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Politics of Friendship*

"O mes amis, il n'y nul amy."
"O my friends, there is no friend."

In addressing you in this way, perhaps I have not yet said anything. Perhaps I have not even addressed myself to you.

On the two sides of a comma or a pause, the two parts of this sentence seem incompatible with each other, destined to annihilate themselves in their contradiction. And, first, I have not yet said anything *in my own name*. I have contented myself with quoting. Spokesman for another, I have reported his words, which belong in the first place to a foreign or even rather archaic language. I have, then, signed nothing, put nothing on my own account.

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

This meditation on friendship should also involve, at the very same time, a study of quotation, and of the quotation of an apostrophe. What happens when one quotes an apostrophe? Later on we will connect these themes to those of the friend's name and death, of memoirs and of testaments. In the *Eudemian Ethics* (VII, 4, 1239 a 35–40), Aristotle inscribes friendship, knowledge, and death within the same configuration, in a constellation whose necessity gives much

to think about. He begins by remarking that in friendship it is more appropriate to love than to be loved, which somewhat complicates the mutualist and, if I may say so, the reciprocalist schema that he seems to privilege elsewhere. He goes on to give a proof of this. If a friend had to choose between knowing and being known, he would choose knowing rather than being known. To make this point clear, Aristotle gives the example of what women do in Antiphon's *Andromache*: they put their children in the care of a nurse and love them without seeking to be loved in return. They know themselves to be loving, they know that they love and whom they love, while accepting that they are neither known nor loved in return. To want to be known or loved, Aristotle then says, is an egoistic feeling, and he concludes: "It is for this reason that we praise those who continue to love their dead ones, for they know but are not known." Friendship for one who is dead thus carries this *philia* to the limit of its possibility. (Is this asymmetry consistent with the law of symmetry and with other Aristotelian axioms—such as, for example, the one according to which the friend is another self who must have the feeling of his own existence, or the one according to which friendship proceeds from self-love?)

On the subject of the death of friends, of memory and of testaments, let us recall to begin with that the chain of this citation of a citation ("O my friends, there is no friend") reaches like the heritage of a boundless rumor across the philosophical literature of the West, from Aristotle to Kant, to Blanchot, from Montaigne to Nietzsche, who reverses it this way in a passage from *Human, All Too Human*:

> Perhaps the hour of joy (*die freudigere Stunde*) will
>   also come on a day when each will say (*wo er
>   sagt*)
> *"Freunde, es gibt keine Freunde!" so rief der sterbende
>   Weise;*
> *"Feinde, es gibt keinen Feind!"—ruf ich, der lebende Tor.*
> "Friends, there are no friends!" cried the dying wise
>   man;

"Enemies, there are no enemies!" cry I, the living
     madman.
                              ("Von den Freunden" 376: 1980,
                                                2:263; 1986, 149)

Numerous paths are opened up by a reading of this reversing
apostrophe which converts the friend into an enemy and com-
plains, in short, about the enemy's disappearance, in any case
fears it, recalls it, announces or denounces it as a *catastrophe*.
     Later on we will situate one of these paths, the one we
could more or less strictly call *political*. It would lead back to
a tradition that, in a naturally differentiated and complicated
manner, goes back at least to Hegel, and that will take a
systematic form in Carl Schmitt. In truth, it is the *political* as
such, nothing more nor less, that would no longer exist with-
out the figure and without the determined possibility of the
enemy—that is, of an actual war. In losing the enemy, one
would simply lose the political itself—and this would be the
horizon of the post-world-wars. In *Der Begriff des Politischen*
(192) Schmitt (whose relationships to Nazism on the one
hand, and to Heidegger on the other, are of the greatest
complexity—one would also have to mention Leo Strauss at
this point) writes, for example: "The specific political dis-
tinction (*die spezifische politische Unterscheidung*) to which po-
litical actions and motives can be reduced is the distinction
between friend and enemy (*die Unterscheidung von* Freund *und*
Feind)" (1976, 26). The distinction or the differential mark
(*Unterscheidung*) of the political amounts to a discrimination
(*Unterscheidung*) between friend and enemy. This *Unterschei-
dung* is not only a difference, it is a determined opposition,
opposition itself. Should this opposition be effaced, and war
with it, the region named "politics" would lose its boundaries
or its specificity.
     Schmitt draws a great many consequences from this ax-
iom and from these definitions, notably as to a certain de-
politicization as the essential risk of modern humanity (and
even of humanity period, which *as such* knows nothing of the
figure of the enemy). Schmitt claims he is reviving a tradition
which was beginning to weaken. Whether one sanctions them

or not, certain of his remarks ought to interest us here. I will underline two of them.

1. Without proposing any equivalence or symmetry for the friend, the opposing term of the *Unterscheidung*, Schmitt considers that the enemy has always been taken to be "public." The concept of a *private* enemy would have no meaning. One has a feeling that the very sphere of the public emerges with the figure of the enemy:

> One may or may not share these hopes and pedagogic ideals. But, rationally speaking, it cannot be denied that nations continue to group themselves according to the friend and enemy antithesis, that the distinction still remains actual today, and that this is an ever present possibility for every people existing in the political sphere.
>
> The enemy is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. The enemy is *hostis,* not *inimicus* in the broader sense; *polemios,* and not *ekhthros.* As German and other languages do not distinguish between the private and political enemy, many misconceptions and falsifications are possible. The often quoted "Love your enemies" (Matt. 5.44; Luke 6:27) reads "diligite inimicos vestros," *agapaté tous ekhthrous,* and not *diligite* hostes *vestros.* No mention is made of the political enemy. Never in the thousand-year struggle between Christians and Muslims did it occur to a Christian to surrender rather than defend Europe out of love toward the Saracens or Turks. The enemy in the political sense need not be hated personally, and in the private sphere only does it make sense to love one's enemy, i.e., one's adversary. (1976, 28–29)

2. The modern definition of the enemy goes back to Hegel, but modern philosophers already have a tendency to avoid it—just as they avoid the political, in fact, insofar as it is linked to a certain concept and a certain practice of war:

> Hegel also offers the first polemically political defini-
> tion of the bourgeois. The bourgeois is an individual
> who does not want to leave the apolitical, riskless, pri-
> vate sphere. He rests in the possession of his private
> property, and under the justification of his possessive
> individualism he acts as an individual against the to-
> tality. He is a man who finds his compensation for his
> political nullity in the fruits of freedom and enrichment
> and above all in the total security of its use. Conse-
> quently he wants to be spared bravery and exempted
> from the danger of a violent death.[2] Hegel has also
> advanced a definition of the enemy which in general
> has been evaded by modern political philosophers: it
> is ethical difference (not in the sense of morality, but
> within the perspective of absolute life in the eternal
> being of the people), the foreigner negated in its living
> totality. [. . .] The question is how long the spirit of
> Hegel has actually resided in Berlin. In any event, the
> new political tendency which dominated Prussia after
> 1840 preferred to avail itself of a conservative philos-
> ophy of state, especially one furnished by Friedrich
> Julius Stahl, whereas Hegel wandered to Moscow via
> Karl Marx and Lenin. His dialectical method became
> established there and found its concrete expression in
> a new concrete-enemy concept, namely that of the in-
> ternational *class enemy,* and transformed itself, the di-
> alectical method, and everything else, legality and il-
> legality, the state, even the compromise with the enemy,
> into a weapon of this battle. The actuality of Hegel is
> very much alive in Georg Lukacs.[3] (1976, 62–63, my
> emphasis)

When Nietzsche writes, "Enemies, there are no enemies! cry I, the living madman," this reversing apostrophe, this

cat'apostrophe thus marks the modern—and anti-modern—landscape included between Hegel and Schmitt, understood and determined as such by Hegel and Schmitt. Nietzsche, or the "living madman," could mean, among many other equally enigmatic things, that there is no more politics, no more "great politics." In order to complain about it rather than to rejoice in it.

But we have decided not to set out on this path for the moment. We will encounter Schmitt again a little later in the vicinity of Heidegger—the vicinity, that is to say, both proximity and distance, difference and affinity. Let us for the moment turn rather to the side of the friend. Schmitt has indeed been reproached for having made the enemy and not the friend the "properly positive conceptual criterion (*das eigentliche positive Begriffsmerkmal*)" in the definition of the political. In his preface to the 1963 edition, Schmitt replies by invoking the privilege that negation must maintain in a dialectical determination of the "life of law" and of the "theory of law."[4] He responds, in short: I insist on the enemy rather than on the friend because if I had to, as you invite me, begin with the friend, it would require me to offer a preliminary definition of it, and that would not be possible except by reference to the opposing term, the enemy. We must begin from this oppositional negativity, and hence from hostility, to gain access to the political. In a word, hostility is required *by definition*, by the very definition of definition. By the dialecticity or the diacriticity which thus do not go without the possibility of war.

So let us return to Nietzsche's *cat'apostrophe*, from another point of view.

If something is *converted* or *inverted* in these two apostrophes, it is perhaps not in the content of the utterances, that is, the reversal of friendship into enmity, which perhaps leaves things intact, but rather in the modalities of the utterance. Substituted for the quotation in the past (*so rief*) of an exclamation attributed to a dying wise man (*der sterbende Weise*) is the quotation or rather the performative utterance of a present exclamation (*ruf ich*), for which a first person answers, introducing himself, precisely, as a living madman (*ruf ich, der lebende Tor*).

In what way does Nietzsche here reverse a Greek tra-
dition of *philia*? In what way will he denounce, in a context
which will later be that of *Zarathustra*, the Christian mutation
which prefers the neighbor to the Greek friend? Let us note
at the start that the citational rumor appears not to have
begun but to have found the simulacrum of its inauguration
(but what would be the origin of a rumor?) with Diogenes
Laertius. He does not quote Aristotle himself, but rather cites
the *Memorabilia* of Favorinus, in the chapter on Aristotle in
his *Lives, Teachings, and Sayings of Famous Philosophers.*

After having described the "tenor" of Aristotle's testa-
ment, Diogenes Laertius tells of the "beautiful sayings" of the
philosopher. One of them answers the question "What is a
friend?" with: "A single soul and two bodies." Further on,
instead of directly quoting the sentence *written* by Aristotle,
Diogenes Laertius prefers to quote Favorinus' *Memorabilia*
which itself quotes Aristotle's words. In spite of their surface
discontinuity, certain series of sayings resemble chains of aph-
orisms drawn together by a secret logic. An ethico-political
thematics, for example, associates a certain egalitarianism,
the idea of distributive or proportional justice, and a certain
concept of the rights of man or of the human person, with
this ambiguous complaint: "O my friends, there is no (true)
friend." For example: "People reproached him for having
given alms to a scoundrel: he answered (for the fact is also
reported in this way): 'I did not give to the individual but to
man.'" This saying can be compared with the *Nichomachean
Ethics* (1161 b), where Aristotle recalls the friendship due to
the slave as a man and not as a slave. The *Eudemian Ethics*
(1236 a b) indeed reserves the first and highest friendship
for man (as opposed to animals), the friendship from which
all others in a sense derive their name even if they are not
simply homonyms of it, even if they are not types of friend-
ship and are not related to this first meaning in an entirely
equivocal or univocal manner. This first meaning of friend-
ship, which is also the highest if not the universal meaning,
is that of friendship founded on virtue. It is reserved for
man because it implies that faculty of deliberation (*bouleusis*)
which belongs neither to animals nor to God. There is no

friendship, at least in this first sense, with or between animals, with or between gods. But one is not allowed to talk *only* of friendship in the first sense without being caught in several paradoxes. For there is also friendship founded on utility (and this is the case for concord as a political friendship: cf. *Eud.* 1242 a b) or on pleasure, an unstable friendship found particularly among young people.

These three friendships imply equality, but a certain friendship can also imply superiority. The friendship of a divine being for a man, of a governor for the governed, of a father for his son, of a husband for his wife, is another kind of friendship, says Aristotle, and they also differ among each other, implying no absolute reciprocity. It is during the passage devoted to this inequality that Aristotle evokes friendship for the dead—the friendship that knows without being known (1239 a b).

What does the series of Aristotelian sayings reported by Diogenes Laertius signify? For example:

> People reproached him for having given alms to a scoundrel: he answered [. . .] 'I did not give to the individual but to the man.' People asked him how one ought to conduct oneself with one's friends: 'As we would like to see them conduct themselves towards us.' He defined justice as a virtue of the soul which makes us give to each according to his own merit. He affirmed that study is the greatest asset in reaching old age. Favorinus says, finally, (*Memoirs,* book II) that he loved to exclaim: 'O my friends, there is no (true) friend.' And one can in fact find this sentence in the seventh book of the *Ethics.* (Aristotle 1925, 1.462–5)

The little word "true" ("there is no [true] friend") obviously bears almost the whole enigma, the other part coming back to the grammatical instability of the sentence, which can always have the O of the apostrophe understood as a sort of dative (the one for whom there are friends, many friends, for that one there are no friends).[5]

Very schematically, we could say that the interpretation can appeal to two great logics. The first can make true friend-

ship (the first friendship, *protè philia* in the *Eudemian Ethics*, perfect or complete friendship, *teleia philia* in the *Nichomachean Ethics*) an *arché* or a *telos*, toward which one must strive even if one never attains it. The inaccessibility, in this case, is merely a distancing within the immensity of a homogeneous space, a path along which to go. But one could also interpret this inaccessibility *differently*. *Differently*, that is to say, in terms of a thinking of the alterity that makes true or perfect friendship not only inaccessible as a conceivable *telos*, but inaccessible because it is inconceivable in its very essence and thus in its *telos*. On the one hand, one would have a conceivable *telos* which one could not reach; on the other, the *telos* remains inaccessible because it is unreachable, and inconceivable because it is contradictory in itself. This inaccessibility would then take on a completely different meaning, that of a prohibitive bar within the very concept of friendship. As Aubenque says, "perfect friendship destroys itself." It is contradictory in its very essence. On the one hand, one *must* want the greatest good for one's friend—and thus that he become a god. But *one cannot* want this, and I would say there are at least *three reasons* why.

One is that there is no longer any possibility of friendship with God by virtue of his distance or his separation (*Nich.* 1159 a) but also because of the absence of a common measure for proportional equality between God and myself. *So one cannot want God for a friend.*

The second reason is that friendship commands me to love the other as he is, by desiring that he remain as he is and do so according to his "nature as man" (1159 a). Friendship is again, in its origin and its end, in its first sense and in its full realization, *what is proper to man*. So one cannot want to deify a friend.

And yet—the third and doubtless most radical reason— the man of friendship, as a man of virtue, ought to resemble God. Now God has no need of friends; he thinks himself and not anything else. The *noesis noeseôs*, the thought of thought which characterizes the prime mover as well as, in the same tradition, absolute knowledge in Hegel's sense of the term, has nothing to do with friendship because it has nothing to do with the other. Perfect or true friendship, that of the just

and virtuous man who wants to resemble God, thus tends towards this divine *autarkeia* which can easily do without the other and thus has no relationship to friendship, any more than it does to the death of the other. It is precisely in a passage devoted to this autarky that Aristotle emphasizes this sort of aporia:

> Because God is such that he has no need of friends, we conclude that it is the same for the man who resembles God. But then, if one follows this reasoning, we will also have to say that the valorous (or virtuous, *spoudaios*) man does not even think, for God's perfection does not reside in thought: God is superior to any thought which would be a thought of something else — unless he thinks himself. The reason for this, in our opinion, is that the good implies a relation to the other, whereas God is for himself his own good (*aition d' oti emin men to eu kath'eteron, ekeinô de autos autou to eu estin*). (*Eud.* VII, 12, 1245 b - 14–19, cited and translated in Aubenque 1963, 183)

This passage clearly shows that (true) friendship can only be human, but most of all, and at the same time, that for man there is no thought unless it is a thought *of the other* and a thought of the other as a *thought of the mortal*. Within the same logic, there is no thought, there is no thinking being, at least if thought has to be thought of the other, except in friendship. Thought, insofar as it has to be thought of the other — and this is what it must be *for man* — does not happen without *philia*. Translated into the logic of a human and finite *cogito*, this results in the formula: I think, therefore I think the other; I think, therefore I need the other (to think); I think, therefore the possibility of friendship lodges itself in the movement of my thought insofar as it requires, calls, desires the other, the necessity of the other, the cause of the other at the heart of the *cogito*. Translated into the logic of a divine *cogito*: I think, therefore I think myself and I suffice for myself, there is no (need of the) other, etc.

But every thought is not necessarily translated into the logic of the *cogito*, and we will be able, later, and along another route, to rediscover this affinity of *philein* with thought — and with mortality.

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

It is also the question of the name that we bear [*nom porté*], of the *port* or the *support* of the name, and of the *rapport* to the name, that I would like to approach here, obliquely.

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

So what is happening at this very moment? This could give rise to a description of a "pragmatic" type. It would confirm that, having been invited (but how and by whom, exactly, in the end?), invited to speak to you when you are assembled to listen to me, then to discuss with me, in short, to *respond to me,* I have already responded to an invitation and consequently I am in the process of addressing myself to you who are beginning to respond to me. You are doing so in a way which is still *virtual* with respect to the content of the response, but you are already doing so *actually* with respect to that first response constituted by the attention given or at least promised to a discourse.

With this distinction between potentiality and act, we are already virtually installed in the dominant code, in the very constitution of one of the great canonical philosophical dis-

courses on friendship, the very one which Montaigne was quoting, Aristotle's. The distinction between potentiality and act, *dynamis* and *energia,* is never far away, in the *Nichomachean Ethics,* when it is a matter of distinguishing between the "good men who are friends in the rigorous sense of the term" and "the others who are so only accidentally and by analogy with the first" (VIII, ch. 4); or between, on the one hand, the *prote philia* of the *Eudemian Ethics* or the *teleia philia* of the *Nichomachean Ethics,* and, on the other hand, the other friendships founded on utility or pleasure; or again when, after having defined the three "forms of government," Aristotle declares that "friendship appears (there) in the same proportion as justice" or, if man is a "political being" (IX, ch. 10), "political friendship" is only a kind of friendship that he calls "concord" (*homonoia*). All of these sequences should be meticulously reconstituted.

You are thus already holding me responsible for what I say, for the simple fact that I am speaking, even if I am not yet assuming the responsibility for the sentences I am citing.

Let us suppose, *concesso non dato,* that one can translate these Greek words *philia* and *homonoia* today by "friendship," *Freundschaft, amitié*—and here everything will depend on thinking the possibility of this translation and on thinking thought, as thought of the same or as thought of the other, in terms of the possibility of this transfer or this train or this streetcar named *philia, Freundschaft, amitié, friendship.* This translation is already problematic in the Greek language itself, as Aristotle knew better than anyone. The Greek language had, in fact, to have recourse to the same word, *philia,* for meanings that were different and derived, inadequate to *philia prote* and *teleia philia.* Aristotle's whole discourse on *philia* is a discourse on language, on the word *philia,* its uses, its contexts, its regulated equivocality, its legitimate and abusive translations. Even supposing one could translate these words without any remainder, I still do not know if there is *philia* or *homonoia* between us, nor how one should distinguish here among us, among each one of us, who together would compose this as yet quite indeterminate "us."

But perhaps you will grant me the following, something like the first result of a practical demonstration, the one that

has just taken place: even before having taken responsibility in our name, to each one of us, for this or that affirmation, we are already taken or caught up, each and any one of us, in a kind of asymmetrical and heteronomical curvature of the social space, more precisely, in the relation to the other prior to any organized *socius,* to any determined "government," to any "law." Prior to or before it, in the sense of Kafka's "before the law."[6] Please note: prior to any determined law, as either natural law or positive law, but not prior to any law in general, because this heteronomical and asymmetrical curvature of a sort of originary sociality is a law, perhaps the very essence of the law. What is taking place at this moment, the disquieting experience we are having, is perhaps just the silent unfolding of that strange violence which has for so long, forever, insinuated itself into the origin of the most innocent experiences of friendship or of justice. We have begun to *respond.* We are already caught, we are already surprised, in a certain responsibility, and the most ineluctable of responsibilities—as if it were possible to think of a responsibility without freedom. We are invested with an undeniable responsibility at the moment we begin to signify something. But where does that begin? Does it ever begin? This responsibility assigns us our freedom *without leaving it with us,* if one can put it that way, and we see it coming from the other. It is assigned to us by the other, from the other, even before any hope of reappropriation permits us to assume this responsibility in the space of what could be called autonomy. This experience is even the one in which the other appears as such, that is, appears without appearing.[7] What comes before autonomy must, then, also *exceed* it, that is to say, succeed it, survive it, and indefinitely overrun it.

In general, when dealing with the law (*nomos*), one believes one can simply oppose autonomy and heteronomy. Perhaps one would have to deform this oppositional logic and prepare, from very far away, its "political" translation.

To say it in a word, and because it is good, for reasons of clarity during a lecture, to anticipate in a number of ways and to announce a heading, it is a question of a "political" translation whose risks and difficulties, even aporias, one could hardly exaggerate. After having foregrounded a scan-

sion in a kind of history of friendship, a scansion which would
have introduced asymmetry, separation, and infinite distance
into a Greek *philia* which did not tolerate them, it would be
a matter of suggesting that a democracy still to come, one
not yet given, not yet thought, even one still suppressed or
repressed, not only would not contradict this asymmetrical
curvature and this infinite heterogeneity, but in truth would
be called for by them. This asymmetry and infinite alterity
would not only not bear any relationship to what Aristotle
would have called inequality or superiority, but they would
even be incompatible with any socio-political hierarchy *as such*.
Later on it will appear that beyond a certain determination
of right and calculation (of measure, of "metry"), but not of
right in general, this democracy would free a certain inter-
pretation of equality from the phallogocentric schema of *fra-
ternity* which, I will attempt to show, has been determining
and dominant in our traditional concept of friendship. In
what sense could one still talk of equality, even of symmetry,
within the asymmetry and measurelessness of infinite alterity?
What right would we have still to talk of politics, of right,
and of democracy? Must these words change their meanings
entirely? Allow themselves to be translated? And what then
will be the rule governing this translation?

We spoke just now of an excessive assignation of re-
sponsibility. What can it have to do with *what is called friendship?*
I say advisedly "what is called friendship," and I underscore
this precaution. It resembles once again a quotation, as if I
were forcing myself to remember unceasingly that before
knowing *what* friendship *is* and what we mean here and now
by this word, we should first deal with a certain use of the
word "friendship." We should *mention* these uses, as well as
the interpretations and experiences (for experiences are also
interpretations) to which this friendship has given rise. For
we should not forget that we are speaking first of all from
within the tradition of a certain concept of friendship, within
a given culture, let us say ours, in any case the one on the
basis of which a certain "we" here tries its luck. Now, this
tradition is not homogeneous, nor is the determination of
friendship within it. Our principal concern will be to rec-

ognize there the major marks of a tension, perhaps ruptures, and in any case scansions, at the interior of this history of friendship, of the canonical figure of friendship.

Let us listen once again to Montaigne listening to Diogenes listening to Aristotle, but let us translate and interpret him as well: "O my friends, there is no friend." The painful and plaintive irony of the address also states the certitude of a strange affirmation. The phrase springs forth like a sort of *apostrophe*; in fact, someone is *turning* toward his friends, "O my friends . . . ," but the apostrophe carries within it a predicative proposition, it envelops an indicative declaration. Stating a fact, it also utters a general truth: "there is no friend." The general truth of the *fact* would seem to contradict, *in the act*, the very possibility of the apostrophe, the possibility of its being serious: there must indeed be friends in order for me to address myself to them in this way, if only so as to say to them "there is no friend."

The performative contradiction would be as vivid and present as a simple logical absurdity, in the best of cases the playful exercise of a paradox, if the structures of the two utterances were symmetrical and if they belonged to a *presently homogeneous* set. This is not necessarily the case. The apostrophe, whose form overruns and comprises in itself the alleged statement, resembles at one and the same time an act of recalling and a call, an appeal. It resembles an appeal because it makes a sign toward the future: be my friends, for I love or will love you (friendship, as Aristotle also said, consists rather in loving than in being loved [*Nich.* VIII 9, 1159 a 25–30], a proposition on which we have not finished meditating), listen to me, be sensitive to my cry, understand and be compassionate, I am asking for sympathy and consensus, become the friends to whom I aspire. Accede to what is at the same time a desire, a request, and a promise, one could also say, a prayer. And let us not forget what Aristotle said about prayer (*eukhè*): it is a discourse (*logos*), but it is a discourse that, somewhat in the manner of a performative, is neither true nor false (*all 'outè alethès outè pesudes*).[8] There are no friends, that we know, but I beg you, make it so that there will be friends from now on. What is more, how could I be your friend, and declare my friendship for you (and the latter

consists more in loving than being loved), if friendship did not remain something yet to come, to be desired, to be promised? How could I give you my friendship where friendship would not be lacking, if it were already there? More precisely, if the friend were not lacking? If I give you friendship, it is because if there is any (perhaps), it does not exist, *presently*. For the apostrophe does not say, "there is no friendship," but rather, "there is no friend." Perhaps this is because we have an idea of friendship and what it should be, in the ideality of its essence or *telos* (*teleia philia*), and thus *in the name of friendship* we must conclude, alas, that if there is friendship, "there is no friend." (And this is just what Montaigne means in the context determined by the most thematic of his intentions, which dominates this passage up to a certain point: it is while thinking about "common friendships," "ordinary and customary" ones, that we are obliged to sigh with regret. These common friendships are not "the most perfect of their kind," and that is why "there is no friend.") But if there is no friend *at present*, then precisely let us make it so that from now on there will be friendships, "the most perfect of their kind." Here is what I am calling you to, answer me, it is our responsibility. Friendship is never a given in the present; it belongs to the experience of waiting, of promise or of engagement. Its discourse is that of prayer, and at stake there is what responsibility opens to the future.

But the apostrophe "O my friends" also turns toward the *past*. It recalls, it makes a sign toward what must be supposed so as to be understood, if only in the non-apophantic form of prayer: you have *already* shown me this minimal friendship, this preliminary consent without which you would not understand me, would not listen to my call, or be sensitive to what is hopeful in my plea. Without this absolute past, I could not, for my part, have addressed myself to you in this way. We would not be together in a sort of minimal community—but one which is also incommensurable with any other—speaking the same language or praying for translation within the horizon of the same language, even were it so as to manifest a disagreement, if *a sort* of friendship had not already been sealed, prior to any other contract: a friendship prior to friendships, an ineffaceable, fundamental and bot-

tomless friendship, the one which draws its breath in the
sharing of a language (past or to come) and in the being-
together which any allocution supposes, including a decla-
ration of war.

Will one say, in a rather Aristotelian gesture, that this
friendship has merely an accidental and analogical relation
with friendship in the strict or proper sense? Or with friend-
ship which is "perfect of its kind" (Montaigne)?

The question thus becomes: "What is friendship in the
proper sense?" Is it ever present? What is presence for this
philia protè or for this *teleia philia*, whose aporia we have caught
a glimpse of? "What is the essence of friendship?" If we are
not close to answering this question, it is not only because of
the very large number of *philosophical* difficulties still before
us, which we are going to try to approach. In a preliminary,
principal way, at once simple and abyssal, it is because the
question "what is? (*ti estin*)," the question of essence or truth,
has *already* unfolded itself, as the question of philosophy,
starting from a certain experience of *philein* and *philia*.

There is not enough space here to tie this question to
the elaboration that Heidegger proposes of it, notably in *Was
ist das—die Philosophie?* This elaboration concerns the moment
in which the *philein* of Heraclitus' *philein to sophon*, after having
been determined as originary accord (*ein ursprünglicher Ein-
klang, harmonia*) would have become an orientation toward
research, a jealous and tense inquisition or striving (*strebende
Suchen*) "determined by Eros" (50–51). It is only with this
eroticization of the questioning about beings ("Was ist das
Seiende, insofern es ist?") that thought (*das Denken*) would
have become philosophy. "Heraclitus and Parmenides were
not yet philosophers" (52–53). The "step" toward philosophy
would have been prepared by the Sophists and finally
achieved by Socrates and Plato. Guided by a vigilant reading
of this interpretation, we might attempt to follow the very
discreet thread of an incessant meditation on friendship in
the path of Heidegger's thought. The meditation passes, in
particular, by way of the unexpected and isolated allusion to
the "voice of the friend (*Stimme des Freundes*) that every *Dasein*
carries within itself" (*Sein und Zeit* §34, 163). The existential
analytic of *Dasein* that "carries (*trägt*)" this voice in itself, let

us not forget, is neither an anthropology, nor a sociology, nor an analytic of the subject, consciousness, psyche, or the ego—neither a morals nor a politics. All these disciplines presuppose it. This loads the allusion to the voice of the friend—and thus friendship itself—with a very particular ontological signification, in the chapter on "Dasein und Rede, Die Sprache" (160–67) and not even in the analytic of *Mitsein*. This strange "voice," at once both internal and from elsewhere, perhaps has some relation to the "voice" of conscience (*Gewissen*) of which Heidegger also proposes an existential analytic (§57). The provenance of the call, its *Woher*, is an *Unheimlichkeit* (§58). The voice of the call is, moreover, experienced as an alien, non-intimate voice (*unvertraut—so etwas wie eine* fremde *Stimme*) by the everyday "they" (§57; 277). Since the sex of this "friend" is not determined, I would also be tempted to graft onto this reading the questions I have elsewhere posed on the word *Geschlecht* and sexual difference in Heidegger (Derrida 1987b and 1987c).

In any case, the sophistic moment signifies a scission in the thought of harmony. To heal this wound, to calm this discord or this discordance in the harmony of the *Einklang*, to reconstitute the originary and interrupted *philein*, a troubled and nostalgic philosophy asks "what is . . ." and becomes with this what it is, philosophy, as if in the question what is (*ti estin*) philosophy implicitly asks itself: what's happened? What's taken place? In other words, what's happened to *philein* or to the originary *Einklang*? Why has the harmony been interrupted? Why the discord and the discordance?

These same questions should lead, by way of the *Gespräch* between the thinker and the poet, the *Gespräch* that always supposes some sort of friendship, toward two types of texts: on the one hand, those addressed to Hölderlin ("Wo aber sind die Freunde?," in *Andenken*[9]), on the other, those addressed to Trakl, to the figures of "the friend who follows the stranger," of the brother and sister, precisely around this motif of the *Geschlecht*.[10]

We should also reread, from this perspective, the 1943–44 course on Heraclitus (1979a, 127 ff.) on the interpretation of *philia* in the name philosophy (*philia tou sophou*) or of *philein* in the Heraclitean saying ("*Der Spruch Heraklits: phusis krup-*

testhai phileï"). Here Heidegger interprets *philia* as favor (*Gunst*), a benevolent protection or happiness for (*Gönnen, Gewähren*). "*In der* physis *waltet die Gunst*" (132). "In *physis* benevolence reigns—that which accords or is in agreement, like the favorableness of a favor." Or again "*Wir verstehen das* philein *als die Gunst und das Gönnen*" (136): "We understand *philein* as favor or solicitude." *Philia* is here the essential and reciprocal or alternating (*wechselweise*) relationship between the raising, opening, or becoming-open (*Aufgehen*) and the decline (*Untergehen*) or self-dissimulation (*Sichverbergen*) of *physis*. *Physis* as *philia* is accord granted, this solicitude for revelation and self-dissimulation, this self-accord of the *Aufgehen* and the *Untergehen*. It has a relationship to itself which is at once generous and jealous, if one can say this, which means that it loves to hide. One of Heidegger's concerns is to avoid anachronism in this understanding of *philia* and *philein*. This anachronistic deafness would above all consist of anthropologizing, psychologizing, subjectivizing *philein*. Heidegger appears to hold a modern, or at any rate post-Christian, metaphysics of subjectivity responsible for this. I find it difficult to follow him in this epochal scansion, especially when he excludes Aristotle from this anthropologization of *philia* or of *philein*. It would be one thing to call the subject-object point of view anachronistic, another to say that the anthropological, or even the psychological point of view was foreign to Aristotle. It is true that for Heidegger what in modernity is called anthropology or psychology would be entirely dependent on a metaphysics of subjectivity, on an interpretation of man as subject. It is this that allows him to say, in the same passage, that Christianity constitutes the preparatory stage of an education in the passions, and even of a psychology: "For the Greeks, there is no psychology. Aristotle's treatise *Peri Psykhès* has nothing to do with 'psychology.' In the completion of metaphysics, metaphysics becomes 'psychology,' in other words psychology and anthropology are the last words of metaphysics. Psychology and technics go hand in hand. (*Im Griechentum gibt es keine Psychologie. Die Abhandlung des Aristoteles Peri Psykhès hat mit "Psychologie" nichts zu tun. In der Vollendung der Metaphysik wird die Metaphysik zur "Psychologie", d.h. die Psycholoie und die Anthro-*

*pologie ist das letzte Wort der Metaphysik. Psychologie und Technik
gehören zusammen wie rechts und links*)" (130).

Whatever one might say about this epochal distribution
and the problems it poses, one has to conclude, at any rate,
that when Heidegger evokes the friend or friendship, he does
so in a space which is no longer or not yet that of the person,
the subject, the *anthropos* of anthropology, or the *psychè* of
psychology.

When Heidegger, in the rather late text on *Was ist das—
die Philosophie?* (1956), attempts to return to an experience
of speech or of language (*Sprache*) originary enough to pre-
cede, in some way, questioning itself (*das Fragen*); when he
recalls that this questioning, namely the very movement of
research, knowledge, philosophy, presupposes a certain ac-
quiescence, an accord granted to *Sprache* and engaged in it,
he perhaps rediscovers this region of accord or of *philein*
which has not yet become *philosophia*, a questioning tension,
the eroticization of a *Streben*, a jealous, nostalgic, mournful,
or curious contraction of Eros.

It is perhaps in this region that the "voice of the friend"
resonates. It is then perhaps a question of what I earlier called
the minimal "community"—but one that is also incommen-
surable with any other, speaking the same language, or pray-
ing or crying for translation within the horizon of a single
language, even if only to demonstrate disagreement: friend-
ship from before friendships. And I will add: from "before"
enmity.

This promise from before friendships would be inti-
mately bound up with the "yes, yes," this promise of memory
which I have attempted to analyze elsewhere. But the double
affirmation, which is and must remain essentially daring,
threatened, open, does not allow itself to be defined or posited
as a determinate position. As such, it withdraws itself from
opposition. It is thus not yet "political," at least in the strictly
coded sense of the tradition that Schmitt claims to define. To
go no further than a very preliminary sketch, we would situate
Schmitt's *Concept of the Political* in the following way. Without
even mentioning the political affinities that this "concept" can
have with a certain politics, in a context dominated by na-
tional-socialism (in itself a very complex question, which I

will leave aside for the moment), one can at least attempt to recognize the differences of level (1) between Heidegger's discussion and that of Schmitt on the one hand, and (2) between these two discussions and what I am trying to suggest, here or elsewhere.

Schmitt appears to share with Heidegger the conviction that it is necessary to go back before the subjectal or anthropological determination of the *Freund/Feind* couple. In the same way, one would have to withdraw from it all of the dependent or corresponding determinations (moral anthropology, aesthetics, economics):

> The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is the distinction (*Unterscheidung*) between friend and enemy. The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all the moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions [namely, the distinctions mentioned earlier: good-bad, beautiful-ugly, etc.]. (1976, 26–27) [. . .]

> The friend and enemy concepts are to be understood in their concrete and existential sense (*Sinn*), not as metaphors or symbols, not mixed or weakened by economic, moral, and other conceptions (*Vorstellungen*), least of all in a private-individualistic sense (*Sinn*) as a psychological expression of private emotions and tendencies. They are neither normative nor pure spiritual (*rein geistigen*) antitheses. (1976, 27–28) [. . .]

> War is still today the most extreme possibility. One can say that the exceptional case has an especially decisive meaning which exposes the core of the matter. For only in real combat is revealed the most extreme consequence of the political grouping of friend and enemy. From this most extreme possibility human life derives its specifically political tension.

> A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a

world without the distinction between friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions and intrigues of every kind, but there would not be a meaningful *antithesis* whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood, and kill other human beings. For the definition of the political, it is here irrelevant whether such a world without politics is desirable as an ideal situation. The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever-present possibility of the friend-and-enemy grouping, *regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics.*

War, as the most extreme political means, discloses the possibility which underlies every political idea, namely the distinction between friend and enemy. This makes sense only as long as this distinction in mankind is actually present or at least potentially possible. On the other hand, *it would be senseless to wage war for purely religious, purely moral, purely juristic, or purely economic motives. The friend-and-enemy grouping and therefore also war cannot be derived from these specific antitheses of human endeavor.* A war need be neither something religious nor something morally good nor something lucrative. (1976, 35–36; my emphasis)

Schmitt proposes, in short, a deduction of the political as such from a place where it did not yet exist. For this, it is necessary to think the enemy as such, that is, the possibility of a properly political war:

If there really are enemies in the existential sense as meant here, then it is justified, but only politically, to repel and fight them, physically. [. . .] For as long as a people exists in the political sphere, this people must, even if only in the most extreme case—and whether this point has been reached has to be decided by it—determine by itself the distinction between friend and enemy. Therein resides the essence of its political ex-

istence. [. . .] The justification of war does not reside in its being fought for ideals or norms of justice, but in its being fought against a real enemy. All confusions of this category of friend and enemy can be explained as results of blendings of some sort of abstractions or norms. (1976, 49–50)

If Schmitt determines the political on the basis of the enemy rather than of the friend, this is not simply an inconsistent asymmetry. As we recalled earlier, Schmitt is here relying on a necessity that he calls dialectical. If one wanted to derive a politics from friendship rather than from war, one would still have to agree upon what "friend" means. Now the meaning of "friend" is only determined within the oppositional distinction "friend-enemy." And Schmitt, indeed, has recourse to this oppositional logic, to the opposition friend/enemy, to the possibility of war rather than to the asymmetrical fact of enmity, in his deduction of the political. The question toward which I am moving here would perhaps concern the possibility of an experience of friendship before or outside of this oppositional or "polemological" logic, and thus also of the purity that this logic seems to demand.

One would doubtless look in vain for such a determining deduction of the political in Heidegger. Is this a lack, an endured or willed absence? Is it because, in going back before this determination toward a more originary zone, Heidegger no longer gave himself the means of a determining derivation? Is it the modernity of such a determination *that is lacking*? But lacking where and for whom? For Heidegger or for modernity itself? And what if Heidegger, in Schmitt's own logic, had understood this properly modern de-politicization of a world in which the concept of enemy loses its limits? This stubbornness in restoring, reconstituting, saving, or refining classical oppositional distinctions—at a time when the attention drawn to a certain modernity (that of war in particular, of guerilla war or of the cold war) was prompting him to assert the disappearance of this fundamental distinction—is not the least of the paradoxes nor the least interesting aspect of Schmitt's enterprise.

How can Schmitt be surprised or complain about the

difficulties encountered by a "reflection whose object is the distinction between friend and enemy" when he himself recognizes that our "age" "at the same time produces machines of nuclear extermination and effaces the distinction between war and peace"?[11] Does Schmitt not dream of improving the instrument of a classical theory (which he claims, moreover, has never really served its purpose) in order to adapt it to a modernity, to a modern theory of the political and a modern polemology, which have nothing more to do with it? He writes:

> The era of systems is past. The debut of the great epoch of European republicanism (*Epoche des europäischen Staatlichkeit*), three hundred years ago, saw the birth of magnificent intellectual systems. It is no longer possible, in our time, to build similar ones. The only remaining possibility is an historical retrospective gathering the image of this great epoch of *jus publicum Europaeum*, with its concepts of the State, of war and the just enemy, into the consciousness of its systematisations. (1972,17)

He notes a little further on that the Cold War provokes

> the rupture of those axes of coupled concepts which have until now supported the traditional system of limits and forms imposed on war. The cold war knows nothing of the classical distinctions between war, peace, and neutrality, between politics and economics, soldiers and civilians, combatants and noncombatants, with the exception of the distinction between friend and enemy, whose logic presides over its birth and determines its nature.
>   There is nothing astonishing in the fact that the old English word *foe** has awakened from its four-hundred year-old archaistic lethargy and come back into use, over these last two decades, alongside the word *enemy*. How could we have, since then, in an age that at the same time produces machines of nuclear extermination and effaces the distinction between war and

peace, blocked the pursuit of a reflection whose object is the distinction between friend and enemy?

foe: Shorter Oxford Dictionary: 1. in early use, an adversary in deadly feud or mortal combat; now, one who hates and seeks to injure another (Old English); 2. One belonging to a hostile army or nation, an enemy in battle or war (Middle English). (1972, 18)

The very possibility of the question, in the form of "what is . . . ?," seems always to have supposed this friendship prior to friendships, this *anterior* affirmation of being-together in the allocution. Such an affirmation can no longer be simply integrated; above all it cannot be *presented* as a being-present (substance, subject, essence, or existence) within the space of an ontology, precisely because it opens this space. The "I-who" to which Nietzsche's utterance in *Human, All Too Human* refers (*"Ruf ich, der lebende Tor"*) would not necessarily presuppose, beneath its grammatical appearance, the presence of such a subject, of a being-present as subject.

Behind the logical game of contradiction or paradox, perhaps the "O my friends, there is no friend" signifies first and last this overrunning of the present by the undeniable future anterior which would be the very movement and time of friendship. Undeniable future anterior, the absolute of an *unpresentable* past as well as future, which is to say of traces that one can only ever deny by summoning them into the light of phenomenal presence. A temporal torsion thus knots up the predicative proposition ("there is no friend") within the apostrophe ("O my friends"). The torsion of this asymmetry envelops the theoretical statement or the knowledge within the performativity of a prayer which it will never exhaust. This asymmetry leads us back to what I will call the *question of the response.*

How should the *question of the response* be linked to the question of responsibility? And why make friendship a privileged site for this reflection? A brief grammar of the response, or rather of "responding," will permit us a preliminary glimpse. I sketch such a grammar on the basis of my language, French, but I do not believe that, in this case, the

concepts are thoroughly limited by language. Not that they are valid *in general,* beyond every language (syntax and lexicon), but that in this context they seem to be translatable within the set of European languages which authorize *us* here to interrogate something like *our* culture and our concept of responsibility. Which is to say that this grammar, however schematic, will be a bit more than a grammar.

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

1. One *answers for* oneself, for what one is, says or does, and this beyond the simple present. The "self" or the "me" thus supposes the unity, in other words the memory, of the one who responds. This is often called the unity of the subject, but one can conceive such a synthesis of memory without necessarily having recourse to the concept of the *subject,* or at least of the subject as being-present. Since this unity is never secured in itself as an empirical synthesis, the name is the instance to which the recognition of this identity is entrusted. "I" am held responsible for "myself," which is to say, for everything that can be imputed to that which bears my name, imputability supposing freedom, of course, and a non-present freedom, but also that what bears my name remains the "same": not only from one moment to the next, from one state to the other of what bears it, but also beyond life or presence in general, for example, the presence to itself of what bears it. The instance here of the "proper name" is not necessarily limited to the phenomenon of the legal name, the patronymic, or the social designation, although this phenomenon is, most frequently, its determining manifestation. This question of the proper name seems essential to the problematic of friendship. I find at least one indication in Montaigne's reflection. His friendship for Estienne de la Boétie preceded,

he says, their meeting. More precisely, this meeting or ac-
quaintance ("accointance") took place "long before I had seen
him, and gave me the first knowledge of his name, thus
leading this friendship on its way." "There is, beyond my
whole discourse, and what I can specifically say about it, some
unknown, inexplicable and fatal force, the go-between of our
union. We sought each other before we had seen one another,
and through the reports we heard about each other, which
caused greater striving in our feelings than that occasioned
by the sense of the reports, I believe through some ordinance
of heaven: we embraced each other through our names"
(Montaigne 1959, 225).

2. One responds first *to* the other: to the question, the
request, the prayer, the apostrophe, the call, the greeting or
the sign, the *adieu* of the other. This dimension of responding,
as responding-*to*, is more originary than the others, as we
have noted, for two reasons. On the one hand, one does not
answer for oneself and in one's own name, one is not re-
sponsible except before the question, request, interpellation,
"instance," or "insistence" of the other. On the other hand,
the proper name which structures the "answering-for-one-
self" is in itself *for the other,* whether because the other has
chosen it (for example, the name I am given at birth, which
I never chose and which introduces me into the space of the
law), or whether because, in any case, it implies the other in
the very act of naming, its origin, its aim, its use. Responding
always supposes the other in relation to the self; it preserves
the sense of this asymmetrical "anteriority" even within the
seemingly most inward and solitary autonomy of the "as for
me [*quant à soi*]," of the inner heart [*for intérieur*], and of the
moral conscience jealous of its independence—another word
for freedom. This asymmetrical anteriority also marks tem-
poralization as a structure of responsibility.

3. Answering *before*: this expression seems at first to mod-
alize "answering to." One answers *before* the other because
first one answers *to* the other. But this modalization is some-
thing more than or other than a specification by example. A
decisive part is being played here, and we should record all
of its effects. Idiomatically, the expression "before" generally
marks the passage to an institutional instance of alterity. It

is no longer singular, but rather universal in its principle. One answers to the other, who can always be singular and who must remain so in a certain way, but one answers *before the law*, a tribunal, a jury, an instance authorized to represent the other legitimately, in the form of a moral, legal, or political community. Here we have two forms or two dimensions of the *respect* implied by any *responsibility*. (Let us note in passing that these two words, *respect* and *responsibility* which are linked and constantly provoke each other, appear to refer, in the first case to distance, to space, and to the look [*regard*], and in the second case to time, to the voice, and to listening. Their co-implication can be sensed at the heart of friendship, one of whose enigmas comes from this distance or this respectful separation which distinguishes it, as feeling, from love. This co-implication calls for a rigorous re-reading of the Kantian analysis of respect in friendship. There is no friendship without "respect for the other," but this respect, although inseparable from a "morally good will," should not be simply confused with *purely moral* respect, the respect owed only to its "cause," the moral law, of which the person is but an example. The principal text that Kant devotes to friendship is immensely complex: it makes up the "Conclusion of the Elements of Ethics" in the "Doctrine of Virtue" in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (§46–47). There Kant cites, in a slightly different form, Aristotle's words ("My dear friends, there exist no friends!"). In its perfection, that is to say as an unattainable but practically necessary Idea, friendship supposes at once both *love* and *respect*. It must be equal and reciprocal. To seek it is a duty, because although friendship does not produce happiness, the two feelings that comprise it make up the "worthiness of happiness." But one of the difficulties within the very Idea of friendship comes from the contradictory character and hence the unstable equilibrium of these two feelings which are opposed as the "attraction" that fuses (love) and the "repulsion" that holds at a distance (respect) (1978, 8:609; 1991, 261). A reflection on the Kantian ethics and politics of friendship should be organized around the concept of the "secret." It seems to me to dominate §47 and to mark in a problematic way the ideal of friendship as communication (*Mitteilung*) and egalitarian sharing. Such a reflection would

first of all consider the definition of the "friend of man."
Every friend should first be the "friend of man." This is not
only the philanthropist; the friend of man presupposes equal-
ity among men, the Idea of being obligated by this very equal-
ity. Is it just by chance if the familial schema imposes itself
again here, and in these terms (fathers/brothers)? "Here men
are represented," Kant in fact says, "as if all men were broth-
ers under one universal father, who wills the happiness of
all" (1978, 8:612–13; 1991, 264).

Of these two dimensions of the relation to the other, only
the one maintains the absolute singularity of the other and
of "my" relation to the other, as of the relation of the other
to the other which I myself am, as his other, for him. But the
relation to the other also passes by way of the universality of
the law. This discourse on universality, which can find its
determination in the regions of morality, law, or politics,
always appeals to a third (person), beyond the face-to-face of
singularities. The third is always witness for a law that comes
to interrupt the vertigo of singularity. Do we have here two
models of friendship? If, by hypothesis, we do, one model
would find its motto in the Aristotelian definition of the friend
as "another ourself" (1166 a 32) or in Montaigne's response
("If one presses me to say why I loved him, I feel that can
only be expressed by responding: because it was he; because
it was me"). The other model would rather be inspired by
Zarathustra's sentences: when it is a question of interrupting
the jealous narcissism of the dual relation, which always re-
mains enclosed between "me" and "me," "I" and "me," in
order to prevent it from sinking into the abyss ("I and me
are always in too jealous [too zealous, *zu eifrig*] a dialogue:
how could one endure this situation if there were no friend?
/ For the hermit, the friend is always the third person: the
third person is the cork that prevents the dialogue of the two
from sinking into the abyss.")[12] But is it a matter of alter-
natives? Are there really two different, even antagonistic or
incompatible relations? Do not these two relations imply each
other at the moment they seem to exclude each other? Does
not my relation to the singularity of the other as other pass
by way of the law? Does not the law command me to recognize
the transcendent alterity of the other who can only ever be

heterogenous and singular, hence resistant to the very gen-
erality of the law? But this co-implication, far from dissolving
the antagonism and breaking through the aporia, aggravates
them instead: at the very heart of friendship.

Sharing (singularity/universality) has always divided the
experience, the concept, and the interpretation of friendship.
It has determined other oppositions there (secret, private,
invisible, unreadable, apolitical, at the limit without a concept
vs. manifest, public, exposed to witnesses, political, homog-
enous with the concept).

Between the two terms of the opposition, there is the
familial schema (I am using the word "schema" in the Kantian
sense: between intuitive singularity and the generality of the
concept). On the one hand, friendship seems to be essentially
foreign or resistant to the *res publica* and thus could not found
a politics. But on the other hand, as we know well, from Plato
to Montaigne, from Aristotle to Kant, from Cicero to Hegel,
the *great philosophical and canonical discourses* on friendship will
have linked friendship explicitly to virtue and justice, to moral
reason and to political reason. But the crucial question—the
one I can only situate in passing—would bear precisely on
the hegemony of the philosophical canon in this domain: how
has it imposed itself? How has it excluded the feminine or
heterosexuality? Why can one not account for feminine or
heterosexual experiences of friendship within it? Why this
heterogeneity of *eros* and of *philia*? Why can such a history
of the canon not be reduced to a history of concepts or of
philosophical texts, nor even to one of "political" structures?
Why is it a matter of a history of the world itself which would
be neither a continuous evolution nor a simple succession of
discontinuous figures? From this point of view, the question
of friendship could at least be an example or a guiding theme
within the two principal kinds of "deconstructive" questions:
that of the history of concepts and of the hegemony trivially
called "textual," that of history period and that of phallo-
gocentrism.

These philosophical canons will have even set the moral
and political conditions for an authentic friendship—and vice
versa. It goes without saying that these discourses differ
among themselves and would call for long and prudent anal-

yses. Such analyses should take care in particular not to stop too quickly, in the name of the law, at an identification of morality with politics: it is sometimes in the name of morality that we have been able to withdraw friendship from the partitions and criteria of politics.

Aristotle appears to place friendship above law and politics when he says at the beginning of book VIII of the *Nichomachean Ethics* (1155 a 25) that "when men are friends there is no longer any need for justice, whereas if they content themselves with being just, they also have need of friendship, and the highest expression of justice is, in the general opinion, in the nature of friendship." But if friendship is above justice—political or moral—it is thus also immediately the most just. Justice beyond justice. In all of the forms of government or of constitution which it defines (monarchy, aristocracy, timocracy, republic, or *politeia*—and democracy as the least bad constitution "for it is only a slight deviation from the republican form of government" [1160 a b]), one can see a form of friendship appear which is coextensive with relationships of justice. And if, in tyranny, friendship and justice play only a very minor role, the opposite is true of democracy. One would of course have to clarify these—very difficult—points by a reading of the *Politics*, which I cannot engage in here. One would also have to specify that justice has two dimensions, one not written and the other codified by law: thus friendship founded on utility—and this is the case for political friendship—can likewise be moral or legal (*Nich.* 1162 b 20, *Eud.* 1242 b 30).

These oppositions seem to dominate the interpretation and the experience of friendship in our culture. A domination that is unstable and under internal stress, but hence all the more imperious. What relation does this domination maintain with the *double exclusion* that can be seen at work in all the great ethico-political-philosophical discourses on friendship, namely, on the one hand, the exclusion of friendship between women, and on the other hand, the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman? This double exclusion of the feminine in the philosophical paradigm of friendship would thus confer on it the essential and essentially sublime figure of a virile homosexuality. Within the familial

schema, whose necessity I pointed out earlier, this exclusion privileges the figure of the brother, the name of the brother or the name of brother, more than that of the father—whence the necessity of connecting the political model, especially that of democracy and of the Decalogue, with the re-reading of Freud's hypothesis about the alliance of brothers.[13] Again Montaigne on his friendship with La Boétie: "In truth, the name of brother is a beautiful and delectable one, and for this reason we made it, he and I, our alliance."

These exclusions of the feminine would not be unrelated to the movement that has always "politicized" the model of friendship at the very moment one tries to withdraw this model from an integral politicization. The tension here is within the political itself. It would be necessary to analyze all discourses which reserve politics and public space for man, domestic and private space for woman. For Hegel, this is also the opposition between day and night, and hence a certain number of other oppositions as well.[14] What is Nietzsche's place in this "history"? Does he profoundly corroborate an old tradition ("That is why woman is not yet capable of friendship: she only knows love [*Deshalb ist das Weib noch nicht der Freundschaft fähig: es kennt nur die Liebe*]")? It is necessary to insist here on the "not yet." For it extends also to man (*Mann*), but first of all and once again to the "brother" of Zarathustra, as the future of a question, of an appeal or a promise, of a plea or a prayer. In the performative mode of the apostrophe. There is not yet friendship, we have not yet begun to think friendship. But, in a sort of mournful anticipation, we can already name the friendship that we still have not met. We *already* think that we *do not yet* have access to it. May we be able to do it!—that is the exclamation point, the singular clamor of this wish. Here is the "O my friends, there is no friend" of Zarathustra: "Woman is not yet capable of friendship. But tell me, you men, who among you is capable of friendship? [. . .] There is comradeship: may there be friendship! (*Aber sagt mir, ihr Männer, wer von euch ist denn fähig der Freundschaft? [. . .] Es gibt Kameradschaft: möge es Freundschaft geben!*)" (1980, 4:73; 1968, 169).

But as woman has not acceded to friendship because she remains—and this is love—either "slave" or "tyrant," a friend-

ship to come continues to signify, for Zarathustra: liberty, equality, fraternity. The motto, in short, of a republic. Or is he trying to think a friendship which goes beyond this Judeo-Christian and philosophical history ("I teach you not the neighbor but the friend. The friend should be to you the festival of the earth and the anticipation of the overman. I teach you the friend and his overflowing heart")?[15]

If the great canonical meditations on friendship (Cicero's *De amicitia*, Montaigne's *De l'amitié*, Blanchot's *L'amitié*, for example) belong to the experience of mourning, to the moment of loss—that of the friend or of friendship—if, through the irreplaceable element of the name, they always advance into the testamentary shadow in order to *entrust and refuse* the death of the unique one to a universalizable discourse (". . . my friends, there is no friend" [Aristotle-Montaigne], "But what has become of the friends?" [Villon], "Wo aber sind die Freunde?" [Hölderlin]), if they thereby *found and destabilize* at the same time, if, because they menace them, they restore a great number of oppositions (singular/universal, private/public, familial/political, secret/phenomenal, etc.) and perhaps *all* oppositions, the relative invariance of this model fractures *itself* and opens itself onto its own abyss. By returning to all the motifs I have just sketched (the morals and politics of friendship, death, the name, fraternity, etc.), by reconsidering all the oppositions, I would have liked to try to recognize two major ruptures in what one could, as a matter of convenience, call the *history of friendship* (but a certain friendship could make the most traditional concept of historicity quake). The Greco-Roman model appears to be marked by the value of *reciprocity*, by homological, immanentist, finitist, and politicist concord. Montaigne (whom we are reading here as the example of a paradigm) doubtless inherits the majority of these traits. But he breaks with the reciprocity there and discreetly introduces, it seems to me, heterology, transcendence, asymmetry, and infinity ("he surpassed me by an infinite distance"; "I would have certainly entrusted myself more willingly to him than to me"; "For even the discourses which antiquity has left us on this subject seem to me to be flat in comparison with my own feeling").

Shall we say that this fracture is Judeo-Christian? Shall

we say that it depoliticizes the Greek model or that it displaces
the nature of the political? Can the same type of question be
put regarding Nietzsche and Blanchot (other examples where
friendship should defy at once historicity and exemplarity)?
In a different way, to be sure, both call the friend by a name
which is no longer that of the neighbor, perhaps no longer
that of a man. Is it possible, without making the militants of
an edifying and dogmatic humanism scream, to think and
live the quiet rigor of friendship, the law of friendship as the
experience of a certain a-humanity, beyond or before the
dealings of gods and men? And what politics could one still
found on this friendship, which exceeds the measure of man
without becoming a theologeme? Will it still be a politics?

     So the "who?" of friendship moves off into the distance
beyond all these determinations. In its "infinite imminence,"
it exceeds even the interest in acquaintance, knowledge, truth,
proximity, up to life, and up to the memory of life. It is not
yet an identifiable "I," private or public.

> We must give up trying to know those to whom we are
> linked by something essential; by this I mean, we must
> greet them in the relation with the unknown in which
> they greet us, as well, in our distance. Friendship, this
> relation without dependence, without episode yet into
> which all of the simplicity of life enters, passes by way
> of the recognition of the common strangeness that does
> not allow us to speak of our friends, but only to speak
> to them, not to make of them a topic of conversations
> (or articles), but the movement of understanding in
> which, speaking to us, they reserve, even on the most
> familiar terms, an infinite distance, the fundamental
> separation on the basis of which what separates be-
> comes relation. Here discretion is not in the simple
> refusal to put forward confidences (how vulgar that
> would be, even to think of it), but it is the interval, the
> pure interval that, from me to this other who is a friend,
> measures all that is between us, the interruption of
> being that never authorizes me to use him, or my knowl-
> edge of him (were it to praise him) and which, far from

preventing all communication, relates us to one another
in the difference and sometimes the silence of speech.

At the death of the friend, the "immeasure of the movement
of dying," the "event" of death reveals and effaces at the same
time this "truth" of friendship:

> [. . .] not the deepening of the separation, but its era-
> sure; not the widening of the caesura but its levelling
> and the dissipation of that void between us where for-
> merly there developed the frankness of a relation with-
> out history. In such a way that, at present, what was
> close to us not only has ceased to approach, but has
> lost even the truth of extreme distance. [. . .] We can,
> in a word, remember. But thought knows that one does
> not remember: without memory, without thought, it
> already struggles in the invisible where everything sinks
> back into indifference. This is its profound grief. It
> must accompany friendship into oblivion. (Blanchot
> 1971, 326–30)

The book bears as its epigraph these words from Georges
Bataille:

> [. . .] friends even to that state of profound friendship
> where a man abandoned, abandoned by all his friends,
> meets up in life with the one who will accompany him
> beyond life, himself without life, capable of free friend-
> ship, detached from any ties.

We should reread other writings by Blanchot, for example
the texts on communism or *La communauté inavouable*.

My hypothesis or my question would then, to conclude
provisionally for today, take the following form: is it possi-
ble—while assuming a certain faithful memory of democratic
reason and of reason period, I will even say of the Enlight-
enment of a certain *Aufklärung* (I leave open here the abyss
which is still opening up today beneath these words)—not to
found, there where it is doubtless no longer a matter of
founding, but to open up to the future, or rather to the
"come" of a certain democracy (for democracy is to come:

not only will it remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the time of the promise, it will always remain, in each of its future times, to come: even when there is democracy, it never exists, it is never present, it remains an unpresentable concept), to the "come" of a certain democracy that would no longer be an insult to the friendship we have tried to think, beyond the homo-fraternal and phallogocentric schema? When will we be ready for an experience of equality that would be a respectful test of this friendship, and that would at last be just, just beyond justice as law, that is, measure up to its immeasure?

O my democratic friends . . .

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Notes

["Politiques de l'amitié" constitutes two sessions of a seminar given at the École des Hautes Études under the same title, a seminar which later came to study, among other things, the phrase "I love you." An earlier, and much shorter, version of this text was published as "The Politics of Friendship," in *The Journal of Philosophy* 75, no. 11 (1988), 632–45. That translation, by Gabriel Motzkin, has been revised and incorporated here, together with additional material translated then by Michael Syrotinski, and some further portions have been translated by the editor from the author's manuscript.—TK]

1. ". . . il faut employer le mot qu'Aristote avoit trés-familier: O mes amis, il n'y nul amis" (Montaigne 1959, 1.226).
2. Schmitt refers to Hegel's *Wissenschaftliche Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts* (*Scientific Methods of Natural Law*), 1802, Lasson ed., 383. Cf. also Lasson VII, 379; Glockner ed. I, 499.
3. Schmitt refers to Lukacs' *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* (*History and Class Consciousness*), 1923, and *Lenin*, 1924.
4. [This preface is included in the French translation (Schmitt 1972), but not in the English version, and so is translated from the French. In general, published translations have been consulted and are listed among the references, but all translations have been modified where necessary. Citations from Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius are translated from the author's French translation—Ed.]
5. The canonical reading sanctions a certain grammatical construction of *ô philoi oudeis philos* ("o friends, no friends at all"). But Diogenes declares that this sentence is found in Aristotle. As it cannot be found there, another explanation for this utterance has been sought. Aristotle does ask sometimes, indeed, the question of the number of friends. Must one have many of them? The answer is clearly negative. One cannot, and should not, have too many friends because then they will not be true or good friends. Thus this other grammar of *ô* and of *philoi*: the one *for whom* there are many friends, numerous friends, a plural of friendship, for this one, no friends at all, not any friend, *oudeis philos*.
     With that the dimension of the apostrophe is effaced and the sentence regains its constative value, but the logical paradox of the apparent contradiction in it is only slightly affected.
6. Cf. "Devant la loi" (Derrida 1985) and *Parages* (Derrida 1986b).
7. Cf. "Violence et métaphysique" (Derrida 1967).
8. Cf. "Comment ne pas parler" (Derrida 1987a), 572 n.1.
9. See Heidegger 1982a, and cf. as well Heidegger's text also called "Andenken" in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*.
10. "Die Sprache im Gedicht" (Heidegger 1982b).
11. Here again, across the divergences which we must first of all prevent ourselves from reducing and which demand long and patient work, Heidegger does share Schmitt's disquiet, his diagnosis and his prognosis: the distinction between war and peace disappears in the technological deployment of modern wars as "world wars." A world war is no longer a war—and certainly not peace: " 'World wars' and their totalitarian aspect (*und ihre Totalität*) are already the consequences of the abandonment of Being (*Seinverlassenheit*). They press toward a guarantee of the stability of a constant form of using things up (*Vernutzung*). Man is also drawn into this process and no longer conceals his character: of being the most important raw material. He [. . .] becomes at the same time the 'object' of the abandonment of Being. The world wars constitute the antecedent form (*Vorform*) of the suppression (*Beseitigung*) of the difference between war and peace. This removal is necessary since the 'world' has become an unworld (*Unwelt*) as a consequence of the abandonment of beings by Being's truth. [. . .] Changed, having lost their proper essence (*zu ihren Unwesen abgeändert*), 'war' and 'peace' are taken up into erring (*Irrnis*); they have become unrecognizable, no difference between them appears any longer, and they

disappear into the mere course of the escalating manufacture of what can be manufactured (*Machen von Machbarkeiten*). The question of when there will be peace cannot be answered, not because the duration of war is unfathomable, but rather because the question already asks about something which no longer exists, since war is no longer anything which could terminate in peace" ("Überwindung der Metaphysik," notes from the years 1936–1946; fragment XXVI, cited here, was published in 1951 in the *Cahier Barlach* from Darmstadt [1978, 88–89; 1973, 103–104]).

12. "Ich und Mich sind immer zu eifrig im Gespräche: wie wäre es auszuhalten, enn es nicht einem Freunde gäbe? Immer ist für den Einsiedler der Freund der Dritte: der Dritte ist der Kork, der verhindert, daß das Gespräch der Zweie in die Tiefe sinkt." ("Vom Freunde," Nietzsche 1980, 4:71; "On the Friend," Nietzsche 1968, 167–168).

13. I insist on the difficulties and the paradoxes of the Freudian hypothesis in "Devant la loi."

14. On all these problems, and once again on the ethico-political question of the woman, the sister, and the brother in Hegel, allow me to refer to *Glas* (Derrida 1974).

15. "Nicht den Nächsten lehre ich euch, sondern der Freund. Der Freund sei euch das Fest der Erde und ein Vorgefühl des Übermenschen. Ich lehre euch den Freund und sein übervolles Herz" ("Von der Nächstenliebe," Nietzsche 1980, 4:78; "On the love of the neighbor," Nietzsche 1968, 173–174). With the love of the distance, Zarathustra counsels the love of the future. And beyond humanity, the love of things and phantoms (*die Liebe zu Sachen und Gespenstern*).