to the atonal norm of philosophical address?

In fact, if Kant did have the audacity, very singular in history, to concern himself systematically with a certain tone in philosophy, we must immediately nuance the praise we would like to give him for this. First, it is not certain that he is bent on or succeeds in analysing the pure phenomenon of a tonality, as we are going to verify. Next, less does he analyse a tone in philosophy than denounce a *manner* of giving oneself airs; now it is a manner or a mannerism that, precisely, does not seem to him to be a very good tone [*de très bon ton*, in very good taste] in philosophy and so marks already a deviation in relation to the norm of philosophical discourse. More seriously, he attacks a tone that announces something like *the death of philosophy*.

The expression is Kant's and appears twice in this twenty-page lampoon; each time, this death is associated with the idea of a

supernatural revelation, of a vision provoking a mystic exaltation or at least a visionary's pose. The first time it is a question of a "supernatural communication" or a "mystical illumination" (*übernatürliche Mitteilung* (*mystische Erleuchtung*)) that promises a substitute or a supplement, a surrogate of a knowable object, "which is then the death of all philosophy (*der Tod aller Philosophie*)" [487]. And right near the end, Kant warns against the danger of an "exalted vision (*schwärmerische Vision*)" "which is the death of all philosophy" (once more *der Tod aller Philosophie*) [495].

Kant's comments are also marked with the tone he gives himself, with the effects he searches for, with his polemical or satiric verve. This is a social critique, and its premises have a properly political character. But if he derides a tone that announces the death of all philosophy, the tone in itself is not what is being mocked. Besides, the tone itself, what is it? Is it something other than a distinction, a tonal difference that no longer refers except by figure to a social code, to a group or caste mores, to class behaviours, by a great number of relays that no longer have anything to do with the pitch, the loftiness of the voice or timbre? Although, as I suggested a moment ago, the tonal difference does not pass for the essentially philosophical, the fact that there is tone, tonal marking, is not by itself alone, for Kant, what announces the death of all philosophy. It is a certain tone, a certain inflection socially coded to say such and such a determinate thing. The tonal loftiness [*hauteur*] he overwhelms with his sarcasm remains a metaphoric loftiness. These people speak in a lofty pitch [or loudly]; these loudspeakers raise the voice, but this is only said by figure and by reference to social signs. Kant never disregards [*fait abstraction de*] the content. Nevertheless — this fact is far from insignificant — the first time a philosopher comes to speak of the tone of other self-styled philosophers, when he comes to inaugurate this theme and names it in his very title, it is in order to be frightened or indignant faced with the death of philosophy. He brings to judgment those who, by the tone they take and the air they give themselves when saying certain things, place philosophy in danger of death and tell philosophy or philosophers the imminence of their end. The imminence matters less than the end. The end is near, they seem to say, which does not exclude that it may have already taken place, a little as in John's Apocalypse the imminence of the end or of the last judgment does not exclude a certain "you are dead./Stay awake!" [3: 1-2], whose dictation follows close on the allusion to a "second death" that will never overtake the victor.

Kant is sure that those who speak in this tone expect some benefit from it, and that is what will first interest me.

What benefit? What bonus of seduction or intimidation? What social or political advantage? Do they want to cause fear? Do they want to give pleasure? To whom and how? Do they want to terrify? To blackmail? [*Faire chanter?*] To lure into an outmatching in enjoyment? Is this contradictory? In view of what interests, to what ends do they wish to come with these heated proclamations on the end to come or the end

already accomplished? I wanted to speak to you today a little about this: in/of a certain tone and of what comes [*arrive*] to philosophy as its death, of the relation between this tone, this death, and the apparently calculated benefit of this eschatological mystagogy. The eschatological tells the *eskhaton*, the end, or rather the extreme, the limit, the term, the last, what comes *in extremis* to close a history, a genealogy, or very simply a countable series.

Mystagogues, that is Kant's word and specific charge. Before coming to my topic [*propos*], I shall take out some paradigmatic traits in Kant's indictment, paradigmatic and contraparamigmatic, for I am perhaps, in repeating what he does, going to come round to doing the contrary — or preferably something else.

The mystagogues make a scene, that is what interests Kant. But at what moment do the mystagogues come on stage and at times go into a trance? At what moment do they begin to play the mysterious ones?

The instant philosophy, more precisely the name philosophy, lost its first signification, *seine erste Bedeutung* [477]. And this primitive signification — Kant does not doubt this for a single instant — is "rational savoir-vivre," literally a wisdom of life regulating itself according to a knowledge or science (*wissenschaftlichen Lebensweisheit*). The mystagogues get hold of the name philosophy the instant it loses its signification or its original reference, that name from then on empty or usurped, that pseudonym or that cryptonym, which is first a homonym. And that does not fail to occur in a regular, recurrent way, ever since the sense had been lost: this is not the first time. To be sure, Kant is more closely interested in some recent examples of this mystagogic and psychagogic imposture, but he supposes at the outset that the usurpation is recurrent and obeys a law. There had been and will always be philosophical mystification, speculation on the end and the ends of philosophy. This depends on an event that Kant himself does not date and that he seems to situate right up against the origin, namely that the name philosophy can circulate without its original *reference*, in other words without its *Bedeutung* and without guarantee of its value. While still remaining in the Kantian axiomatic, as it were, we can already infer from this that no harm would have happened [*arrivé*], no mystagogic speculation would have been credible or efficient, nothing or no one would have detoned [*détonné*] in philosophy without this errance of the name far from the thing, and if the relation of the name philosophy to its primordial sense had been insured against every accident.

So some slackness was indeed necessary in this relation of sign to thing in order to contrive the space for a rerouting of sense or the grip for a perversion. Too slack a reference then, there where it should be tighter, more exact, more rigorous. Here I hand you an association that will perhaps seem verbal, but since the lack of rigour or tension in the verbalisation is already our concern, it occurs to me that *tonos*, tone, first signified the tight ligament, cord, rope when it is woven or braided,

cable, strap, briefly the privileged figure of everything subject to stricture. *Tonion* is the ligament as band and surgical bandage. In short, the same tension runs across tonic difference (that which under the word *stricture* forms both the theme and the instrument or cord of *Glas*) and tonal difference, the deviation, the changes or mutation of tones (Hölderlin's *Wechsel der Töne* constituting one of the most obsessive motifs of *La Carte postale*). From this value of tension, or of elasticity (for example in a ballistic machine), we pass to the idea of tonic accent, of rhythm, of mode (Dorian, Phrygian, etc.). The tone's pitch [*hauteur*] is tied to tension; it has a bond to the bond, to the bond's more or less tight tension. This is not sufficient for determining the sense of the word or *tone* when it is a matter of the voice. Even less when, through a great number of figures and tropical displacements, the tone of a discourse or of a piece in writing is analysed in terms of content, manners of speaking, connotations, rhetorical staging, and pose taken, in semantic, in pragmatic, scenographic terms, and so on; in short, rarely or not at all, in tuning in to the pitch of a voice or to a quality of timbre. I close this parenthesis.

So the bond fastening the name philosophy to its signification really had to be slackened for the philosophical title to be regularly available as a simple ornament, a decor, a costume, or ceremonial dress (*Ausschmückung*), a signifier usurped and treated as intellectual travesty or transvestism by those Kant nonetheless calls thinkers, and thinkers self-styled uncommon.

These people place themselves out of the common, but they have this in common: they say they are in immediate and intuitive relation with the mystery. And they wish to attract, seduce, lead toward the mystery and by the mystery. *Mystagogein* is indeed this: to lead, initiate into the mystery; that is the mystagogue's or the initiatory priest's function. This *agogic* function of the leader of men, of *duce*, of *Führer*, of *leader* places him above the crowd he manipulates through the intermediary of a small number of followers gathered into a sect with a crypted language, a band, a clique or a small party with its ritualised practices. The mystagogues claim to possess as if in private the privilege of a mysterious *secret* (*Geheimnis* is the word that recurs most often.) The revelation or unveiling of the secret is reserved to them: they jealously protect it. Jealousy is a major trait here. They never transmit the secret to others in the everyday language, only by initiation or inspiration. The mystagogue is *philosophus per initiationem* or *per inspirationem*. Kant envisages a whole differential list and a historical typology of these mystagogues, but he recognises in all of them one common trait: they never fail to take themselves for lords (*sich für Vornehme halten*) [478], elite beings, distinguished subjects, superior and apart in society. Whence a series of value oppositions I am content to indicate very quickly: they scoff at [*prennent de haut*] work, the concept, schooling; to what is given they believe they have access effortlessly, gracefully, intuitively or through genius, outside of school. They are partisans of intellectual intuition, and

the whole Kantian systematic could be recognised, though I shall not do so here, in this lampoon [*libelle*]. The hierarchised opposition of gift to work, of intuition to concept, of genius's mode to scholar's mode (*geniemässig/schulmässig* [ibid.]) is homologous to the opposition between aristocracy and democracy, eventually between demagogic oligarchy and authentic rational democracy. Masters and slaves: the overlord reaches with a leap and through feeling what is immediately given him; the people work, elaborate, conceive.

And there we approach the more acute problem of tone. Kant does not find fault with the true aristocrats, with persons truly "vornehme", with authentic distinction, only with those who give or take themselves for distinguished beings, with the grand air of those pretentious people who elevate their voice, with those who raise the tone in philosophy. Kant does not incriminate the lofty pitch of the overlordly tone when it is just, natural or legitimate. He takes aim at the rise in tone when an upstart *parvenu* authorises himself to do so by giving himself airs and by sporting usurped signs of social membership. So the satire aims at the mimicry and not the tone itself. For a tone can be mimicked, feigned, faked. I shall go so far as to say *synthesised*.

But what does the fiction of the tone presuppose? How far can that fiction go? Here I am going to force and accelerate a bit the interpretation beyond commentary. A tone can be taken, and taken from the other. To change voice or mimic the intonation of the other, one must be able to confuse or induce a confusion between two voices, two voices of the other and, necessarily, of the other in oneself. How we do distinguish the voices of the other in oneself? Instead of engaging myself directly in this immense problem, I return to the Kantian text and to a figure that seems to belong to the current rhetoric and to so-called *used up* [*usées*] metaphors. The question concerns the distinction between the voice of reason and the voice of the oracle. (Perhaps here I shall echo, without being sure I am responding to, the questioning, the injunction, or the request Jean-Luc Nancy addressed to me the other day).

Kant is lenient with highly placed persons who devote themselves to philosophy, even if they do so badly, multiply the faults against the School, and believe they reach the peaks of metaphysics. They have a certain merit; they have condescended to mingle with the others and to philosophise "on a foot of civil equality" (bourgeois, *bürgerlichen* equality) [482]. On the other hand, philosophers by profession are unpardonable when they play the overlord and take on grand airs. Their crime is properly political; it is a matter for [*releve de*] a kind of police. Farther on Kant will speak of the "police in the realm of the sciences (*die Polizei im Reiche der Wissenschaften*)" [493]. The police will have to stay vigilant to suppress — symbolically — not only the individuals who improperly adorn themselves with the title of philosopher, who take hold of and bedeck themselves [*s'emparent et se parent*] with the overlordly tone in philosophy, but also those who flock around them; for that

haughtiness [*morgue*] with which one settles on the peaks of metaphysics, that wordy arrogance is contagious; it gives rise to aggregations, congregations, and chapels. This dream of a police of knowledge could be related to the plan for a university tribunal presented in [Kant's] *Der Streit der Fakultäten*. The tribunal was intended to arbitrate the conflicts between the provisionally lower faculty (the faculty of philosophy) and the higher faculties, so called because they represent the power whose official instrument they are (theology, law, and medicine). This tribunal is also a parliament of knowledge. And philosophy, which has the right to inspect everything touching on the truth of theoretical (constative) propositions but no power to give any orders, occupies in the parliament the bench on the left; and in the conflicts concerning practical reason it has the authority only to treat formal questions. The other questions, the most serious for existence, are a matter for the high faculties, singularly theology. In the indictment before us, philosophers by profession are not pardoned when they take on a tone, overlordly because, in raising thus the tone, they hoist themselves above their colleagues or fellows (*Zunftgenossen*) [483], and wrong them in their inalienable right to freedom and equality regarding everything touching on reason alone. And they do this precisely — this is where I was wanting to come to — by perverting the voice of reason, by mixing the two voices of the other in us, the voice of reason and the voice of oracle. Those people believe work to be useless in philosophy: it would suffice to “lend an ear to the oracle within oneself (*nur das Orakel in sich selbst anhören*)” [478]. These are Kant's first words.

Since this voice speaks to them in private, through what is properly their idiomatic feeling, their desire or their pleasure, they make it say what they want. On the other hand, you do not make the voice of reason say just anything. These are the lampoon's last words: the voice of an oracle (*die Stimme eines Orakels*) always lends itself to all kinds of interpretations (*Auslegungen*) [495]. The priest-mystagogues are also interpreters; the element of their agogic power is the hermeneutic or hermetic seduction (and here one thinks of what Warburton said about the political power in ancient Egypt of the scribes and of the priests as decipherers of hieroglyphs). The overlordly tone dominates and is dominated by the oracular voice that covers over the voice of reason, rather parasitises it, causes it to derail or become delirious. To raise the tone, in this case, is to make it jump, make the inner voice delirious, the inner voice that is the voice of the other in us. The word delirium appears once in Latin, in citing the verse of a monk of the Middle Ages (“*Quaerit delirus quod non respondet Homerus*” [481]), and one other time in the French translation (here I find it a little forced but interesting) for a word that interests me even more, *Verstimmung*.

Guillermi translates *Verstimmung der Köpfe zur Schwärmerei* [486] as “*délire de têtes qui s'exaltent*” [99], as “*delirium in the heads of those who exalt themselves,*” and he is right. The overlordly tone acts on

the authority of a *salto mortale* (which is also Kant's expression), a leap from concepts to the unthinkable or the irrepresentable, an obscure anticipation of the mysterious secret come from the beyond. This leap toward the imminence of a vision without concept, this impatience turned toward the most crypted secret sets free a poetico-metaphorical overabundance. To that extent this overabundance has indeed an apocalyptic affinity, but Kant never speaks the word for reasons we shall glimpse in a moment. *Verstimmen*, which Guillermit translates not without reason by *délirer*, to be delirious, is first of all to put out of tune [*désaccorder*], when speaking of a stringed instrument [*instrument à cordes*], or again for example, a voice. This is currently said of a piano. Less strictly this signifies to derange, to put out of order, to jumble. One is delirious when one is deranged in the head. *Verstimmung* can come to spoil a *Stimmung*: *pathos*, or the humour that then becomes testy. The *Verstimmung* we are speaking about here is indeed a social disorder and a derangement, an out-of-tune-ness [*désaccordement*] of strings and voices in the head. The tone leaps and rises when the voice of the oracle takes you aside, speaks to you in a private code, and whispers secrets to you, while uncovering your ear, jumbling, covering, or parasitising the voice of reason that speaks equally in each and maintains the same language for all. The voice of reason, Kant says, *die Stimme der Vernunft* [491], speaks to each without equivocation (*deutlich*), and it gives access to scientific knowledge. But it is essentially for giving orders and prescribing. For if we had the time to reconstitute the whole internal and properly Kantian necessity of this address, we would have to go as far as the extreme finesse of the objection made to the mystagogues. Not only do they confuse the voice of the oracle with that of reason. They do not distinguish either between pure speculative reason and pure practical reason; they believe they *know* what is solely *thinkable* and reach through feeling alone the universal laws of practical reason. So there is a voice of practical reason; it describes nothing; it says nothing describable; it dictates, prescribes, orders. Kant also names it in Latin: *dictamen rationis* [491]. Although it gives rise to autonomy, the law it dictates is as little flexible, as little subject to free interpretation as if it came from the completely other in me. It is a "brazen voice" (*ibid.*), Kant says. It resounds in every man, for every man has in him the idea of duty. And it resounds rather loud in him; it strikes rather percussively and repercussively; it almost thunders in him, for man trembles (*zittert*) [*ibid.*] to hear this brazen voice that, from the height of its majesty, orders him to sacrifice his drives, to resist seductions, to forgo his desires. And the voice promises me nothing in return; it insures me no compensation. It is sublime in this; it orders, mandates, demands, commands without giving anything in exchange; it thunders in me to the point of making me tremble; it thus provokes the greatest questions and the greatest astonishment (*Erstaunen*) [492]. That is the *true* mystery; Kant also calls it *Geheimnis* [*ibid.*], but it is no longer the mystery of the mystagogues. It is the mystery at once domestic, intimate, and

transcendent, the *Geheimnis* of practical reason, the sublimity of moral law and moral voice. The mystagogues fail to recognise that *Geheimnis*; they confuse it with a mystery of vision and contact, whereas the moral law never gives itself to be seen or touched. In this sense, the *Geheimnis* of moral law is more in tune with the essence of the voice that hears/understands itself but neither touches nor sees itself, thus seeming to hide itself from every external intuition. But in its very transcendence the moral voice is nearer, and thus more auto-effective, more autonomous. The moral law then is more auditory, more audible than the mystagogic oracle still contaminated by feeling, illumination, or intuitive vision, contact and mystical tact (*ein . . . mystischer Takt*, Kant says [486]). The overlordly tone detones because it is foreign to the essence of the voice.

Why did I feel inclined, at this moment of my reading of an overlordly tone, to add this piece to the dossier (if I can say that) of *La Carte postale*? Or again to file it in what is called *dossier* therein, between the word and the thing, the word *dossier* packed with all the *dos* [backs] whose note and syllable punctuate the "Envois" on each page, at Socrates's back and on the back of the postcard, with all the words in *do* and with the back [*dossier*] of the chair, of the partition between Plato and Socrates when the latter seems to write what the former dictates? Not only on account of the mixing or changing of tones (*Wechsel der Töne*) that would form in this book at once a theme and a manner. Nor on account of the word and the thing "apocalypse" that regularly recur there, with the numerological obsession and the insistence of the number 7 that also gives rhythm to John's Apocalypse. The signer of the "Envois" mocks what he calls "my postcard apocalypse" [17], our "little, library apocalypse" [16]. Nor is this the satire of academic philosophy. No, at this point of my reading of "an overlordly tone," what I did feel inclined to add to *La Carte postale*'s dossier is the difficulty Plato gives to Kant, the devilish job Kant gives himself with Plato, the untiring rhetoric for distinguishing between the good Plato and the bad Plato, the true and the false, his authentic writings and his more or less reliable or apocryphal ones.

That is to say, his Letters. Kant wants at once to accuse and excuse Plato for/of this continuous catastrophe that has corrupted philosophy, the strict relation between the name and the thing "philosophy," in order to end in this detoning *Verstimmung*. He wants to accuse *and* excuse him for/of delirium in philosophy, one would say, in the same movement of a double postulation. *Double bind* again of filiation: Plato is the father of the delirium, of all exaltation in philosophy (*der Vater aller Schwärmerei mit der Philosophie* [487]), but without it having been his fault (*ohne seine Schuld* [*ibid.*]). So we must divide Plato; we must distinguish between the Academician and the presumed author of the Letters, the teacher and the sender [*envoyeur*].

Thus Plato the Academician was, without it being his fault (for he

used his intellectual intuitions only *regressively* in order to *explain* the possibility of a synthetic *a priori* knowledge, and not *progressively* in order to *extend* this knowledge thanks to that idea readable (*lesbare*) in the divine understanding [the innocent Plato is Kant's father, as well as the postcard³ of a self-portrait by Kant; the innocent Plato is not the father of delirium]), the father of all exaltation in *philosophy*. But I am hardly disposed to confuse with this Plato that of the *Letters* (*Plato den Briefsteiler*) just translated into German. [487]

Kant's pamphlet, which came out in the *Berliner Monatschrift*, is dead set against a certain Schlosser who had just translated the Letters of Plato, in a work entitled *Plato's Letters on the Syracuse Revolution, With an Introduction and some Remarks* (1795). Kant seems to denounce Schlosser *directly* when he appeals to Plato and certain of his so-called esoteric doctrines; but *indirectly*, we know he wants to get at Jacobi. And what is intolerable in this letter-writer Plato is aristocratic esotericism — Kant cites that Letter recommending that secrets not be divulged to the crowd — a cryptophilia combined with a mystical interpretation of mathematics. The great stake between Plato and Kant is of course the philosophical interpretation of mathematics. Plato, enchanted by geometric figures, as Pythagoras was by numbers [*nombres*], would have done nothing but have a presentiment of the problematic of the *a priori* synthesis, and too quickly would have taken refuge in a mysticism of geometry, as Pythagoras in the mysticism of numbers. And this mathematising mysticism, this idolatry of figures and numbers [*chiffres*] always goes hand in hand with the phenomena of sect, cryptopolitics, indeed superstitious theophany that Kant opposes to rational theology. Numerology, mystic illumination, theophanic vision — all that indeed belongs to the apocalyptic world. And here I note in passing that, in the vast and overabundant corpus of the apocalyptic "genre," from the Persian and Zoroastrian heritage up to the very numerous Jewish and Christian apocalypses, the experts often inscribe this or that text of Plato, especially the myth of Er in the *Republic*. This apocalyptic corpus has been collected, identified, and studied as such only in the nineteenth century. Kant never names the Apocalypse in this text, but he does make, three years earlier, a brief allusion to it, between parentheses, in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* — which is one of the most indispensable contextual surroundings for understanding the essay "Of an Overlordly Tone. . . ." In this parenthesis, the Apocalypse is invoked in order to designate the punishment of the guilty ones at the end of the world as the end of history (Book Three, Division Two, "Historical Account of the Gradual Establishment of the Sovereignty of the Good Principle on Earth." Also cf. *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, p.374 [p.73 of *Le Conflit des Facultés*].)

This cryptopolitics is also a cryptopoetics, a poetic perversion of philosophy.

And it is again a matter of the veil and of castration.

Eight years ago, right here in fact, I had spoken of veil and castration, of interpreters, of hermeneutics and hermetics. *I have forgotten my umbrella* is a statement at once hermetic and totally open, as secret and superficial as the postcard apocalypse it announces and protects against. And elsewhere, in *Glas* and in "Economimesis," I indicated the intrigue of a certain veil of Isis around which Kant and Hegel had more than once busied themselves. I am going to expose myself to taking (and tying) up again with the threads of this intrigue and with the treatment of castration, faced with Isis.

About the veil of Isis and about castration Kant says nothing that visibly refers them to one another within the same demonstrative argument. I observe only a kind of tropical continuity, but the tropical transfer(ence), the metaphorical and the analogical, is exactly our problem.

The mystagogues of modernity, according to Kant, do not simply tell us what they see, touch, or feel. They have a presentiment of, they anticipate, they approach, they smell out, they are the men of imminence and the trace. For example, they say they have a presentiment of the sun and cite Plato. They say that every philosophy of men can show or designate the dawn, but that one can have only a presentiment of the sun. Kant is ironical about this presentiment of the sun; he multiplies his sarcastic remarks. These new Platonists give us through sentiment or presentiment (*Gefühl, Ahnung*) only a theatrical sun (*Theatersonne*) [488], a chandelier in sum [*un lustre en somme*]. And then these people abuse metaphors, figurative expressions (*bildlichen Ausdrücken*) [ibid.], in order to sensitise us, to make us presensitive to this presentiment.

Here is an example of this — Kant cites his adversaries: " 'to approach so near the divine wisdom that one can perceive the quivering of its garment'" (its rustling [*Rauschen*], rather than its light touch [*frôlement*] as the French translation says [101]). Or again: "'since he cannot raise the veil of Isis, at least it can be made so thin (*so dünne*) that one can have a presentiment of the goddess under it (*unter ihm*)'" [488]. To raise the veil of Isis here is *aufheben* ("da er den Schleier der Isis nicht aufheben kann"), and one can still dream between the *gala* of this *Aufhebung* and that apocalyptic unveiling.

Kant fires off his dart [*son trait*]: thin to what point, he asks; that we are not told. Probably not thin enough, still too thick for one not to be able to do what one wants with the ghost (*Gespenst*) behind its veil or sheet. For otherwise, if the veil was absolutely thin, transparent, this would be a vision, a seeing (*Sehen*), and, Kant notes in quite mercilessly taking aim, that must be avoided (*vermieden*) [488]. Above all we must not see; we must have only a presentiment under the veil. Then our mystagogues play on the ghost and the veil; they replace the evidences and proofs with "'analogies,'" "'versimilitudes'" ("'*Analogien, Wahrscheinlich-keiten*'") [ibid.]. These are their words. Kant cites them

and calls us to witness: you see, they are not true philosophers; they resort to poetic schemas. All that [ça] is so much literature. We know this scene well today, and it is, among other things, to this repetition that I would like to draw your attention. Not to take sides or come to a decision — I shall do no such thing — between metaphor and concept, literary mystagogy and true philosophy, but for a start to recognise the old solidarity of these antagonists or protagonists.

Consider now that Kant first proposes the word or the image of castration, or more rigorously of “emasculat[i]on (*Entmannung*)” [488], as one example of those “analogies” or “verisimilitudes” this “new mystico-Platonic language” [487] abuses to manipulative ends. He first takes them from a sentence of that Schlosser who just translated and introduced Plato’s Letters. Nietzsche might have made something of this name Schlosser, as he did of a Schleiermacher, the *first maker of hermeneutic veils*. Schlosser is the locksmith, the man who makes or keeps the keys, true or false, but also the official in charge of locking up, the one who closes and knows all about closure, expert as he is in speaking of it, in producing it, or in getting the better of it. This Schlosser then had spoken, by figure, of the “emasculat[i]on of reason (*Entmannung der . . . Vernunft*),” and he had accused “metaphysical sublimation (*metaphysische Sublimation*)” [488] of this emasculat[i]on. An inadmissible analogy in Kant’s eyes, abusive because it takes the place of proof by coming to the place where the demonstration leaves a “lack (*Mangel*),” but also scandalous because in truth those who adorn themselves with this new tone in philosophy emasculate and make a corpse of reason. “To this very end,” he says, “for want of rigorous proofs, some ‘analogies, verisimilitudes’ are enlisted as argument (it had been a question of this above), thus ‘the fear of the emasculat[i]on [the French translation [101-2] says castration for emasculat[i]on] of reason made so enervated by metaphysical sublimation that it has trouble bearing the shock in its fight against vice.’ ” And Kant immediately turns the argument inside out, I would say like a glove: “whereas, nevertheless,” he says, “precisely in these *a priori* principles does practical reason find an exact feeling that it never otherwise had a presentiment of, and indeed rather by the empirical that is falsely attributed to it (this very fact is what makes it improper for a universal legislation) is it emasculated and paralysed (*entmannt und gelähmt*)” [488-91].

If castration is a metaphor or a simulacrum — and so it must be, it seems, since it concerns the phallus, not the penis or the clitoris — then the metaphorical stake is clear between the two opposing parties sketched out [*campés*] by a Kant who is no less a party in this. The stake for this *Kampfplatz* of metaphysics is the castration of reason. Which of the two parties facing each other most surely castrates reason? Or more seriously: which of the two unmans, *entmannt*, this descendant of *logos* that is *ratio*? Each of the two, we just heard them without the least equivocation, would accuse the other of castrating the

logos and of defalcating its phallus. And into this debate, phallogocentric on both sides, therefore throughout, we could put Freud on the scene as a third robber procuring the key, true or false, the "sexual theory," namely that for this stage of reason wherein there is only male reason, only a masculine *or* castrated organ or canon of reason, everything proceeds in this just as for that stage of infantile genital organisation which there is definitely a masculine but no feminine. Perhaps he would speak of a *phallic stage* of reason. "The antithesis here," Freud says at the end of "The Infantile Genital Organisation," "is between having a *male genital* and being *castrated*" [145]. No sexual difference [*pas de différence*] as opposition, but only the masculine! This strange logic (reason since Freud, Lacan would say) could be followed quite far into the details of the text, above all in the moments when the veil of Isis unleashes what Freud calls *Bemächtigungstrieb*, the drive for mastery. Kant for example accuses the mystagogic metaphysicians of behaving like "musclemen (*Kraftmännern*)" who lately preach with enthusiasm a wisdom that costs them nothing, since they claim they have caught this goddess by the end of her robe and thus have made themselves her masters and lords; they would have "mastered (*bemächtigt*) [490n] her, and so on.

The castration or not of the *logos* as *ratio* is a central form of this debate around metaphysics. It is also a fight around poetics (between poetry and philosophy), around the death or the future of philosophy. The stake is the same. Kant does not doubt this: the new preachers need to pervert philosophy into poetry in order to give themselves grand airs, to occupy through simulacrum and mimicry the place of the great, to usurp thus an essentially symbolic power.

Schlosser, the locksmith, we could also say, right here, the man of the lordly castle, not only abuses poetic metaphors. He accuses his century of being prosaic; and he dares to write to Plato, addresses him, invokes him, apostrophises him, calls him to witness: "*Armer Plato*, poor Plato, if you were not marked with the seal of Antiquity . . . who would still want to read you in this *prosaic* century in which the highest wisdom consists in seeing only what is at our feet and in admitting only what can be grasped with the hands?" Locked in combat with this Schlosser who thrashes the new sons of the earth, Kant plays Aristotle against Plato: "But unfortunately this reasoning is not *conclusive*; it proves too much. For *Aristotle*, a manifestly prosaic philosopher, also clearly has the seal (*Siegel*) of Antiquity and could on this account lay claim, he too, to being read! — At bottom, all philosophy is indeed prosaic, and to propose today to go back to philosophising poetically (*wiederum poetisch zu philosophieren*) could well pass for proposing to the shopkeeper (*Kaufmann*) that he henceforth no longer write his account books in prose but in verse" [495n].

But the strategy on both sides is more twisted still. The mystagogues, the analogists, and the anagogists, they too play the Aristotle card. And at this moment of play it is a matter of the ends and the end of

philosophy. The watch [*La veillée*] over the death or the end of philosophy, the vigil [*la veille*] by the corpse of philosophy is not just an ancient (hi)story because it would date back to Kant. For it was already said that if philosophy were finished, that was not a deferred action [*un après-coup*] of the Kantian limitation or of the bounds [*termes*] placed on the empire of metaphysics, but “already for two thousand years” [482n]. Already for two thousand years have we finished with philosophy, said a disciple of Schlosser, a real count, this one, Count Leopold Stolberg, since “the Stagirite has made so many conquests for science that he left to his successors only very few notable things for which they can lie in wait” [482-93n].

Kant’s rejoinder is that of a decided progressive; he believes in philosophy’s finally open and unveiled future. It is also the response of an egalitarian democrat: you want to put an end to philosophy through obscurantism (*durch Obskurieren*) [483n] and you are disguised monarchists; you want all to be equal among themselves, but with the exception of one single individual all are nothing. Sometimes the individual is Plato, sometimes Aristotle, but in truth through this monarchism you play the philosophers, and elevate yourselves by proclaiming the end of philosophy in an overlordly tone.

Naturally, even when he fights like this, Kant declares that he does not like war. As in *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (wherein he distinguished moreover between natural warfare and the conflict arbitrated by a law), he ends by proposing to the castrating adversary a kind of concordat, a deal, a peace treaty, or a contract, in short the solution of a conflict that is not an antimony. As perhaps you have foreseen, this contract is more important to me than the whole combinatory strategy, the play, and the exchange of places. What can deeply bind the two adversary parties and procure for them a neutral ground of reconciliation for again speaking together in a fitting tone? In other words, what do they together exclude as the inadmissible itself? What is the *inadmissible*?

Kant speaks of modernity, and of the mystagogues of his time, but you will have quickly perceived in passing, without my even having to designate explicitly, name, or pull out all the threads, how many transpositions we could indulge in on the side of *our* so-called modernity. I will not say that today everyone would recognize him or herself on this or that side, purely and simply, but I am sure it could be demonstrated that today every slightly organized discourse is found or claims to be found on both sides, alternately or simultaneously, even if this emplacement exhausts nothing, does not go round the turn or the contour [*ne fait pas le tour ou le contour*] of the place and the discourse held. And this inadequation, always limited itself, no doubt indicates the densest difficulty. Each of us is the mystagogue *and* the *Aufklärer* of an other. I leave to you to try some of these transpositions; we could return to them in the discussion.

What, then, is the contract? What condition does Kant lay down for those who, like himself, declare their concern to speak the truth, to

reveal without emasculating the *logos*? For they agree on this together, this is the place of consensus where they can meet and come together, their synagogue. Kant first asks them to get rid of the veiled goddess before which they both tend to kneel. He asks them no longer to personify the moral law or the voice that incarnates it. No longer, he says to the mystagogues, should we personify the law that speaks in us, above all not in the "esthetic," sensible, and beautiful form of this veiled Isis. Such will be the condition for understanding/hearing the moral law itself, the unconditioned, and for understanding/hearing ourselves. In other words, and this is a trenchant motif for thought of the law or of the ethical today, Kant calls for placing the law above and beyond, not the person, but personification and the body, above and beyond as it were the sensible voice that speaks in us, the singular voice that speaks to us in private, the voice that could be said in his language to be "pathological" in opposition to the voice of reason. The law above the body, above this body found here to be represented by a veiled goddess. Even if you do not want to grant some *signifiante* or "significance" to the fact that what the concordat excludes is precisely the body of a veiled Isis, the universal principle of femininity, murderess of Osiris all of whose pieces she later recovers, except for the phallus. Even if you also think that that is a personification too analogical or metaphorical, grant me at least this: the truce proposed between the two declared defenders of a non-emasculated *logos* supposes some exclusion. It supposes some *inadmissible*. There is an excluded middle and that will be enough for me.

Enough for me in view of what? Before pursuing this question, I shall read the proposition of peace or alliance addressed by Kant to his adversaries of the day, but perhaps to his accomplices of all times:

But what is the good of all this conflict between two parties that at bottom share the same good intention: to make men wise and honest? It is noise about nothing, a discord based on a misunderstanding, which calls less for reconciliation than for reciprocal explanation in order to conclude an accord, an accord that makes a still more profound concord for the future.

The veiled goddess before which we on both sides bend our knees is the moral law in us in its invulnerable majesty. We certainly perceive its voice, and we understand very clearly its commandments. But in hearing it we doubt whether it comes from man and whether it originates from the all-powerfulness of his very own reason, or whether it emanates from some other being, whose nature is unknown to man and who speaks to him through his own proper reason. At bottom we would perhaps do better to exempt ourselves entirely from this research, for it is simply speculative, and what (objectively) devolves upon us to do remains the same, let one found it on one or the other principle. The only difference is that the didactic procedure of leading the moral law in us back to

distinct concepts according to a logical method is alone properly *philosophical*, whereas the procedure consisting in personifying this law and in making of the reason that morally commands a veiled Isis (even when we attribute no other properties to it than those the first method discovers in it) is an *esthetic* manner of representing (*eine ästhetische Vorstellungsart*) exactly the same object. It is indeed permitted to rely on this manner, since one has already started by leading the principles back to their pure state, in order to give life to this idea thanks to a sensible, though only analogical, presentation (*Darstellung*), not however without always running some risk of falling into an exalted vision, which is the death of all philosophy. [494-95]

Among the numerous traits characterising an apocalyptic type of writing [*écrit*], let us provisionally isolate prediction and eschatological preaching [*prédication*], the fact of telling, foretelling, or preaching the ends, the extreme limit, the imminence of the last. Can one not say then that all the parties to such a concordat are the subjects of eschatological discourses? No doubt, other contexts taken into account, this situation is older than the Copernican revolution; the numerous prototypes of apocalyptic discourses would suffice to attest to this, as would so many others in the meantime. But if Kant denounces those who proclaim that philosophy has been at an end for two thousand years, he has himself, in marking a limit, indeed the end of a certain type of metaphysics, freed another wave of eschatological discourses in philosophy. His progressivism, his belief in the future of a certain philosophy, of another metaphysics, is not contradictory to this proclamation of ends and of the end.

And I shall now start again from this fact: from then on and with multiple and profound differences, indeed mutations, being taken into account, the West has been dominated by a powerful program that was also an untransgressible contract among discourses of the end. The themes of the end of history and the death of philosophy represent [*figurent*] only the most comprehensive, massive, and gathered forms of this. To be sure there are obvious differences between Hegelian eschatology, that Marxist eschatology people have too quickly wanted to forget these last years in France (and perhaps this was another eschatology of *Marxism*, its eschatology and its death knell [*glas*]), Nietzschean eschatology (between the last man, the higher man, and the overman), and so many other more recent varieties. But aren't these differences measured as deviations in relation to the fundamental tonality of this *Stimmung* audible across so many thematic variations? Haven't all the differences [*différends*] taken the form of a going-one-better in eschatological eloquence, each newcomer, more lucid than the other, more vigilant and more prodigal too, coming to add more to it: I tell you this in truth; this is not only the end of this here but also and first of that there, the end of history, the end of the class struggle, the end of

philosophy, the death of God, the end of religions, the end of Christianity and morals (that [ça], that was the most serious naïveté), the end of the subject, the end of man, the end of the West, the end of Oedipus, the end of the earth, *Apocalypse Now*, I tell you, in the cataclysm, the fire, the blood, the fundamental earthquake, the napalm descending from the sky by helicopters, like prostitutes, and also the end of literature, the end of painting, art as a thing of the past, the end of psychoanalysis, the end of the university, the end of phallogocentrism and phallogocentrism, and I don't know what else? And whoever would come to refine, to say the finest fine [*le fin du fin*], namely the end of the end [*la fin de la fin*], the end of ends, that the end has always already begun, that we must still distinguish between closure and end, that person would, whether wanting to or not, participate in the concert. For it is also the end of metalanguage on the subject of eschatological language. With the result that we can wonder if eschatology is a tone, or even the voice itself.

Isn't the voice always that of the last man? The voice or language [*langue*] itself, the song or accent in language itself? Hölderlin closes his second version of *Patmos*, the poem bearing as its title the name of the apocalyptic island, that of John, by invoking the poem of the German tongue (*Dem folgt deutscher Gesang*. ["This German song observes."]) Heidegger often cites the first lines of this poem: "Nah ist / Und schwer zu fassen der Gott. / Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch." ("Near is / And difficult to grasp, the God. / But where danger threatens / Grows also what saves."). And if Heidegger thinks the *Überwindung* of metaphysics or of ontotheology as that of the eschatology which is inseparable from it, he does so in the name of another eschatology. Several times he says of thought, here distinct from philosophy, that it is essentially "eschatological." That is his word.

Isn't the voice of the language, I was asking, always that of the last man? Forgoing reading with you Blanchot's *Le Dernier Homme*, I recall, since I spoke of the voice and of Oedipus, this fragment from the *Philosophenbuch*. Nietzsche, under the title "Oedipus" and in an absolute soliloquy, has speak with himself the last philosopher who is also the last man. He speaks *with* his voice; he converses with himself [*s'entretient*] and maintains [*entretient*] what life remains for him with the phantom of his voice; and he calls (on) himself, he is called Oedipus: "The last philosopher, that thus is what I name myself, for I am the last man. No one speaks to me except myself alone, and my voice comes to me like that of someone dying. With you, beloved voice, with you, last breath of the memory of all human happiness, allow me still this commerce of a single hour. Thanks to you I delude my solitude, and I penetrate into the lie of a multiplicity and a love, for my heart loathes believing that love is dead; it does not tolerate the shudder of the most solitary of solitudes, and it obliges me to speak as if I were two."

"As if I were two": for the moment he thus sends himself this message by acting *as if* he could still really address it to himself, this

impossible destination signs the death of the last man, in and outside him. He knows him beyond the *as if*: "And yet! I still hear you, beloved voice! He still dies *someone* outside me, the last man, in this universe: the last sigh, *your* sigh dies with me, this long alas! alas! breathed out on me, the last of the miserable ones, Oedipus!"

Then if eschatology surprises us at the first word, at the first as at the last, always at the last but one, what are we to say? What are we to do? The response to this question is perhaps impossible, because it never lets itself be expected. For the question is that of the response, and of a call promising or responding before the question.

Clarity is necessary, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe said yesterday. Yes. But there is light, and there are lights, daylight, and also the madness of the day (*la folie du jour*). "The end is beginning," we read in *La Folie du jour*. Without even referring to apocalypses of the Zoroastrian type (there were more than one of them), we know that every apocalyptic eschatology is promised in the name of light, of seeing and vision, and of a light of light, of a light brighter than all the lights it makes possible. John's apocalypse, which dominates the whole of the Western apocalypse, is lit by the light of El, of Elohim:

yes, the glory of Elohim illuminates it.

. . .

the kings of the earth bring their glory into it.

Its gates are never closed for the day:

no, there is no night there.

They bring the glory. . . .

(21:23-26)

And there is no night any more.

they do not need the light of a lamp

or the light of the sun.

Adōnai Elohim illuminates them, and they rule to the ages of ages

(22:5)

There is light, and there are lights, the lights of reason or of the *logos*, that are not, for all that, some other thing. And it is in the name of an *Aufklärung* that Kant, for example, undertakes to demystify the overlordly tone. In the daylight of today we cannot not have become the heirs of these *Lumières*. We cannot and we must not — this is a law and a destiny — forgo the *Aufklärung*, in other words, what imposes itself as the enigmatic desire for vigilance, for the lucid vigil [*veille*], for elucidation, for critique and truth, but for a truth that at the same time keeps within itself some apocalyptic desire, this time as desire for clarity and revelation, in order to demystify or, if you prefer, to deconstruct apocalyptic discourse itself and with it everything that speculates on vision, the imminence of the end, theophany, parousia, the last judgment. Then each time we intractably ask ourselves where they want

to come to, and to what ends, those who declare the end of this or that, of man or the subject, of consciousness, of history, of the West or of literature, and according to the latest news of progress itself, the idea of which has never been in such bad health to the right and the left? What effect do these noble, gentile [*gentils*] prophets or eloquent visionaries want to produce? In view of what immediate or adjourned benefit? What do they do, what do we do in saying this? To seduce or subjugate whom, intimidate or make whom come? These effects and these benefits can be related to an individual or collective, conscious or unconscious speculation. They can be analysed in terms of libidinal or political mastery, with all the differential relays and thus all the economic paradoxes that overdetermine the idea of power or mastery and sometimes drag them into the abyss. Lucid analysis of these interests or of these calculi should mobilise a very great number and a great diversity of interpretative devices available today. It must and can do this, for our epoch would be rather superarmed in this regard. And a deconstruction; if it does not stop there, nonetheless never goes without some secondary work on the system that joins this superarmament to itself, that articulates, as is said, psychoanalysis to Marxism or to some Nietzscheanism; to the resources of linguistics, rhetoric, or pragmatics; to the theory of *speech acts*; to Heideggerian thought on the history of metaphysics, the essence of science or of technology. Such a demystification must give in [*se plier*] to the finest diversity of apocalyptic ruses. The interest or the calculus of these ruses can be so dissembled under the desire for light, well hidden (*eukalyptus*, as is said of the tree whose calycine limb remains closed after flowering), well hidden under the avowed desire for revelation. And one dissembling can hide another. The most serious thing, for then it is endless, the most fascinating thing, depends on this: the subject of eschatological discourse can have an interest in forgoing its own interest; it can forgo everything in order to place yet its death on your shoulders and to make you inherit in advance its corpse, that is, its soul, hoping thus to arrive at its ends through the end, to seduce you on the spot by promising you to guard your guard in his absence.

I am not sure that there is just *one* fundamental scene, *one* great paradigm according to which, except for some deviations, all the eschatological strategies would regulate themselves. It would still be a philosophical, onto-eschato-teleological interpretation to say: the apocalyptic strategy is fundamentally one, its diversity is only a diversity of procedures [*procédés*], masks, appearances, or simulacra.

This caution being taken, let us yield for a short time to the temptation of a fiction, and let us imagine this fundamental scene. Let us imagine that there is *one* apocalyptic tone, a unity of the apocalyptic tone, and that *the* apocalyptic tone is not the effect of a generalised derailment, of a *Verstimmung* multiplying the voices and making the tones shift [*sauter*], opening each word to the haunting memory [*hantise*] of the other in an unmasterable polytonality, with grafts, intrusions,

interferences [*parasitages*]. Generalised *Verstimmung* is the possibility for the other tone, or the tone of another, to come at no matter what moment to interrupt a familiar music. (Just as I suppose this is readily produced in analysis, but also elsewhere, when suddenly a tone come from one knows not where cuts short, if that can be said, the tone that tranquilly seemed to determine (*bestimmen*) the voice and thus insure the unity of destination, the self-identity of some addressee [*destinataire*] or sender [*destinateur*]. Henceforth *Verstimmung*, if that is what we call the derailment, the sudden change [*saute*] of tone, as one would say *la saute d'humeur*, the sudden change of mood, is the disorder or the delirium of destination (*Bestimmung*), but also the possibility of all emission. The unity of tone, if there was any, would certainly be the assurance of destination, but also death, another apocalypse.) So let us imagine that there is *one* apocalyptic tone and *one* fundamental scene. Then whoever takes on the apocalyptic tone comes to tell you or itself something, but what? I say "whoever takes," "whosoever takes," in order not to say "he who" or "she who," "those men who" or "those women who," and I do indeed say the tone, which one must be able to distinguish from all articulated discursive content. What the tone means (to say) is not perforce what the discourse says, and either one can always contradict, deny, make drift or derail the other.

Whoever takes on the apocalyptic tone comes to signify to, if not tell, you something. What? The truth, of course, and to signify to you that it reveals the truth to you; the tone is the revelatory of some unveiling in process. Unveiling or truth, apophantics of the imminence of the end, of whatever comes down, finally, to the end of the world. Not only truth as the revealed truth of a secret on the end or of the secret of the end. Truth itself is the end, the destination, and that truth unveils itself is the advent of the end. Truth is the end and the instance of the last judgment. The structure of truth here would be apocalyptic. And that is why there would not be any truth of the apocalypse that is not the truth of truth.

Then whoever takes on the apocalyptic tone will be asked: with a view to what and to what ends? In order to lead where, right now or soon?

The end is beginning, signifies the apocalyptic tone. But to what ends does the tone signify this? The apocalyptic tone naturally wants to attract, to get to come, to arrive at this, to seduce in order to lead to this, in other words, to the place where the first vibration of the tone is heard, which is called, as will be one's want, subject, person, sex, desire (I think rather of a pure differential vibration, without support, insupportable). The end is soon, it is imminent, signifies the tone. I see it, I know it, I tell you, now you know, come. We're all going to die, we're going to disappear. And this death sentence [*cet arrêt de mort*] cannot fail to judge us. We're going to die, you and me, the others too, the goyim, the gentiles, and all the others, all those who don't share this secret with us, but they don't know it. It's as if they're already dead. We're the only ones in the world. I'm the only one able to reveal to you the truth or the

destination. I tell you it, I give it to you, come, let us be for a moment, we who don't yet know who we are, let us be for a moment, before the end the sole survivors, the only ones to stay awake, it'll be the stronger for it. We'll be a sect, we'll form a species, a sex or gender, a race (*Geschlecht*) all by ourselves, we'll give ourselves a name. (That is just a bit the Babel scene, of which we can speak again, but there is also a Babel in John's Apocalypse that would lead us to think, not on the side of the confusion of tongues or tones, but of prostitution, supposing such distinctions can be made. Babel the great is the mother of whores: " 'Come. I shall show the judgment/of the great whore' " (17:1).) *They* sleep, we stay awake.

This discourse, or rather this tone I translate into discourse, this tone of the vigil at the moment of the end, which is also that of the funeral watch, of the *Wake*, it always cites or echoes [*répercute*] in a certain way John's Apocalypse or at least the fundamental scene that already programs the Johannine writing. Thus, for example:

'I know your works:
you are renowned for living,
but you are dead.

. . .

Stay awake! [*Esto vigilans* says the Latin translation.]
Strengthen what remains, so near dying.

If you do not stay awake,
I shall come like a thief:
you will not know at what hour I shall come upon you.'
(3:1-3)

I shall come: the coming is always to come. The Adôn, named as the aleph and the tav, the alpha and the omega, is the one who has been, who is, and who comes, not who shall be, but who comes, which is the present of a to-come [*à-venir*]. *I am coming* means: I am going to come, I am to-come in the imminence of an "I am going to come," "I am in the process of coming," "I am on the point of going to come." "Who comes" (*o erkhomenos*) is translated here in Latin by *venturus est*.

Jesus is the one who says, "Stay awake." But it would be necessary, perhaps beyond or before a narratology, to unfold a detailed analysis of the narrative voice in the Apocalypse. I use the expression "narrative voice" in order to distinguish it, as Blanchot does, from the narratorial voice, that of the identifiable subject, of the narrator or determinable sender in a narrative, a *récit*. In addition, I believe that all the "come's" resounding in the *récits* or *non-récits* of Blanchot also resound, harmonise with a certain "come" (*erkhou, veni*) of the Johannine Apocalypse. Jesus is the one who speaking, says, "Stay awake . . . I shall come upon you." But John is the one speaking, citing Jesus, or rather writing, appearing to transcribe what he says in recounting that he cites Jesus the moment Jesus dictates to him to write — which he does

right now and which we read — to the seven communities, to the seven churches of Asia. Jesus is cited as the one who dictates without himself writing and says, “write, *grapson*.” But even before John writes while saying right then that he writes, he hears as a dictation the great voice of Jesus —

I, Yohanân . . .

. . .

I am in the island called Patmos
because of the word of Elohim and the testimony of Yéshoua’.
I am in the breath (*en pneumati, in spiritu*), on the
day of the Adôn.
I hear behind me a great voice,
like that of a shofar. It says:
“What you see, write it into a volume,
send it to the seven communities. . . .”

[1:9-11]

Write and send, dictates the voice come from behind, behind John’s back, like a shofar, *grapson eis biblion kai pempson, scribe in libro: et mitte septem Ecclesiis*. *I see* and *I hear*, in the present tense in Chouraqui’s translation, are in the past in the Greek and the Latin, which does not simplify the premises of an analysis.⁴ Now even before this narrative scene citing a dictation or literally a present inspiration, there was a preamble without narrative, or in any case narratorial voice, a kind of title or name tag [*médaille*] come from one knows not where and binding the apocalyptic disclosure to the sending, the dispatch [*envoi*]. These lines are properly the apocalypse as sending, as *envoi*, and of the *envoi* as apocalypse, the apocalypse that sends itself:

Disclosure of Yéshoua the messiah (*Apokalupsis Jesou Khristou*):
Elohim gives of him
to show to his servants
what will arrive quickly.

He signifies it by sending it through his messenger
(*esemanen aposteilas dia tou angelou autou,*
significavit, mittit per angelum suum)
to his servant Yohanân.

[1:1-2]

So John is the one who already receives mail [*courrier*] through the further intermediary of a bearer who is an angel, a pure messenger. And John transmits a message already transmitted, testifies to a testimony that will again be that of another testimony, that of Jesus; so many sendings, *envois*, so many voices, and this puts many people on the line.

He signifies it by sending it through his messenger
to his servant Yohanân.

He reports the testimony of the word of Elohim
and the testimony of Yéshoua' the messiah,
all he has seen.

The joys of the reader, of the hearer
of the words of the inspiration
of those who keep what is written:

yes, the time approaches, *o gar kairos engus, tempus
enim prope est.*

[1:2-3]

If, in a very insufficient and scarcely even preliminary way, I draw your attention to the narrative sending [*envoi*], the interlacing of voices and *envois* in the dictated or addressed writing, I do so because, in the hypothesis or the program of an intractable demystification of the apocalyptic tone, in the style of the *Lumières* or of an *Aufklärung* of the twentieth century, and if one wanted to unmask the ruses, traps, trickeries, seductions, machines of war and pleasure, in short, all the interests of the apocalyptic tone today, it would be necessary to begin by respecting this differentially proliferating division [*démultiplication*] of voices and tones that perhaps takes them beyond a distinct and calculable plurality. One does not know (for it is no longer of the order of knowing) to whom the apocalyptic dispatch [*envoi*] returns; it leaps [*saute*] from one place of emission to the other (and a place is always determined *starting from* the presumed emission); it goes from one destination, one name, and one tone to the other; it always refers to [*renvoie à*] the name and to the tone of the other that is there but as having been there and before yet coming, no longer being or not yet there in the present of the *écrit*.

And there is no certainty that man is the exchange [*le central*] of these telephone lines or the terminal of this endless computer. No longer is one very sure who loans his voice and his tone to the other in the Apocalypse; no longer is one very sure who addresses what to whom. But by a catastrophic overturning here more necessary than ever, one can just as well think this: as soon as one no longer knows who speaks or who writes, the text becomes apocalyptic. And if the dispatches [*envois*] always refer to other dispatches without decidable destination, the destination remaining to come, then isn't this completely angelic structure, that of the Johannine apocalypse, isn't it also the structure of every scene of writing in general? This is one of the suggestions I wanted to submit for your discussion: wouldn't the apocalyptic be a transcendental condition of all discourse, of all experience even, of every mark or every trace? And the genre of writings called "apocalyptic" in the strict sense, then, would be only an example, an *exemplary* revelation of this transcendental structure. In that case, if the apocalypse reveals, it is first of all the revelation of the apocalypse, the self-

presentation of the apocalyptic structure of language, of writing, of the experience of presence, in other words of the text or of the mark in general: *that is, of the divisible dispatch for which there is no self-presentation nor assured destination.*

But let's leave this, there is an apocalyptic *pli* [fold, envelope, letter, habit or message] here. Not only a *pli* as dispatch, a *pli* inducing a tonal change [*changement*] and an immediate tonal duplicity in every apocalyptic voice. Not only a fold in the signifier "apocalyptic" that designates at times the content of the *récit* or of what is announced, namely the end-of-the-world catastrophes and cataclysms, the upheavals, the thunderbolts and earthquakes, the fire, the blood, the mountain of fire and the sea of blood, the afflictions, the smoke, the sulphur, the burning, the multiplicity of tongues and kings, the beast, the sorcerers, Satan, the great whore of the Apocalypse, and so on; and at other times, it designates the announcement itself and no longer what is announced, the discourse revealing the to-come or even the end of the world rather than what it says, the truth of the revelation rather than the revealed truth.

But I think of another *pli*, which we are also in, in the daylight of today: everything that can now inspire a de-mystifying desire regarding the apocalyptic tone, namely a desire for light, for lucid vigilance, for the elucidating vigil [*veille é lucidante*], for truth — all that is already found on the way, and I shall say in apocalyptic transfer(ence), it is already a citation or a recitation of John or of what already programmed John's dispatches [*envois*], when for example he writes, for a messenger, under the dictate of the great voice come from behind his back and which tenders itself [*se tend*] like a shofar, like a ram's horn:

To the messenger of the community in Ephesus, write:

"He says this,

he who seizes the seven stars in his right hand,

he who walks in the midst of the seven lamps of gold.

'I know your works, your toil,

your endurance:

you cannot endure the wicked.

You have tested those who call themselves envoys and are

not (*tous legontas eautous apostolous kai ouk*

eisen, qui se dicunt apostolos esse, et non sunt),

and you find them liars.

...

But I have this against you:

your first love, you have left it."

(2:1-2, 4)

And the dispatches [*envois*] multiply, then the seven messengers come, up to the seventh, after which

The temple of Elohim is opened to the sky.
 The coffer of his pact appears in his temple.
 There come lightning flashes, voices, thunders,
 an earthquake, great hail.

A great sign [*semeion mega*] appears in the sky:
 a woman clothed in sun,
 the moon under her feet,
 and on her head a crown of twelve stars.
 (11:19-12:1)

So we, *Aufklärer* of modern times, we continue to denounce the impostor apostles, the "so-called envoys" who are not sent [*envoyés*] by anyone, the liars and unfaithful ones, the turgidness and the pomposity of all those charged with a historic mission of whom nobody has requested anything and whom nobody has charged with anything. Shall we thus continue in the best apocalyptic tradition to denounce false apocalypses?

The habit [*p/i*] being taken up, I am not going to multiply the examples. The end approaches, but the apocalypse is long-lived. The question remains and comes back: what can be the limits of a demystification?

No doubt one can think — I do — that this demystification must be led as far as possible, and the task is not modest. It is interminable, because no one can exhaust the overdeterminations and the indeterminations of the apocalyptic strategems. And above all because the ethico-political motive or motivation of these strategems is never reducible to some simple. I recall thus that their rhetoric, for example, is not only destined to mislead the people rather than the powerful in order to arrive at retrograde, backward-looking, conservative ends. Nothing is less conservative than the apocalyptic genre. And as it is an apocalyptic, apocryphal, masked, coded *genre*, it can use the detour in order to mislead another vigilance, that of censorship. We know that apocalyptic writings increased the moment State censorship was very strong in the Roman Empire, and precisely to catch the censorship unawares. Now this possibility can be extended to all censorships, and not only to the political, and in politics to the official. Even if we remained with political censorship, and were alert enough to know that it is not only practiced starting from specialised State lairs [*officines*], but everywhere, like a thousand-eyed Argus, in a majority, in an opposition, in a virtual majority, with respect to everything that does not let itself be centered [*cadrer*] by the logic of the current political discourse and of the conceptual oppositions legitimated by the contract between the legitimate adversaries, well then we would perhaps think that the apocalyptic discourse can also get round censorship thanks to its genre and its cryptic ruses. By its very tone, the mixing of voices, genres, and codes, apocalyptic discourse can also, in dislocating [*détraquant*]

destinations, dismantle the dominant contract or concordat. It is a challenge to the established receivability [*recevabilité*] of messages and to the policing of destination, in short to the postal police or the monopoly of posts. Conversely, we could even say that every discord or every tonal disorder, everything that detones and becomes inadmissible [*irrecevable*] in general collocation, everything that is no longer identifiable starting from established codes, from both sides of a front, will necessarily pass for mystagogic, obscurantistic, and apocalyptic. It will be made to pass for such.

If we now inquire about another limit of demystification, a limit (perhaps) more essential and which would (perhaps) distinguish a deconstruction from a simple progressive demystification in the style of the Enlightenment, I would be tempted by another bearing [*démarche*]. For finally, to demystify the seductive or agogic manoeuvre is fine and necessary, but must we not first ask ourselves with a view to what, to what end does it [ça] seduce, use trickery, mislead, manoeuvre? About this other bearing, I am going to say a very quick word, in order to conclude and try to respond, if possible, to a request. Several times I have been asked (and that is why I shall allow myself a brief galatic ostentation of certain of my writings) why (with a view to what, to what ends, and so on) I had or had *taken on* an apocalyptic tone and put forward apocalyptic themes. That is how they have often been qualified, sometimes with suspicion, and above all, I have noticed, in the United States where people are always more sensitive to phenomena of prophetism, messianism, eschatology, and apocalypse-here-now. That I have multiplied the distinctions between closure and end, that I was aware of speaking of discourses *on* the end rather than announcing the end, that I intended to analyse a genre rather than practice it, and even when I would practice it, to do so with this ironic genre clause wherein I tried to show that this clause never belonged to the genre itself; nevertheless, for the reasons I gave a few minutes ago, all language on apocalypse is also apocalyptic and cannot be excluded from its object. Then I also asked myself why, to what ends, with a view to what, the Apocalypse itself, I mean the historic writings thus named and first the one signed by John of Patmos, had little by little settled in, above all for the last six or seven years, as a theme, a concern, a fascination, an explicit reference, and the horizon for me of a work or a task, although I know these rich and secret texts very badly. This was first the case in *Glas*, whose columns are constantly shaken by apocalyptic shocks or laughs on the subject of apocalypse and which in a certain moment (p.220) mixes the remains of genres and of John, the John of the Gospel, of the Apocalypse, and of Genet. We see there: "The Gospel and the Apocalypse violently severed, fragmented, redistributed, with blanks, shifts of accents, lines skipped or moved out of place, as if they reached us over a broken-down teletype, a wiretap [*table d'écoute*] in an overloaded telephone exchange. . . ." And a long sequence jumbling the citations comes to an end thus:

"And I, John, I have heard and seen all this." As his name indicates: the apocalyptic, in other words, capital unveiling, in truth lays bare the hunger for/of self. *Funeral Rites*, you recall, on the same page: "Jean was taken away from me. . . . Jean needed a compensation . . . the . . . revelation of my friendship for Jean. . . . I was hungry for Jean."

It [Ça] is called a colossal compensation. The absolute phantasm as absolute self-having [*s'avoir absolu*: cf. *savoir absolu*, absolute knowledge] in its most mournful glory: to swallow (one)self in order to be (close) by (one) self, to make (one)self a mouthful, to b(come) (in a word *bander* [bind, bandage, bend, blindfold, get a hard-on, bandy]) one's own proper bit. [222]

That was finally, as I said a few minutes ago, the case with *La Carte postale*, where the allusions increase to the Apocalypse and to its arithmosophy, where everything speculates on the figures and notably seven, the "written 7," the angels, "my angel," messengers and postmen [*facteurs*], prediction, the announcement of the news, the holocaustic "burning," and all the phenomena of *Verstimmung*, of change of tone, of mixing genres, of *destinerrance*, if I can say that, or of *clandestination*, so many signs of more or less bastard apocalyptic filiation. But it was not this thematic or tonal network that I wanted, in concluding, to stress. For want of time, I shall limit myself to the word, if it is a word, and to the motif "Come" that occupies other texts written in the meantime, in particular "Pas," "Living On," and "En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici," three texts dedicated, we can say, to Blanchot and to Levinas. I was not immediately aware of the citational resonance of this "Come," or at least that its citation (for the drama of its citationality was what mattered to me at the outset, its repetitive structure and what, even in a tone, must be able to be repeated, thus mimicked, indeed "synthesised") was also a reference to John's Apocalypse. I was not thinking of this when I wrote "Pas," but I did know it at the time of the other two texts. And I noted it. "Come," *erkhou, veni, viens*, this appeal resounds in the heart of the vision, in the "I see" following Christ's dictation (starting from Chapter 4) when it is said:

I see, in the right hand of him who is sitting on the throne,
a volume written on the inside and out,
sealed with seals: seven.

I see a messenger, strong.
He cries in a great voice:
"Who is worthy to open the volume
and break the seals?"

No one can,
in heaven, on earth, or under the earth,
open the volume, or look at it.

[5:1-3]

And each time the Lamb opens one of the seven seals, one of the four living says, "Come," and it is the continuation of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. (In the "Envois" of *La Carte postale*, one or the other often says: they will believe that we are two, or that I am alone, or that we are three, or that we are four; and it is not certain that they are wrong; but everything happens as if the hypothesis could not go beyond four; in any case that is the fiction.) Farther on, I mean in John's Apocalypse, in Chapter 17, one of the seven messengers with the seven cups says, "'Come. I shall show you the judgment/of the great whore'" [17:1]. It is a question of Babel. And in 21, "'Come! I shall show you/the bride, the wife of the Lamb'" [21:9]. And above all at the end of ends, "Come" launches into or echoes itself in an exchange of calls and responses that is precisely no longer an exchange. The voices, the places, the routes of "Come" traverse the partition [*paroi*] of a song, a book of citational and recitative echoes, as if it [*ça*] began by responding. And in this traversal or this transfer(ence), the voices find their spacing, the space of their movement, but they nullify it with one stroke [*d'un trait*]; they no longer give it time.

There is a kind of general narrator there: at the moment of the signature, he will call himself the witness (*martyrôn, testimonium*). There is the angelic messenger there whose dispatch he reports. There is John there who begins to speak again and says that at present he is prostrating himself before the messenger who speaks to him:

He tells me:

"Do not seal the words of the inspiration of this volume:
yes, the time is near."

[22:10]

Double bind of an order John could only disobey in order to obey. Then Jesus speaks again, naturally in this directly reported mode that Plato called mimetic or apocryphal, and the play of quotation marks in the translation poses all the problems you can imagine. Each time we know that so-and-so speaks because he introduces himself: I, so-and-so; but he does this in the text written by the witness or the general narrator who is always a party to it. Here it is, and it is the end:

"I Yeshoua', I have sent my messenger
to testify this to you about the communities
I am the scion and the seed of Dawid
the shining star of the morning."

[22:16]

Close quote: the text of the witness resumes:

The breath and the bride (*numphè, sponsa*, the promised)
say [together]: "Come"

Let the hearer say: "Come"
 Let the thirsty come,
 let the volunteer take the water of life freely.
 I myself testify to every hearer
 of the words of the inspiration of this volume:
 if anyone adds to them,
 Elohim will add to him the afflictions described
 in this volume.

If anyone takes away from the words
 of the volume of this inspiration,
 Elohim will take away his share of the tree of life,
 outside the city of the sanctuary described in this volume.

The witness to these things says: "Yes, I come quickly."
 Amen.
 Come, Adôn Yéshoua'.
 Dilection of the Adôn Yéshoua to all . . .
 [22:17-20]

The event of this "Come" precedes and calls the event. It would be that starting from which there is any event, the coming, the to-come of the event that cannot be thought under the given category of event. "Come" appeared to me to appeal to the "place" (but here the word *place* becomes too enigmatic), let us say to the place, the time, and to the advent of what in the apocalyptic in general no longer lets itself be contained simply by philosophy, metaphysics, onto-eschato-theology, and by all the readings they have proposed of the apocalyptic. I cannot reconstitute what I have attempted in this respect in a milieu of resonances, responses, citations referred, referring to texts of Blanchot, Levinas, Heidegger, or others such as one could hazard to do today with the latest book of Marguerite Duras, *L'Homme assis dans le couloir*. What I had then tried to expose to an analysis that would be, among other things, a spectrography of tone and of change of tone, by definition could not keep itself at the disposal of or confine itself to the measure of philosophical, pedagogical, or teaching demonstration. First, because "Come," opening the scene, could not become an object, a theme, a representation, or even a citation in the current sense, and subsumable under a category, whether that of coming or event. For the same reason, that bends itself difficultly to the rhetoric required by the present scene. Nonetheless I am trying to extract from this, at the risk of essentially deforming it, the demonstrative function in terms of philosophical discourse.

Moving more hastily, I shall say then the following. Come from the other already as a response and a citation without past present, "Come" tolerates no metalinguistic citation, even when it is itself a narrative, a *récit*, already, a recitative and a song whose singularity remains at once

absolute and absolutely divisible. "Come" no more lets itself be arraigned [*arraisonner*] by an onto-theo-eschatology than by a logic of the event, however new they may be and whatever politics they announce. In this *affirmative* tone, "Come" marks in itself, in oneself, neither a desire nor an order, neither a prayer nor a request [*demande*]. More precisely, the grammatical, linguistic, or semantic categories from which the "Come" would thus be determined are traversed by the "Come." This "Come," I do not know what *it is*, not because I yield to obscurantism, but because the question "what is" belongs to a space (ontology, and from it the knowledge of grammar, linguistics, semantics, and so on) opened by a "come" come from the other. Between all the "come"'s, the difference is not grammatical, linguistic, semantic, pragmatic — and thus permitting us to say: it's an imperative, it's a jussive modality, it's a performative of such and such a type, and so on — the difference is tonal. And I do not know whether a tonal difference finally lends itself to all these questions. Try to say "come" — it can be said in every tone, and you'll see, you'll hear, the other will hear first — perhaps or not. It is the gesture in speaking [*parole*], that gesture which does not let itself be recovered [*repandre*] by the analysis — linguistic, semantic, or rhetorical — of speaking.

Come [*Viens*] beyond being — this comes from beyond being and calls beyond being, engaging perhaps in the place where *Ereignis* (no longer can this be translated by event) and *Enteignis* unfold the movement of appropriation. If "Come" does not try to lead, if it no doubt is an-agogic, it can always be led back higher than itself, anagogically, toward conductive violence, toward authoritarian "duction." This risk is ineluctable; it threatens the tone as its double. And even in the confession of seduction: in saying in a certain tone, "I am in the act of seducing you," I do not suspend, I can even increase, the seductive power. Perhaps Heidegger would not have liked this apparently personal conjugation or declension of coming. But they are not personal, subjective, or egological, "Come" cannot come from a voice or least from a tone signifying "I" or "self," a so-and-so (male or female) in my "determination," my *Bestimmung*: vocation to the destination *myself*. "Come" does not address itself to an identity determinable in advance. It is a drift [*une dérive*] underivable from the identity of a determination. "Come" is *only* derivable, absolutely derivable, but only from the other, from nothing that may be an origin or a verifiable, decidable, presentable, appropriable identity, from nothing not already derivable and arrivable [*arrivable*] without *rive* [bank, shore].

Perhaps you will be tempted to call this disaster, catastrophe, apocalypse. Now here, precisely, is announced — as promise or threat — an apocalypse without apocalypse, an apocalypse without vision, without truth, without revelation, *dispatches* [*des envois*] (for the "come" is plural in itself, in oneself), addresses without message and without destination, without sender or decidable addressee, without last judgment, without any other eschatology than the tone of the "Come,"

its very difference, an apocalypse beyond good and evil. "Come" does not announce this or that apocalypse: already it resounds with a certain tone; it is in itself the apocalypse of apocalypse; *Come* is apocalyptic.

Our *apocalypse now*: there would be no more chance, save chance itself, for a thought of good and evil whose announcement would come to *gather* itself in order to be with itself in a revelatory speaking; (no) more chance, unless a chance, the unique, chance itself, for a collection of truth, a *legein* of *aletheia* that would no longer be a legendary unveiling; and (no) more chance even for such a gathering of gift, dispatch, destiny (*Schicken, Geschick*), for the destination of a "come" whose promise at least would be assured of its own proper event.

But then what is someone doing who says to you: I tell you this, I have come to tell you this, there is not, there has never been, there will never be apocalypse, "the apocalypse is disappointing"? There is the apocalypse *without* apocalypse. The word *sans, without*, I pronounce here in the so necessary syntax of Blanchot, who often says *X without X*. The *without* marks an internal and external catastrophe of the apocalypse, an overturning of sense [*sens*] that does not merge with the catastrophe announced or described in the apocalyptic writings without however being foreign to them. Here the catastrophe would perhaps be of the apocalypse itself, its fold and its end, a closure without end, an end without end.

But what reading, what history of reading, what philology, what hermeneutic competence authorises one to say that this very thing, this catastrophe of the apocalypse, is not the catastrophe described, in its movement and its very course [*trajet*], in its outline [*tracé*], by *this* or *that* apocalyptic writing? For example, the one from Patmos that would then be doomed to going out of itself in this aleatory errance?

And what if this outside of apocalypse was *inside* the apocalypse? What if it was the apocalypse itself, what precisely breaks-in [*fait effraction*] in the "Come"? What is "inside" and what is "outside" a text, of *this* text, both inside and outside these volumes of which we do not know whether they are open or closed?

Of this volume written, you remember, "on the inside and out," it is said at the very end: do not seal this; "Do not seal the words of the inspiration of this volume. . . ."

Do not seal, that is to say, do not close, but also do not sign.

The end approaches, now there is no more time to tell the truth about the apocalypse. But what are you doing, all of you will still insist, to what ends do you want to come when you come to tell us, here now, let's go, come, the apocalypse, it's finished, I tell you this, that's what's happening.

Translated by John P. Leavey, Jr.

Notes

1. This is a translation of the second version (published under separate cover by Editions Galilée, 1983) of a lecture given the last full day of the conference at Cerisy-la-Salle, France, on the work of Jacques Derrida, or rather, starting from his work: " 'Les Fins de l'homme' (A partir du travail de Jacques Derrida)." Convened from 23 July to 2 August 1980, the conference consisted of lectures, discussions, and seminars on Derrida's effects within diverse perspectives and disciplines. The format explains the references in the text to the organisers and some participants in the conference: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Jean Ricardou, as well as to questions left open for discussion following the presentation. The proceedings of the conference and the first version of this lecture were published as *Les Fins de l'homme* (Galilée, 1981).

In the translation, references to Kant's "Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie (1976)" are to Vol.6 of *Immanuel Kants Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer (Berlin, 1923). References to *Der Streit der Fakultäten* are to Vol.7 (1922). The citation from Freud's "The Infantile Genital Organisation" follows the *Standard Edition* (vol.19).

I would like to thank Geoff Bennington for his scrupulous reading of the translation and suggestions for improvement. And once again I am indebted to Jacques Derrida for his gracious help and patience.

2. Translation from the Greek, of course, but with some conditions I must specify here, at once because it will be a question of this in the course of the discussion and because what is at stake could be named the *appropriation* of the apocalypse: that is also the theme of this exposition. In sum, Chouraqui's very singular attempt consists, for John's Apocalypse as well as for the New Testament generally, in reconstituting a new Hebrew original, under the Greek text at our disposal, and in *acting as if* he were translating that *phantom* original text about which he supposes, linguistically and culturally, that it had already had to let itself be translated (if that can be said in a largely metaphorical sense) in the so-called original Greek version. "The translation I publish, nourished by the contribution of the traditional versions, has the calling to search under the Greek text for its historical context and its Semitic substratum. Such a course [*démarche*] is possible today . . ." (9). According to Chouraqui, it passes through an "Aramaic or Hebrew retroversion" of the Greek text taken for a "filter." So the historic translations of the New Testament into Aramaic or Hebrew will have played here an indispensable but only a mediating role." [E]ven if the text is expressed in Greek and, for what is from Jesus, if it is based on an Aramaic or a Hebrew (Mishnaic, rabbinic, or Quomranic) whose traces have disappeared, the thought of the Evangelists and the Apostles has as ultimate terms of references the word of YHWH, that is, for all of them the Bible. It is the Bible that is recovered in analysing the Greek text, even if one must preliminarily pass through an Aramaic filter or through that of the translation of the Seventy. . . . Starting from the Greek text, knowing the techniques of the translations from the Hebrew into Greek, and the Hebrew resonances of the Koine, I have tried with each word, with each verse, to touch the Semitic ground in order then to return to the Greek that it was necessary to recover, enriched by a new substance, before passing to the French" [11-12]. Such is the project, it gives as its reference a *double authority*, invoking in turn the "quasi-unanimity of the exegetes" [11] or "the great ecumenical current" [15], the "ecumenism of sources" [16]. For multiple reasons I shall not discuss directly the authority of these authorities. But when the matter concerns language, text, event, and destination, etc., the questions I shall propose today would not have been able to be unfolded if the foundation of such authorities had to be kept under cover in the unquestionable. A secondary consequence of this precaution: it is not as to an *authorised* translation that I shall often refer to that of André Chouraqui.
3. I am thinking of that bust of Kant "in the Greek style" (Emanuel Bardou, 1798) reproduced on a postcard in a Berlin museum.
4. The stake here, this goes without saying, can be very grave, above all in an eschatological or apocalyptic text. Chouraqui has clearly assumed his responsibility as

translator: here one can only leave it to him: "The most constant liberty I have taken with the Greek text concerns the verb tenses. Already Joüon had noted this: 'The attention given to the Aramaic substratum is particularly useful for avoiding too mechanical a translation of the Greek tenses. The Greek verb conceives time above all as a function of a past, a present, and a future: the Hebrew, or the Aramaic on the contrary, instead of specifying the time of an action, describes its state under two modes: the finished and the unfinished. As Pedersen has seen so well, the Hebrew verb is essentially *intemporal*, that is, *omnitemporal*. I have tried, between two notions of time irreducible to one another, to resort most often to the present that in contemporary French usage is a very supple, very ample, very evocative tense, whether in its normal use, or under the form of the historic present or the prophetic present'" ("Une nouvelle traduction du Nouveau Testament," Preface to *Un Pacte Neuf*, p.13).

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