

OF AN APOCALYPTIC TONE RECENTLY ADOPTED IN PHILOSOPHY

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I shall speak then of (with) an apocalyptic tone in philosophy.

The Seventy have bequeathed us a translation of *gala*. It is called the apocalypse. In Greek, *apokalupsis* would translate words derived from the Hebrew word *gala*. I am referring to some indications of André Chouraqui to which I shall return, but I must give notice of them already: I believe the histories or enigmas of translation I would like to speak about are without solution or conclusion (I shall get myself entangled in them for reasons more serious than my incompetence). In a certain way that will be my theme, and more or less than a theme, a task (*Aufgabe des Übersetzers*) I shall not discharge. The other day Jean Ricardou asked me, at the time we were speaking about translation, to say a little more about what could be a grace beyond the work, owing to [*grâce au*] the work but without it, a gift given there (*il y a, es gibt*), but above all given there without meriting any responsibility for it. Well, pursuing the beginning [*l'amorce*] of the other day in the

*This text was presented 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 concerning Derrida's effects within diverse perspectives and disciplines. This format explains the references in the text to the organizers and some participants in the conference: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Jean Ricardou, as well as the references to questions left open for consideration in the discussion following the presentation of the paper. The proceedings of the conference have just been published as *Les Fins de l'homme*, Editions Galilée.

In translating this text, I have cited all available English translations. When that was not possible, I have provided my own translations. There is one exception. Since Derrida has taken up Chouraqui's new translation of the Biblical texts (see the notes by Derrida to his text), I have followed Chouraqui's renderings. At times, however, I have been helped by Richard Lattimore's *Four Gospels and the Revelation* (New York: Farrar, 1979). Finally, all bibliographic references within brackets are my additions. Those in parentheses are Derrida's.

I would like to thank Barbara Fletcher for her help in preparing this translation. And once again I want to thank Jacques Derrida for his gracious help, friendship, and patience with my many questions

direction of the *double-bind* of YHWH affording (with the name of his choice, with his name, we could say, Babel) *translation and no translation*, I shall say this in the form of an elliptical thanks for what I am given here, given to think and simply given (beyond the thinkable, as is said in German, beyond thanks or memory), given by our hosts at Cerisy, by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and by Jean-Luc Nancy, by all of you with so much work and grace, so much grace in the work: as regards translation, grace would perhaps be when the writing of the other absolves you, at times, from the infinite *double bind*. And first of all (such is the condition of the gift) when it absolves itself from, unbinds itself from, unburdens or clears itself of this double bind—it, the language of writing and what it represents, a given trace that always comes from some other, even if no (or some)one. To clear oneself of the gift, of the given gift, of giving itself, that is the grace I now know you have and in any case I wish for you. Grace is always improbable; it can never be proved. But must we not believe that it comes [*ça arrive*] ? That perhaps is belief itself. In other words: for what you have given me during these ten days I not only thank you, I pardon you. But who can be authorized to pardon? Let us say that I ask pardon for you, I ask this of you yourselves even for you yourselves.

Apokaluptō no doubt was a good word, a witticism [*bon mot*] for *gala*. *Apokaluptō*, 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 genitals or whatever might be hidden, a secret, the thing to be dissembled, a thing that does not show itself or say itself, that perhaps signifies itself but cannot or must not first be handed over to its self-evidence. *Apokekalummenoi logoi* are indecent 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 recalls in his short “Liminaire pour l’Apocalypse” of John (of which he recently offered a new translation),/1/ the word *gala* recurs more than a hundred times in the Hebrew Bible. And it seems in effect to say *apokalupsis*, disclosure, discovery, uncovering, unveiling, the veil lifted from, the truth revealed about the thing: first of all, if we can say this, men’s or women’s genitals, 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 disclosed in 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 in French and other languages, of fearsome catastrophe. Thus the Apocalypse is essentially a contemplation (*hazōn*) [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 dreamed such for a moment, to collect [*lever*] or relieve [*relever*] all the senses pressing around this Hebrew *gala*, in front of the columns and colossi of Greece, in front of 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 or cylindrical rolls, of parchment rolls and books, of rolls that envelop or furnish, but above all (and this is what I retain of these for the moment) the idea of laying bare [*mise à nu*], of specifically apocalyptic unveiling, of the disclosure that lets be seen what up 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 remember 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 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 indeed seems 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 genitals.
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 genitals,
she sees his genitals:
it is incest.

But the terrifying and holy gravity of this apocalyptic disclosure or uncovering is no less, of course, when the question concerns the arm of YHWH, his glory, or 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, gaps, deviations, or inadequations.

Preferring to let them resound all alone, I have chosen to speak to you rather of (with) an apocalyptic tone recently adopted in philosophy. No doubt I wanted thus to mime in citation but also to transform in kind or

genre, and then parody, depart, deform the well-known title of a perhaps less well-known lampoon 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."] While asking myself what happens to a title when made to undergo this treatment and when it begins thus to resemble the category of a genre (here a genre that comes down to making fun of those who give themselves a genre), I wished to go meet those who, in one of the seminars these ten days, have precisely organized their work in privileging the reference to such a Kantian caesura in the time [*temps*, beat, tempo] 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, if we suppose that such 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. With what is a tone, a change or rupture of tone marked? And how do we recognize a tonal difference within the same corpus? What traits are to be trusted for analyzing this, what set of signals [*signalisation*] neither stylistic, nor rhetorical nor evidently thematic or semantic? The extreme difficulty of this question, indeed of this task, stands out more when dealing with philosophy. Isn't the dream or the ideal of philosophic discourse, of philosophical address [*allocution*], and of the writing supposed to represent that address, isn't it to make the tonal difference inaudible—and with it a whole desire, affect, or scene that works (over) the concept as contraband? Through what is called neutrality of tone, philosophical discourse must also guarantee the neutrality or at least the imperturbable serenity that should accompany the relation to the true and the universal. Consequently, will it be possible to hear or detect the tone of a philosopher, or rather (this precision is important) the *soi-disant* or alleged philosopher? And what if we are promised that one will not undertake to relieve [*relever*, Derrida's translation of Hegel's *aufheben*] all those traits that in the corpus are not yet or no longer philosophical, all the regrettable deviations or gaps 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 moderate the praise we would like to give him on this. First, it is not certain that he is bent on or succeeds in analyzing the pure phenomenon of a tonality—we are going to verify this. Next, less does he analyze a tone in philosophy than denounce a *manner* of giving oneself airs; now, as a matter of fact, to him a manner or mannerism does not appear to be a very good tone in philosophy and so marks already a gap in relation to the norm of philosophical discourse. More seriously, he attacks a tone that announces something like *the death of philosophy*. The words are Kant's, and they appear twice in this short lampoon of twenty pages;

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, "what is thus the death of all philosophy (*der Tod aller Philosophie*)" [487]. And quite near the end, Kant warns against the danger of an "exalted vision (*schwärmerische Vision*)" "that 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 satiric or polemical verve. It is a social critique, and its premises have a properly political character. But if he derides a tone announcing 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 group or caste mores, to class behaviors, by a great number of relays that no longer have anything to do with the pitch or loftiness of the voice or timbre? Although, as I suggested just a moment ago, the tonal difference does not pass for the essentially philosophic, for Kant that is not the fact that there is any tone, any tonal mark, announcing to him alone the death of all philosophy. It is just a tone, a certain inflection socially coded to say such and such a determined thing. The tonal loftiness [*hauteur*] he overwhelms with his sarcasm remains a metaphoric pitch [*hauteur*]. These people speak in a lofty pitch [or loudly]; these lofty speakers raise their voices, but this is only said by figure and by reference to social signs. Kant never disregards [*fait abstraction*] the content. Nevertheless—this fact is far from insignificant—the first time a philosopher comes to speak of the tone of self-styled philosophers, when he comes to inaugurate this theme and names it in his very title, it is 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 here less than the end. The end is near, they seem to say, which does not exclude that the end has 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 seductive or intimidating bonus? What social or political advantage? Do they want to cause fear? Do they want to cause pleasure? To whom and how? Do they want to terrify? To make one sing? To blackmail? [*Faire chanter?*] To lure into a going-one-better in enjoyment? Is this contradictory? With a view to what interests, to what ends do they wish to come with these inflamed

proclamations on the end to come or the end already accomplished? That is a little of what I was wanting to speak to you about today, a certain tone and what comes to philosophy as its death, 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 chief accusation. Before coming to my topic [*propos*], I shall set apart some paradigmatic traits in Kant's indictment, paradigmatic and contraparamigmatic, for I am perhaps, in repeating what he does, going to come to the point of 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 create the mysterious?

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 knowing-living," literally a wisdom of life regulating itself according to a knowledge or science (*wissenschaftlichen Lebensweisheit*) [ibid.]. The mystagogues get hold of it the instant the name philosophy 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 philosophic mystification, speculation on the end and the ends of philosophy. This results from an event that Kant himself does not date and that he seems to situate nearest the origin, namely that the name philosophy can circulate without its original *reference*, let us understand that as without its *Bedeutung* and without the guarantee of its value. While still remaining in the Kantian axiomatic, as it were, we can already infer from this that nothing would have happened [*arrivé*], no mystagogic speculation would have been credible or efficient, nothing or no one would have untuned [*détoné*] 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. Some slackness or despicableness was indeed necessary in this relation of sign to thing in order to arrange and economize the space of sense's rerouting or the grasp for a perversion. An unduly slack reference, then, there where it should be more exact, tighter, closer, more rigorous. Here I hand you an association that will perhaps seem verbal, but since the lack of rigor or tension in the verbalization is already our concern, it occurred to me

that *tonos*, tone, first signified the tight ligament [*le ligament tendu*], the cord, rope when it is woven or braided, the cable, the strap, briefly the privileged figure of everything that is subject to stricture. *Tonion* is the ligament as band and surgical bandage. In short, the same tension runs across the tonic difference (that which under the word stricture norms both the theme and the instrument or cord of *Glas*) and the tonal difference, the gap or deviation, the changes or the 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 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 *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 a piece of writing is analyzed in terms of content, manners of speaking, connotations, rhetorical staging, and pose taken, in semantic terms, in pragmatic ones, scenographic ones, and so on; in short, rarely or not at all, in tuning in to the pitch of a voice or the quality of timbre. I close this parenthesis.

So the bond fastening the name philosophy to its signification really had to be slackened, in order that the philosophical title regularly be at one's disposal like a simple ornament or grace note, a decoration, a costume, or attire for show (*Ausschmückung*) [ibid.], a signifier usurped and treated as intellectual travesty or transvestism by those Kant nonetheless calls thinkers, and thinkers self-styled out of the ordinary. These people place themselves out of the common, but they have this in common: they are all in immediate and intuitive relation with the mystery. And they wish to lure, 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, *il Duce*, the *Führer*, the *leader* places him above the crowd he manipulates through the intermediary of a small number of initiates gathered into a sect with a "crypted" language, a band, a clique or a small party with its ritualized practices. The mystagogues claim to possess as it were 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 here is a major trait. They never transmit the secret to others in the current language, only by initiation or inspiration. The mystagogue is *philosophus per initiationem* or *per inspirationem*. Kant envisages a whole differential list and a historic typology of these mystagogues, but he recognizes 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 react indignantly to

[*prennent de haut*] the work, the concept, the course of study; 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 recognized, what I shall not do, in this lampoon or libel. The hierarchized opposition of gift to work, of intuition to concept, of genius's mode to scholar's mode (*genie-mässig/schulmässig* [ibid]) is homologous to the opposition between aristocracy and democracy, possibly 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, work out, 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 indict the pitch or loftiness of the overlordly tone when it is just, natural, or legitimate. He takes aim at raising the tone when an upstart [*parvenu*] authorizes himself in this by giving himself airs and by erecting usurped signs of social membership. So his 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 *synthesized*. But what does the fiction of the tone presuppose? Up to where 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 to the other. To change voice or mimic the intonation of the other, we must be able to confuse or induce a confusion between two voices, two voices of the other and, necessarily, of the other in itself, in oneself. How do we distinguish the voices from the other in itself, in oneself? Instead of entering directly into this immense problem, I return to the Kantian text and to a figure which seems to belong to the current rhetoric and to so-called hackneyed 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 of Jean-Luc Nancy.)

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 philosophize "on the 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 d'*] 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 awake to suppress—symbolically—not only the individuals who unduly adorn themselves with the title of

philosopher, who take hold of and adorn themselves 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 aggregates, congregations, and chapels. We could put this dream of a police of knowledge in harmony with 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 inferior 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 look over 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 higher faculties, singularly theology. In the indictment occupying us, philosophers by profession are not pardoned when they take on an overlordly air because, in raising thus the tone, they hoist themselves above their colleagues or fellows (*Zunftgenossen*) [483], they 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 the 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; they send it word of what they want. On the other hand, the voice of reason is not made to say anything; no word is sent it. 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 we are thinking 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 parasitizes it, causes it to derail or become delirious. To raise or set the tone higher, 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, for *Verstimmung*. Guillermit 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 mentions the word for reasons we shall catch a glimpse of 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 we speak of a stringed instrument [*instrument à cordes*], or yet, 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*: the bathos [*pathos*], or the humor that then becomes testy. The *Verstimmung* of which we are speaking here is indeed a social disorder and a derangement, an out-of-tune-ness [*désaccordement*] of cords [*cordes*] and voices in the head. The tone leaps and is raised higher when the voice of the oracle takes you aside, speaks to you in a private code, and whispers secrets to you in uncovering your ear for you, jumbling, covering, or parasitizing 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 cognition. 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 subtlety 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 of the describable [*de descriptible*]; 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 in him in a rather percussive and repercussive way; it almost thunders in him, since 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 assures me of 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 false 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 recognize that *Geheimnis*; they confuse it with a mystery of vision and contact, whereas 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-affective, more autonomous. Moral law then is more auditory, more audible than the mystagogic oracle still contaminated with feeling, illumination, or intuitive vision, contact and mystical tact (“ein . . . mystischer Takt,” Kant says [486]). The overlordly tone untunes because it is also not as near the voice’s essence.

Why did I feel inclined, at this moment of my reading of an overlordly tone, to add this document to the dossier (if I can say that) of *La Carte postale*? Or yet to arrange it in what is called *dossier* therein, between the word and the thing, the word *dossier* packed with all the backs [*dos*] with which the note and the 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 Socrates and Plato? This is not only on account of the question of tone, of the mixing or changing of tones (*Wechsel der Töne*) that would form in this book at once a theme and a practice. Nor is this on account of the word and the thing “apocalypse” that regularly recur there, with the numerological obsession and the insistence of the number seven that also puts rhythm into John’s Apocalypse. The signer of the “Envois” mocks at one moment what he calls our “little, library apocalypse” [16]. Nor is this a satire of philosophy and the academy. 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 is given 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 untuning *Verstimmung*. He wants to accuse *and* excuse him for/of the delirium in philosophy, one would say, in the same movement of a double postulation. The *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 made of his intellectual intuitions only a *regressive* use, in order to *explain* the possibility of a synthetic *a priori* cognition, and not a *progressive* use 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 postcard of a self-portrait by Kant; the innocent Plato is not the father of the delirium]), the father of all exaltation *in philosophy*. But I am hardly disposed to confuse with this Plato that of the *Letters* (*Plato den Briefsteller*) 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 overtake Jacobi. And the intolerable, in this letter-writer Plato, is aristocratic esotericism—Kant cites that Letter recommending not divulging secrets to the crowd—a cryptophilness added to a mystical interpretation of mathematics. The great stake between Plato and Kant is evidently the philosophical interpretation of mathematics. Plato, amazed by geometric figures, as Pythagoras was by numbers, would have done nothing but have a presentiment of the problematic of the *a priori* synthesis and would too quickly have taken refuge in a mysticism of geometry, as Pythagoras in the mysticism of numbers. And this mathematizing mysticism, this idolatry of figures and numbers always goes hand in hand with phenomena of sect, cryptopolitics, indeed superstitious theophany that Kant opposes to rational theology. Numerology, mystic illumination, theophanic vision, and so on, all these do belong 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") [125].

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

It is still a matter of the veil and of castration.

Eight years ago, right here in fact, I had spoken of veil and castration, about interpreters, hermeneutics and hermetics [1973]. *I have forgotten my umbrella* is a statement at once hermetic and totally open, as secret and superficial as the apocalypse of the postcard it announces and protects against. And elsewhere, in *Glas* and in "Economimesis," I indicated the intrigue of a certain veil of Isis near which Kant and Hegel more than once busied themselves. I am going to expose (and explain) myself in taking (and tying) up again with the threads of this intrigue and with the treatment of castration taking Isis into account.

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, that 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 humankind can point out or designate the dawn, but that we 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* [488]) only a theatrical sun (*Theatersonne*) [ibid.], a chandelier in sum [*un lustre en somme*]. And then these people abuse the metaphors, the figurative expressions (*bildlichen Ausdrücken*) [ibid.], in order to sensitize 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 *rustle* of its garment," its rustling (*Rauschen*), rather than its light touch (*frôlement*) as the French translation says [101]. Or yet: "since one 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*)" [ibid.]. 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; we are not told that. Probably not thin enough, still too thick so that we cannot do what we want with the phantom (*Gespens*t) behind its veil or cloth. For otherwise, if the veil was absolutely thin or transparent, this would be a vision, a seeing (*Sehen*), and, Kant notes while 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 bring into play the phantom and the veil; they replace the evidences and proofs with "analogies," "versimilitudes" ("*Analogien, Wahrscheinlichkeiten*") [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 from

literature. We certainly know this scene 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 recognize the ancient interdependence of these antagonists or protagonists.

Now let us consider that Kant first puts forward the word or the image of castration, or more rigorously of “emasculatation (*Entmannung*)” [488], as one example of those “analogies” or “verisimilitudes” abused by, with its conjuring ends, this “new mystico-Platonic language (*in der neuren mystisch-platonischen Sprache*)” [487]. He first takes [*prélève*] them from a sentence of that Schlosser who just translated and introduced Plato’s Letters. Nietzsche had 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 holds the keys, the true or the false ones, but also the officer of locking [*le préposé à la fermeture*], the one who closes and is an expert on closure, skilled as he is in speaking of it, in producing it, or in being right about it. This Schlosser then had spoken, by figure, of the “emasculatation of reason (*Entmannung der . . . Vernunft*),” and he had accused “metaphysical sublimation (*metaphysische Sublimation*)” [488] of this emasculatation. 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 there are those who adorn themselves with this new tone in philosophy, who emasculate and make a corpse of, empty [*cadavérisent*] 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 emasculatation [the French translation [101–2] says castration for emasculatation] 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 sentiment 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 paralyzed (*entmannt und gelähmt*)” [488–91].

If castration is a metaphor or a simulacrum—and it must be such, it seems, in order to concern the phallus, not the penis or the clitoris—then the metaphorical stake is clear between the two opposing parties encamped by a Kant who is no less a receiving party from 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 taking off its phallus. And

into this phallogocentric debate on both parts, then throughout all parts, 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 organization wherein 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 Organization,” “is between having a *male genital* and being *castrated*” [145]. No sexual difference [*pas de différence*] as antithesis, but only the masculine! This strange logic (reason since Freud, Lacan would say) could be followed far enough 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*)” [490n] 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*)” [ibid.] her, and so on.

The castration or not of *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. It is the same stake. 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 a power of symbolic essence. Schlosser, the locksmith, we could also say the man of the castle, not only abuses poetic metaphors. He accuses his century of being prosaic; and he dares to write to Plato, appeals to him, invokes him, apostrophizes him, calls him to witness: “*Armer Plato*, poor Plato, if you were not marked with the seal of Antiquity . . . who would still 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?” [495n]. Fighting against 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 philosophizing poetically (*wiederum poetisch zu philosophieren*) could well pass for proposing to the shopkeeper (*Kaufmann*) no longer henceforth to write his account books in prose but in verse” [ibid.].

But the strategy on both sides is more twisted still. The analogist and anagogist mystagogues, 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; it was “already for two thousand years” [482n]. Already for two thousand years have we finished with philosophy, said a disciple of Schlosser, a true count, the former, Count Leopold Stolberg, since “the Stagirite has made so many conquests for science that he left to his successors just so few notable things for which they can lie in wait” [482–83n]. 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 you play the philosophers through this monarchism, and you elevate yourselves by proclaiming the end of philosophy with an overlordly tone.

Naturally, even when he fights like this, Kant declares that he does not like warfare. 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 antinomy. As perhaps you have foreseen, this contract is more important to me than the whole combinative 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 yet speaking together about the suitable 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 surrender to on the side of our so-called modernity. Not that today anybody can be recognized on this or that side, purely and simply, but I am sure it could be shown 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 sustained discourse. And this inadequation, always limited itself, no doubt indicates the thickest of difficulties. Each of us is the mystagogue *and* the *Aufklärer* of another. 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, like himself, who declare their concern to speak or say 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 speaking in us, above all not under 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 and of the ethical today, Kant calls for placing the law above and beyond, not the person, but personification and the body, as it were the sensible voice speaking in us, the singular voice speaking to us in private, the voice that could be said in its 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 feminity, murderess of Osiris all of whose pieces she later recovers, except for the phallus. Even if you also think that is a personification too analogical or metaphorical, grant me at least that 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. Will be 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 founded 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 harmony 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 find 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 Vorstellungssart*) 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*), but not without always running some risk of falling into an exalted vision, which is the death of all philosophy. [494–95]

Among the numerous traits characterizing an apocalyptic type of document [*écrit*], let us provisionally isolate prediction and eschatological predication, the fact of telling, foretelling, or preaching the end, the extreme limit, the imminence of the last. Can't we say then that all the receiving parties of such a concordat are the subjects of eschatological discourses? No doubt, with other contextual elements, 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 is 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, indeed 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 history's end and of philosophy's death represent [*figurent*] only the most comprehensive, massive, and assembled forms of this. To be sure there are obvious differences between Hegelian eschatology, that Marxist eschatology one 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 gaps or 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 than the other, 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, the nuclear thunder and the great whoring, 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 tell the extreme of the extreme [*le fin du fin*], namely the end of the end, 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 that is also the end of the metalanguage concerning eschatological language. And so we can ask ourselves if eschatology is a tone, or even the voice itself. Isn't the voice always that of the last man? The voice or the tongue itself, the singing or the tone of voice [*l'accent*] in the tongue 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."] [476–77]). 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 / That which saves from it also grows." [Hölderlin, 462–63; Heidegger, 28, 34]). And if Heidegger thinks the *Überwindung* of metaphysics or of onto-theology like that of eschatology which is inseparable from it, he does so in the name of [*au nom de*] 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 tongue, 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, made the last philosopher speak with himself who is also the last man. He speaks with his own voice; he converses [*s'entretient*] and maintains [*entretient*] what life remains for him with the phantom of his own voice; and he calls on himself, he calls himself 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 reaches me like that of a dying person. 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 support 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 appeal to it. This impossible destination signs, stamps the death of the last man, inside 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!" [1922:36–37; 1978:48–49].

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 an appeal promising and responding before the question.

Clarity is necessary, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe said yesterday. Yes. But there is light, and there are the lights, daylight, and also the madness of the day [*la folie du jour*]. "The end is beginning," we read in *La Folie du jour* [1973:18; 1977:171]. Without even referring to the Zoroastrian type of apocalypses (there was 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 all the Western apocalyptic, is lit by the light of El, of Elohim:

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 have no need of the lamp's light
or of the sun's light:

Adônai Elohim illuminates them, and they rule forever and
ever.

(22:5)

There is light, and there are the 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 [*au nom d'*] an *Aufklärung* that Kant, for example, undertakes to demystify the overlordly tone. In light 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, we cannot and we must not forgo what compels recognition as the enigmatic desire for vigilance, for the lucid vigil [*veille*], for clarification, for critique and truth, but for a truth that at the same time keeps within itself enough apocalyptic desire, this time as desire for clarity and revelation, to demystify, or if you prefer, to deconstruct the apocalyptic discourse itself and with it everything that speculates on vision, the imminence of the end, theophany, the parousia, the Last Judgment, and so on. Then each time we intractably ask ourselves: where do 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 never went so badly one way or the other, to the right or the left? What effect do these noble, gentile [*gentils*] prophets or eloquent visionaries want to produce? With a view to what immediate or postponed

[*ajourné*] benefit? What do they do, what do we do in saying this? For whom do we seduce or subjugate, intimidate or cause to enjoy, to come? These effects and these benefits can be related to an individual or collective, conscious or unconscious speculation. They can be analyzed in terms of libidinal or political mastery, with all the differential relays and thus all the economic paradoxes overdetermining the idea of power or mastery and sometimes carrying them along into the abyss. The lucid analysis of these interests or of these calculi should mobilize a very great number and a great diversity of interpretative devices available today. It must and can do this, for our epoch would rather be superarmed in this regard. And a deconstruction, if it does not come to a stop there, nonetheless never works without some secondary work concerning the system joining up this superarmament to itself, articulating, 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 the Heideggerian thought on the history of metaphysics, the essence of science or of technics [*technique*]; and so on. Such a demystification must give in [*se plier*] to the subtlest 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 a dissembling can hide another of these desires. The most serious (for then it is without end), the most fascinating, results from 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 immediately in promising you to keep watch over your watching in its own absence. I am not sure that there is just *one* fundamental scene, *one* great paradigm on which, except for some gaps or deviations, all the eschatological strategies would model themselves. It would still be a philosophical, onto-eschato-teleological interpretation to say: the apocalyptic strategy is fundamentally one, its diversity is only of ways of proceeding [*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 *an* apocalyptic tone, a unity of the apocalyptic tone, and that *the* apocalyptic tone is not the effect of a generalized 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 uncontrollable polytonality, with grafts, intrusions, interferences [*parasitages*]. Generalized *Verstimmung* is the possibility for the other tone, or the tone of another, to come at no matter what moment to interrupt a familiar tonality. (Just as I suppose this is readily produced in analysis, but also elsewhere, when suddenly a tone come from one knows not where cuts off the word of—if that can be said—interrupts what tranquilly seemed to

determine (*bestimmen*) the voice and thus insure the unity of destination, the self-identity of some addressee [*destinataire*] or sender [*destinateur*]. If, from then on, *Verstimmung* is called the derailment, the sudden change [*saute*] of tone as one would say the sudden change of mood, it is the disorder or the delirium of the destination (*Bestimmung*), but also the possibility of all emission or utterance. The unity of tone, if there was such, would certainly be the assurance of the destination, but also death, another apocalypse.) So let us imagine that there is *an* apocalyptic tone and *a* 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," "she who," "those men who," "those women who," and I definitely say the tone that must be distinguishable from all articulated discursive content. Which means the tone is not perforce what the discourse says, and either one can always contradict, deny, make drift, derive, 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 revelator of some unveiling in process. Unveiling or truth, apophantics of the imminence of the end, of whatever returns at the limit, at 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: 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 in a few minutes? 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 or arrive at itself, to seduce in order to lead to itself, or 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, unbearable). The end is soon, it is imminent, signifies the tone. I see it, I know it, I tell you it, now you know it, come. We are all going to die, we are going to disappear. And this death sentence, this stopping of death [*cet arrêt de mort*] can only judge us. We are going to die, you and I, the others too, the goyim, the gentiles, and all the others, all those who do not share this secret with us, but they do not know it. It is as if they were already dead. We are the only ones in the world. I am 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 an instant, we who do not yet know who we are, an instant before the end the sole survivors, the only ones to stay awake—that will be even stronger. We shall be a sect; we shall form a species, a sex or gender, a race (*Geschlecht*) by ourselves alone; we shall

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 will lead us to think, not on the side of the confusion of tongues or tones, but on prostitution, if we suppose distinctions can be made.) The great Babel is the mother of whores: "Come. I shall show you 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 reflects back [*répercute*] in a certain way John's Apocalypse or at least the fundamental scene that already programs the Johannine document. Thus, for example:

"I know your works:
you are reputed to be alive
but you are dead.

Stay awake! [*Esto vigilans* says the Latin translation.]
Strengthen what is left, so near death.

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

I shall come: the coming is always to come. The *Adôn*, named as the aleph and the tau, 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, a future [*à-venir*]. *I come* 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 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, harmonize with a certain "come" (*erkhou, veni*) of the Johannine Apocalypse. Jesus says, "Be wakeful . . . I shall come to you." But John speaks by citing Jesus, or rather writes, appears to transcribe what he says by 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 book,
send it to the seven communities. . . ."

[1:9-11]

Write and send, dictates the voice come from behind, in the back of John, 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./2/ 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 or 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 it to him
to show to his servants
what will come soon.

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

[1:1-2]

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

He indicates 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
for those who keep what is written:

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

[1:2-3]

If, in a very insufficient and only just 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 great attention no doubt would have to be given this differential reduction or gearing down of voices and tones that perhaps divides them beyond a distinct and calculable plurality—at least 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 we wanted to unmask the ruses, traps, trickeries, seductions, the engines of war and pleasure, in short, all the interests of the apocalyptic tone today. We do 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 *récit*. And there is no certainty that man is the exchange [*le central*] of these telephone lines or the terminal of this computer without end. No longer do we know very well who loans his voice and his tone to the other in the Apocalypse; no longer do we know very well who addresses what to whom. But by a catastrophic overturning here more necessary than ever, we can as well think this: as soon as we no longer know very well 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 itself, 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 the revelation of the apocalypse, the self-presentation of the apocalyptic structure of language, of writing, of the experience of presence, either of the text or of the mark in general: that is, of the divisible dispatch [*envoi*] for which there is no self-presentation nor assured destination. But let us not worry, there is an apocalyptic *pli* [fold, envelope, letter, habit, or message]

there. 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 *pli* in the "apocalyptic" signifier that designates at times the content of the *récit* and of what is announced, namely the catastrophes and the cataclysms of the end of the world, the upheavals, the bolts of thunder and the earthquakes, the fire, the blood, the mountain of fire and the sea of blood, the plagues, the smoke, the sulphur, the burning [*la brûlure*], 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 revelatory discourse of the to-come or even of 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 light 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*], or for truth, well all that is already found on the way. And I shall say in an apocalyptic transfer(ence), it is already a citation or a recitation of John or of what already programed 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 thrusts [*se tend*] like a shofar, like a ram's horn:

To the messenger of the community in Ephesus, write:

"He says this,
he who holds 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 evil men.

You have tried those who call themselves envoys and are
not (*tous legontas eautous apostolous kai ouk eisin, qui se dicunt apostolos esse, et non sunt*),
and you find them false.

...

But I have this against you:
your first love, you have left it."
(2:1-2,4)

And the dispatches [*envois*] increase, 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 [*semion mega*] appears in the sky:
a woman clothed in the sun,

the moon under her feet,
and on her head a crown of twelve stars.
(11:19–12:1)

Then we, *Aufklärer* of modern times, we continue to denounce the imposter apostles, the “so-called envoys” who are not sent [*envoyés*] by anyone, the false and the unfaithful ones, the turgidness and the inflation of all those charged with a historic mission of whom nobody has requested anything and whom nobody has charged or entrusted with anything. Thus shall we continue, in the best apocalyptic tradition, to denounce the false apocalypses?

The habit [*plû*] 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 think this—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 motif 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 get to reactionary, backward-looking, conservative ends. Nothing is less conservative than the apocalyptic genre. And seeing that it is an apocryptic, apocryphal, masked, coded genre, it can give some detours in order to mislead another vigilance, that of censorship. We know that apocalyptic writings have 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 go no further than political censorship, and if we were alert enough to know that political censorship is not only practiced starting from specialized State lairs [*officines*], but everywhere, like an Argus with a thousand eyes, 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 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, and the breakdown [*le détraquement*] of destinations, apocalyptic discourse can also dismantle the dominant contract or concordat. It is a challenge to the established admissibility of messages and to the enforcement or the maintenance of order [*la police*] of the destination, in short to the postal regulations [*la police postale*] or to the monopoly of the posts. Conversely, we could even say that every discourse or every tonal disorder, everything that untunes and becomes inadmissible in general collocation, everything that is no longer identifiable starting from established codes, from both sides

of one front, will necessarily pass for or be considered 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 *Lumières*, I would be tempted by another bearing [*démarche*]. For finally, to demystify the seductive or agogic move is fine; it is necessary; but mustn't we first ask ourselves with a view to what, to what end does it [*ça*] seduce, use trickery, mislead, move? About this other bearing, I am going to say a very quick word, in order to conclude and respond thus if possible to a request. Several times I have been asked (and that is why I shall allow myself a brief exhibition or galactic (and nongalactic) show of certain of my writings) why (with a view to what, to what ends, and so on) I have or have *taken on* an apocalyptic tone and proposed apocalyptic themes. Thus have they often been qualified, sometimes with suspicion, and above all, I have noticed, in the United States where one is always more sensitive to phenomena of prophetism, messianism, eschatology, and of the 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 analyze a genre rather than practice it, and even when I would practice it, to do so with this ironic kind [*genre*] of clause wherein I tried to show that this clause never belonged to the genre itself; nevertheless, for the reasons I said a few minutes ago, every language on the apocalypse is also apocalyptic and cannot be excluded from its object. Then I have also asked myself why, to what ends, with a view to what, did the Apocalypse itself, I mean the historic writings thus named and first the one signed by John of Patmos, install itself little by little, above all for 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 very badly these rich and secret texts. This was first the case in *Glas*, whose columns are constantly shaken by apocalyptic agitations and laughs on the subject of the apocalypse and which in a certain moment (p. 220) mixes the remains of genres and of John, the one of the Gospel, of the Apocalypse, and of Genet. We see there: "The Gospel and the Apocalypse violently severed, fragmented, redistributed, with blanks, displacements in accents, lines skipped or shifted around, as if they reached us over a broken-down teletype, a wiretap [*table d'écoute*] within 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 be(come) (in a word *bander* [bind, bandage, bend, blindfold, get a hard-on, bandy]) one's own proper bit. [222]

That was finally, I said this 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 seven," the angels, "my angel," the messengers and the postmen [*facteurs*], prediction, the announcement of the news, the holocaustic "burning," and all the phenomena of *Verstimmung*, of the changing of tone, of the mixing of genres, of *destinerrance*, if I can say that, or of *clandestination*, so many signs of more or less bastard apocalyptic filiation. But in concluding I did not wish to stress this thematic or tonal network. 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 its tone, should be able to repeat itself, thus mimic itself, indeed "synthesize" itself) was also a reference to John's Apocalypse. I was not aware 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 the dictation of Christ (starting from Chapter 4) when it is said:

I see, in the right hand of him who is sitting on the throne,
a book-roll 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 book
and break the seals?"

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

[5:1-3]

And each time the Lamb opens one of the seven seals, one of the four living beings says, "Come," and it is the retinue of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. (In the "Envois" of *La Carte postale*, one or the other often says: they 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 in this; but everything

happens as if the hypothesis could not go beyond four, in any case it is 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 has repercussions in an exchange of appeals and responses that precisely is no longer an exchange. The voices, the places, the journeys 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* with one brilliant melodic passage, run, or virtuosic passage], they no longer give it the time, the beat. There is a kind of general narrator there at the moment of the signature, it will call itself the witness (*martyrōn, testimonium*). There is the angelic messenger there to whom he ascribes the dispatch [*l'envoi*]. There is John there who takes up the word again and says that at present he prostrates himself before the messenger who tells him

"Do not seal the words of the inspiration of this book
yes, the time is near "

[22 10]

The *double bind* of an order that John could only disobey in order to obey. Then Jesus takes up the word again, naturally in a mode directly related to what 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 presents himself. I, so-and-so, but he does this in the written text through the witness or the general narrator who is always the receiving party. Here it is, and it is the end.

'I, Yéshoua', I have sent my messenger
to testify to these things for you to 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 (*numphē, sponsa, the promised*)
say [together] "Come "
Let him who hears say "Come "
Let him who is thirsty come,
let him who wishes take the water of life, freely
For all who hear, I testify
to the words of the inspiration of this book
if anyone adds to them,
Elohim will inflict on him the afflictions described
in this book

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

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 let itself be contained simply in philosophy, metaphysics, onto-eschato-theology, and in 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, deferred, referring to some texts of Blanchot, Levinas, Heidegger, or others such as one could risk in this today with the last 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 the tone and of the changing of tone, by definition could not keep itself at the disposal of or confine itself to the measure, to the tempo, of philosophical, pedagogic, 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 the coming or of the 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. I shall say this then while accelerating the movement. Come from the other already as a response and a citation without past present, "Come" supports 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 stopped and examined [*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, in this *affirmative* tonality, "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." That "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 learnings 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, or pragmatic—and thus permitting us to say: it is an imperative; it is a jussive modality; it is 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, every tonality. And you will see, you will hear, the other will first hear—perhaps or not. It is a gesture in the word [*parole*], that gesture which does not let itself be recovered [*reprendre*] by the analysis—whether linguistic, semantic, or rhetorical—of a word.

“Come” [*Viens*] beyond being—this comes from beyond being and calls beyond being, engaging, starting 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 or conduct, if it no doubt is an-agogic, it can always be led back higher than itself, anagogically, toward the conductive violence, toward the authoritarian “duction.” This risk is unavoidable; it threatens the tone as its double. And even in the confession of the seduction: in saying with a certain tone, “I am in the act of seducing you,” I do not suspend, I can even increase, the seductive power. Perhaps Heidegger had not liked this apparently personal conjugation or this declension of the coming. But they are not personal, subjective, or egological. “Come” cannot come from a voice or at least not from a tone signifying “I” or “self,” a so-and-so (male or female) in my “determination.” “Come” does not address itself, does not appeal, 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 that may not already be derivable and arrivable [*arrivable*] without “rive” [without the source, *rivus*].

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

Our *apocalypse now*: that there is no longer any place for the apocalypse as the collection of evil and good in a *legein* of *alētheia*, nor in a *Geschick* of the dispatch [*l’envoi*], of the *Schicken* in a co-destination that would assure the “come” of the power to give rise [*lieu*] to an event in the certainty of a determination. But then what is someone doing who tells you: I tell you this, I have come to tell you this, there is not, there never has

been, there never will be an apocalypse, the apocalypse deceives, disappoints? There is the apocalypse *without* apocalypse. The word *sans*, *without*, I mention here in Blanchot's so necessary syntax, who often says *X without X*. The *without*, the *sans* 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 *pli* and its end, a closure without end, an end without end.

But what reading, what history of reading, what philology, what hermeneutic competence authorizes us to say that this very thing, this catastrophe *of* the apocalypse, is not what describes, in its movement and its very course [*trajet*], in its outline [*tracé*], this or that apocalyptic writing? For example, the one from Patmos that would then be dedicated to going out of itself in this aleatory errance? And what if this outside of the apocalypse was within the apocalypse? What if it was the apocalypse itself, what precisely breaks-in [*fait effraction*] in the "Come"? What is "(with)in" and what is "outside" a text, here of this text, (with)in and outside these volumes of which we do not know whether they are open or closed? Of this volume written, you remember this, "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 book. . . ." 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 on the apocalypse. But what are we doing, you will still insist, to what ends do we want to come when we come to tell you, here now, let's go, "come," the apocalypse, it's finished, that's all, I tell you this, that's what happens, that's what comes.

NOTES

/1/ Translation from the Greek, of course, but with some circumstances [*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, fed by the contribution of the traditional versions, has the calling to search under the Greek text for its historic 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 in Aramaic or Hebrew will have played an indispensable role here, but only a mediating one [E]ven if the text is expressed in Greek and, for what is from Jesus, if it is founded on an Aramaic or a Hebrew (Mishnaic, rabbinic, or Qumranic) 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 analyzing 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 with a new substance, before passing to the French" [11-12] Such is the project, it gives as its reference a *double authority*, evoking in turn the "almost unanimity of the exegetes" [11] or "the great ecumenical current" [15], the "ecumenism of sources" [16] For multiple reasons I shall not directly discuss the authority of these authorities. But when the question concerns language, text, event, and destination, etc., the questions I shall propose in this exposition 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 *authorized* translation that I shall often refer to that of André Chouraqui.

2/ 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 freedom I have taken with the Greek text concerns the verb tenses. Already Jouon had noted this: 'The attention given to the Aramaic substratum is particularly useful for avoiding a too mechanical 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 which in contemporary French usage is a very supple, very ample, very evocative tense, either 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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