

When the world corresponds to the transcendence projected by a single subject as the horizon of the totality of all that exists, this world converts time into space. Although such a transcendence represents a temporal project on the part of the subject, the fact that this subject ensures, from a unique standpoint, the gathering or the closure of the whole of finite things results in the world closing up, even in advance, in a circle. The intuition of the infinite can remain, but the dynamic, indeed the dialectical, relations between time and space somehow or other freeze. Passing from one horizon to another, from one epoch of history to another, will thus not happen without some harm: for example, without war according to Hegel, without destruction or deconstruction according to Heidegger.

In contrast, if the transcendental also has its origin in a respect for the irreducible difference of the other really considered as other, in the fact that their otherness is thus never knowable nor appropriable by myself – although it appears limited to my perceptions and even my intuitions – then transcendence no longer amounts to merely making objective a projection of my own subjectivity. So long as the

other subject remains alive and free with respect to another world, especially to my world, time and space are kept in a dialectical process between us in an always indefinite and open way.

It is true that I then have to renounce projecting in a solitary manner – or in a manner shared by all the subjects of one epoch who are presumed to be the same – the horizon of a world as a transcendence. As soon as I recognize the otherness of the other as irreducible to me or to my own, the world itself becomes irreducible to a single world: there are always at least two worlds. The totality that I project is, at any moment, questioned by that of the other. The transcendence that the world represents is thus no longer one, nor unique. And if the gesture of projecting the totality of a world can remain a gesture that has something to do with transcendence, to recognize the partial nature of such a transcendence is even more transcendental. It reopens the autological circle of the transcendental horizon of a single subject in the name of this truth: the human real is formed by two subjects, each one irreducible to the other. As each has his or her own way of projecting a horizon that gathers the totality of existing beings, the transcendental gesture that is fitting to their human existence becomes one of building with the other a relation in which space and time are, at any moment, in-finite and in becoming.

Man transcends himself towards a world in order to give himself a unity through a projection of all that he perceives towards a present, but always future, horizon. Man needs such a transcendental project to acquire an identity of his own with regard to his origin, especially his maternal origin. However, through this gesture he not only projects

what he is, but also a perception of all the beings in the midst of which he finds himself. The unity that he forms or delimits in this way is thus not only his, but also that of an emergence which he imagines he represents with respect to his surroundings.

In reality, what the masculine subject constitutes is a sort of new placenta in which to be sheltered in separating off from his natural birth. This projection of a horizon is necessary for him to distance himself from an adherence to, or confusion with, his maternal or uterine origin. And the historical epoch that he elaborates in this way is only a new modality or figure of his attempt to acquire an identity of his own with respect to this origin. This construction is problematic for two reasons from a transcendental or ideal standpoint relative to human reality. No doubt, it signifies an intention to surpass an individualization already partially gained, a status already acquired, yet it is not certain that this corresponds to a specifically human reality. It indicates rather a stage towards the advent of this human reality.

Projecting a world does not necessarily amount to attaining a human world. Furthermore, such a projection exists starting from the intention of man alone. It is thus both partial and biased. And when the world is given back to us as human reality, it imposes upon us all a conception of this reality which is far from expressing or unveiling its totality, and thus its truth. Such a failure is all the more serious since the horizon of the world, which in this way determines meaning, appears in terms of requirements, a priors, laws, ideals, which paralyse the becoming of a different human reality, notably by preventing it from transcending itself towards a world appropriate to it. Furthermore, because

this projection of a world comes before any representation, judgement, indeed any conscious feeling, it cannot be questioned in a rational way. It is even prior to any word, and a fortiori prior to any possible dialogue. Any verbal exchange is presumed to ensure its permanence through statements that are, in reality, tautological with regard to the foundation of the world. In this enveloping horizon, which is at every moment finite, the debate of man with himself and those who are the same as him amounts in some way to a worn-out repetition of an already given reality and truth. This debate is without any freedom until a subject or an event of the milieu – an explosive saturation, for example – tears the horizon and compels man to project another, which does not happen without some disaster or rejection. The collapse of transcendences or ideals does not take place without causing harm – to man, to those who are the same as him, to his world and environment. And the proposal of new values is generally contested until the milieu becomes imbued with them and imposes them as an almost eternal reality or truth, after it has become immune to their novelty.

In fact, such a conception of the world and of human reality leaves only an illusory freedom to man himself, and a spontaneity without any further possible transcendental realization. At least this is the case for most people, which can be appraised by the use they make of a surplus of energy – for example, of sexual energy. An energy that could be unfurled as the horizon of a world built with a view towards a sharing of desire with the other is instead expended in secondary, animalistic, solitary, 'shameful' or warring activities ... There where one ought to appeal to

freedom in order to accomplish human reality as such, it no longer exists because it is harnessed by ideals or obligations that do not take into account the most demanding human imperative: to cultivate the development of an energy, that is always and already bound to the other, towards the elaboration of a specifically human transcendence.

Freedom, in a way spontaneous and autonomous with respect to the historical foundation of the world, is able, at any moment, to be converted into transcendence without cutting itself off from the source of its impetus. Instead of projecting itself onto the horizon of a world, it must be safeguarded, reserved, brought to a standstill or hemmed in before the other as other, an other who is recognized in his, or her, transcendence, and with whom the matter will be one of elaborating a relation without abolishing either the duality of the subjects or the difference(s) between them.

To say that human reality is determined by the whole of what exists exclusively as beings in the world probably obeys the necessities and limits of masculine subjectivity. The self of man is first received from an other who, surrounding him, remains imperceptible as other: his mother. Because of his lack of recognition of the mother as a transcendence in whom he first has his origins, man projects the origin of his self onto the totality of the world, unless he extrapolates it from God. The other who is close to him, the other from whom he receives himself, is not recognized as transcendence. The mother, and later the woman, remain confused with a world that is solely natural, from which it is necessary to emerge in order to become a man; they are not recognized with a full humanity that transcends itself in a way different from that of a man. The mother, a woman,

exist starting from an en-stasis and not an ec-stasis with regard to themselves. Their world is constituted through respecting the other within oneself, and not by projecting the totality of what exists outside oneself, as man does.

The expression of transcendence requires different modalities on the part of man and of woman. For woman, what matters is to withdraw or to limit herself in order to open within her self a place of hospitality for the other, without appropriation, fusion or confusion. For man, the question is instead one of acquiring an identity of his own with respect to the first dwelling or environment from which he has received himself, by projecting, into an always future present, the ex-sistence of a possible world of his own. This manner of differing from her does not take into consideration the mother as other, except in a negative way. It represents an attempt to go away without any return. To impose a world of his own is, on the part of man, often an unconscious way of replying to a first dwelling in the mother, to a desire to remain in woman, to a necessity of begetting children within her. Man tries to envelop, by his world, by his transcendence, the one by whom he has been enveloped, nourished. Which most of the time deprives her of a transcendence of her own.

Between him and her and, in return, between her and him, the existence – ex-sisting – of the reality of a difference, including in the way of forming a world and expressing a transcendence of one's own, is lacking. The possibilities of the one and the other then become paralysed or unrecognized. And this deprives humanity of the most fertile source of its impetus, of its freedom, a source from which the outpourings are constant if each one remains faithful

to one's own world. At each moment, a different way of relating to the transcendental frees up an energy that might be fixed and frozen in the horizon of a unique totality. Thus, for each one and for the two, the impetus and the limit, which ensures the return to the source of the self, are safeguarded. Thanks to the respect for the transcendence of the other as irreducible to one's own, each discovers, at each moment, a new impetus toward the in-finite – or infinite – through the recognition of the finiteness of one's own world. The in-finite can again become the horizon of the intention of each one thanks to accepting that the totality of the world that is one's own is, for its part, necessarily finite.

This impetus toward the in-finite – or infinite – is then able to promote or produce as in-finite – or infinite – the becoming of the relation between the two worlds, at least so long as these worlds are considered in their duality and each subjectivity cares about constituting one's own world with the intention of transcending the human reality in which he or she is already situated. In this reality, the other and its transcendental project are already present. Each subject is always already affected by the existence of the other: each one, always and already, is in relation to and with the other. This is the case at a natural level, through the intuition and experience of belonging to the same species, and it is also the case at a transcendental level, through the fact that they ex-sist in the world. But this transcendental is perverted in its intentionality if it does not take into consideration the duality of worlds. This presupposes that each subject questions him- or herself about their intentional relation regarding the other

before projecting a unique and anticipatory horizon onto the totality of all that exists. Questioning myself about my relation to the other as such offers the possibility of turning that through which I am always and already affected by this other into transcendence. The real coexistence that formed our being together can thus become a coexistence of intentionalities of which the transcendental dimension will be more in accordance with human reality or truth. The transcendental project will then become raised more to the level of a conscious and freely decided intention towards non-human existence, the self, and the other recognized in his or her difference, both natural and transcendental.

In fact, going no further than those who are similar to oneself leads to transcendence itself getting bogged down either in a natural belonging or in belonging to a supposedly common world. The relation to non-human existing, but even more to human existing, has to be rethought in the horizon of a reality in which being in relation with the other cannot be overshadowed by projecting a world of one's own. This projecting remains possible only as long as the relations take place between those who are alike, those who are presumed to share a unique and common view of the world. The error of Western philosophy in part lies there: having intended to carry on with human individuation starting from a single transcendence corresponding to the necessities of the masculine subject. In such a unique design towards the whole of existing beings, woman cannot discover her transcendental possibilities. And, because of a failure to recognize a double human subjectivity, a part of his own possibilities remains veiled to man himself.

No doubt, the nature of the double – or rather triple – transcendence that in this way becomes outlined, discovered as possible and even necessary, remains partly veiled. It is only indirectly that such a possibility, and even necessity, proves to be a means of letting blossom the being-in-the-world of the feminine subject, as well as the human relation between subjects who are naturally different. For this advent, the task of the feminine subject is crucial. Woman has to separate off from the world that is imposed on her as unique, found a world of her own and also the means of coexisting with a world irreducible to her own. Because the world that takes form in this way represents progress in human becoming only on the condition that it does not impose itself as a unique world blindly laying down the law on all that exists. It is important that the feminine world take into account in its foundation and its legitimation the transcendence of the other, thus allowing each human reality to exist – and ex-sist – in the midst of existing beings as a whole.

Woman is led to recognize the transcendence of the other because this gesture is part of the foundation and development of her own transcendence. But it is necessary that she discover herself, and by herself, what can ensure a transcendental basis to her world. It is not a masculine being, even a divine one, that could alone provide woman with a transcendental status. Even in this case, she still remains dwelling in and subjected to the world of the other. She does not found a world in accordance with her necessities and possibilities, which requires a transcendental ground of her own, in addition to that of man, recognized as a human reality destined to be in relation to and with the other.

To stress the relation to the other as an irreducible dimension of human reality and freedom shifts the concern regarding temporality. It is no longer a matter of persisting or subsisting, but of keeping alive the becoming of oneself, of the other, of the relations between the two.

What is at stake in the becoming as becoming is probably specifically human. But, instead of remaining a necessary task in our present existence – and ex-sisting – it has been put off into the beyond. Becoming would be dependent on our achieving another world, another nature, and not on our transforming this world and our own nature. The necessity of projecting the achievement of our human being into another world, making it dependent on a transcendence extraneous to humanity itself, could be explained by the formation of a world where the transcendence of the other as other is unrecognized. In such a case, a part of human reality – and, therefore, human reality in its totality – is deprived of its inherent motivations and the reasons in which they find their source and their impetus. This could result in one subject representing Being for the other, but this does not yet amount to reaching Being for oneself by freely assuming a transcendence able to found a world of one's own. The affective dimension of such a world ceaselessly projects itself towards its surpassing so that it can remain an affect of one's own while becoming a shared relation thanks to the mediation of a transcendence respectful of the duality of freedoms and truths. This implies that one cares about maintaining an impetus but also a limitation on each side, having in mind a becoming that is sustained, both as a world of one's own and as a relation to the other, through the relation between the two worlds.

The limit of freedom can take place in various ways, and freedom itself can receive its impetus from a more or less human real and reality. In the unfolding of Western thought, freedom has not yet been rooted in accordance with the specifically human task that consists of passing from nature to culture in the relation between human subjectivities. If this blossoming of a possible – and, moreover, necessary – becoming has not yet happened, this could be explained by the fact that the difference between man and woman has not been considered as allowing, indeed needing, a transcendental ground. Providing this difference with such a horizon requires that the impetus of freedom originate in a specifically human real and reality and not in sexual or procreative instincts, which are not strictly human. This presupposes that the spontaneous energy which attracts the sexes to one another will be converted into affects, into feelings, into thoughts, without for all that renouncing or annihilating such an energy. To cultivate sexual attraction as an original impetus in the relations between humans is a task that Western culture has not cared about with the seriousness that it deserves. Nevertheless, it is through this task that humanity can distance itself from other species, discovering an impetus and limits of its own. Which makes the construction of a truly human world possible.

Human freedom is neither mere natural spontaneity nor mere impetus arising from a retroactive effect of the anticipation of the totality of a world by a unique subject. Human freedom is more mysterious in its origin and its finality. It resembles the sap that comes out of a delicate plant, and that grows or withers depending on whether or not the surroundings in which it appears are favourably

disposed towards its existence, its becoming. The welcome its impetus receives from the other and the contribution that the other, in turn, makes to its impetus also act upon the possibilities of it being based with more knowledge and more respect for human and non-human reality, for truth. Consequently, the projection of a world of one's own and that of a shared world become more faithful to what exists and, if this projecting means a transcendental gesture with respect to existence, the aim is now to cultivate this existence in accordance with its own life rather than towards its mastery.

Founded upon the respect for non-human existence, for oneself, and for the other considered in his or her difference, freedom loses the unfathomable nature that a subject existing only in a solitary way can feel with regard to it, even if it is limited. Freedom is constrained, at each moment, to re-define or adjust itself according to the human or non-human beings which surround it. This does not mean that freedom must renounce its impetus but that it must discover an economy compatible with the impetus of the other, in his or her life and transcendental intention. Freedom must, at every moment, limit its expansion in order to respect other existing beings and, even more, to find ways of forming with them a world always in becoming where it is possible for each human or non-human living being to exist – or ex-sist.

In such a world, the freedom of each living being, and of human being in particular, does not project itself, from a unique ground, towards the horizon of the totality of existing beings. Its impetus and its limits – a term which is more suitable than deprivation, in my opinion – enter,

at each moment, into a dialectical process in which the other participates by what they bring but also by what they remove as possibilities of life, both natural and transcendental. Such a process takes part in the constitution of a world of one's own according to the possibilities of each one. It is also at work in structuring a relational world between each existing being and each other. This aspect is especially critical between humans whose reality, both natural and transcendental, is different: woman and man.

If freedom, in this way, reveals itself to be more free than it could have been, it also meets with a limit that it must continuously confront because of the irreducible duality of the human real and reality. Not taking into account the existence – or possible ex-sisting – of the other, in fact amounts to depriving oneself of some freedom both by reducing the original impetus and by only partially founding that which determines the transcendental impetus. This makes human freedom as such impossible. Because this freedom cannot exist – or ex-sist – without taking into account the irreducible duality of humanity, and the fact that the relations between two human existences cannot remain at or return to the level of a mere natural impetus.

The Opening of a Threshold

The path towards the other is first a path towards the infinite, an infinite in which both I and the other risk losing ourselves. A threshold is lacking that marks the limits of the world of each one. Also lacking is the difference between us, which allows the opening of a threshold. In fact, a threshold must exist for each one, but it must as well exist between the one and the other. Each one has, or ought to have, limits which set borders between one's self and the beyond. This self comprises all that belongs to a world of one's own: the way in which the subject relates to itself, to the other, to the world, but also to the cultural environment in which this subject lives, an environment which takes part in our subjectivity and is too often confused with identity itself. To recognize the existence of another subjectivity implies recognizing that it belongs to, and constitutes, a world of its own, which cannot be substituted for mine; that the subjectivity of the other is irreducible to my subjectivity.

To assert that a single sort of subjectivity exists for humanity amounts to being unaware of the parameters

that define this subjectivity, especially in its relational dimensions. In any case, it is too soon to affirm this, because we do not yet know all the possible ways or modes through which a subject can constitute itself and its world. Such an affirmation would mean imposing our manner of being, and Being, on other cultures.

Nevertheless, one difference at once appears as universal: sexual, or better sexuate, difference. Of course, it is worked out in various ways by different cultures but it maintains constant dimensions with regard to the connection between nature and culture, especially concerning that which already exists and that which is still to be constructed of the relations of one's own body to the self and to the other.

It thus seems right to start, or start again, from this determination of subjectivity in order to define the limits corresponding to one's own world and the way of laying out or inhabiting a threshold. When such indications are supported by the connection between natural givens and their most elementary cultural elaboration, they do not represent compulsory norms imposed by a culture on others according to its own necessities. They permit deconstructing the artifice of a tradition while also elaborating potential universal ways of being in relation with oneself and with the other.

Appropriation has dominated the rules of construction in a monosubjective culture. Recognizing one's own limits, as well as the existence of the other as irreducible to one's own existence, and searching for the means of entering into relations with him, or her, will then substitute for appropriation. Such necessities or cultural obligations can appear as universal duties insofar as they are based on a universal

given: the division of humanity into two sexes who really live in different worlds. Certainly it is no longer a matter of coexisting in a world built by only one part of humanity with its own survival in mind. Rather the question is about the world that each one has to build in order to dwell in their own subjectivity and in this way be able to meet with the subjectivity of the other and enter into exchange with respect for differences, that is, for what is proper to each one.

The parameters that are to be treated by each one in order to carry out such a task are not the same. To cultivate the relations with the one who brought you into the world does not involve the same elements for those who are the same as her or different from her – that is, for a female or a male subject. And to have recourse to the abstraction of a paternal law for remedying a supposedly amorphous empathy in the first relations with the mother cannot solve the passage from nature to culture: rather, it evades the problem by repressing it. The same, the intervention of the precious paternal seed cannot be the sole leaven for a cultivation of the original link with the one who brings us into the world. The task is other and still to be accomplished, by woman as well as by man.

Whether desire tends towards the other and fulfils itself outside oneself or preserves in the self a welcome for the other also represents a different relational space for man and for woman. Received as a given that accompanies one's own body, this requires a cultivation of the relations to the self and to the other that is not the same. To give birth in oneself or outside oneself as well means an irreducible dimension of belonging to a sex.

Laying down a masculine law – at a linguistic, civil or religious level – on a nature that is supposedly undifferentiated, be it the mother or the child, does not correspond to a cultivation of differences. Such a gesture does not sufficiently take into account the respective subjective positions, simply opposing nature and culture when it is really a question of nature and culture on both sides. Patterns operating almost as a prioris have prevented man and woman from elaborating what begetting and loving mean with respect to oneself, to one's own body, but also to the relational context in which it is situated. Having become an imperative imposed from the outside in which, what is more, the need of an instinctive satisfaction remains, giving birth has not contributed to the subjective becoming of man and woman – the child thus being in more than one account the death of the parents, as Hegel wrote.

Without working out the relational context in which it arises, desire remains or falls back into instinct, an instinct the connotations of which sometimes seem more uneducated than in the animal world itself. The attraction for the other loses any moderation. It remains a mere vital impulse, unless it is determined by cultural components that have nothing to do with entering into relations with another subject: possession, subjection, appropriation. Without being aware of one's own world and recognizing the world to which the other belongs, entering into relations with him, or her, proves to be impossible. This additional clarity about what or who a human being is must be rethought, reformulated, and thus along with it a great part of the content of our discourses and behaviours. This discovery already opens a threshold with regard to a previous culture,

and perceiving this threshold could help to sense the threshold or thresholds that exist between myself and the other, the other and myself.

Thus silence will no longer be that which has not yet come to language, that which is still lacking words or a sort of ineffability that does not merit interest from language. Silence is the speaking of the threshold. If this silence does not remain present and active, the whole of discourse loses its most important function: communicating and not merely transmitting information. Then dialogue becomes impossible. In no dialogue can everything be said, and it is recognizing the necessity of something unspeakable and its preservation that allows an exchange of words between two different subjects. It is thanks to silence that the other as other can exist or be, and the two be maintained. Relations between two different subjectivities cannot be set up starting from a shared common meaning, but rather from a silence, which each one agrees to respect in order to let the other be. Entering into communication requires the limits, always effective, of a unique discourse, access to a silence thanks to which another world can manifest itself and take place.

To claim that nothing would be there where the word is lacking (cf. the argument of Heidegger, notably in the text 'The Way to Language' in *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz, Harper, San Francisco and New York, 1982, pp.109–136), means to deny the existence of the other and of that which remains unspeakable where two worlds join together. Western philosophy has cared about the relations of the subject to things, and about the relations between

things and the world, but very seldom about the relations between two subjects, especially two different subjects – the only place where speaking is really indispensable, but a speaking that only happens from a lack of word(s). Which does not necessarily give rise to sadness or frustration, but rather to the joy of opening to an other, source of a new saying. Certainly, we then renounce mastering the whole and the power of all by ourselves giving names to things, and, in this way, arranging them in a single world. But this assenting to one's own limits corresponds to reaching out to the other as other, to receptiveness to a different language, to the discovery of a still-unknown world in which work and mastery do not simply impose their law on us. Nor listening to that which is always and already determined by a single statement in speaking.

Each subjectivity henceforth has before it a source of words foreign to that in which it dwells – thus not a space opened by a language that is already shared, but a horizon which opens beyond its limits.

Even if there are intersections between the saying of the other and one's own, this does not prevent the sites from which words arise from being different for each one. Listening is thus never simple, and it is not from a single saying that the meaning offered to the other for sharing could be received. It is necessary to listen to the saying of the other, and to discover a saying that could be fitting for the two. This saying cannot be already said or foreseen by a previous discourse: it arises from a mutual listening, from the sense that is discovered thanks to the confidence of two subjects in one another, from the search for words that correspond to this reciprocal abandon.

Patience is imperative: the future is not defined here by the past, and the house, notably of language, is not yet built. Sometimes, we hardly reach the threshold, starting from which it happens that we call to the other, that we invite him, or her, to share our home, without yet leaving a well-known place in order to approach a region that is unfamiliar to us.

And yet, nearness to the other cannot amount to sharing a territory, to a spatial closeness. The other as other remains remote from us, whatever the neighbourhood in which we are situated. And insofar as we recognize that we are remote from one another, we can begin to come near. This approach cannot be merely spatial, at least in the sense of a physical closeness. But nor can it stop with a complicity in the same culture: the same background of ideas, of opinions. On the contrary, this risks veiling the otherness of the other through the sharing of a common third, which gives us the illusion of being close. It is essential to be aware of co-belonging to a spatial or cultural environment and to deconstruct it so that each can discover whether and how this environment is or is not appropriate to oneself.

Before wanting to approach the other, it is advisable to wonder about oneself and one's own manner of dwelling. It is important to have a view of one's own faithfulness to that which is proper to one. And often it will be necessary to turn back on our path in order to question ourselves about where we are already situated. If we are not dwelling where we ought to dwell, being what or who we are, we are not prepared for an encounter with the other. We are only able to impose on the other our alienation, misunderstanding,

or ignorance. Opening a threshold in order to approach the other requires that we dwell where we can and should be.

Without overrunning our limits. Only these allow us to have access to the other by respecting ourselves. If we are not faithful to ourselves, approaching the other proves to be impossible. What we could then experience would only be appropriation, leading us astray from what is proper to us and proper to the other. What is proper to each world as well. Confusing a part of the other with ourselves makes us lose an accurate perception of the place where we dwell. Henceforth no environment maintains a real distance between living beings and things. And the background against which they dwell and relate to one another becomes an illusory construction which leads them to their ruin.

Nearness to the other, or better with the other, appears in the possibility of elaborating a common world with him, or her, a world which will not destroy the world proper to each one. This common world is always in becoming. A living being, especially a human living being, is irreducible to a thing. It cannot exist once and for all, neither in itself nor towards the other or the world. If we consider humans as things, their becoming amounts to a decline, and that through which they were truly human disappears: a becoming that is partly decided and ruled by oneself. A becoming that, of course, is also modified by the other. But instead of speaking of paths that cross each other ad infinitum, of cuts in the one or the other resulting from an unfolding of spatial proximity, of furrows which open up, it would be better to speak of building openings that are deliberately arranged for having access to the other – thus of thresholds.

On the borders of our own dwelling, thresholds will prepare a meeting with the other: thresholds on the horizon of a world allowing us to leave it and to welcome the other, thresholds also on the border of oneself, if it is possible to distinguish between the two. To build such openings requires from us an active undertaking but also a letting be: an economy that is too little known in our Western culture, and one that meeting with the other as other constrains us to discover, to cultivate. It will no longer be only a matter of existing or Being, of trying to let the other and things be, but also of uniting, at each moment, our quest for existing or Being to that of letting us be. Making this way towards letting be will take place in our relations with nature and with the other. Trusting in the contribution that the otherness of the other will provide us with, agreeing to receive until we become changed, without for all that renouncing ourselves – that is what a threshold must give us access to. Opening a welcome through working out an appropriateness to ourselves, through a gathering within ourselves.

To Venture Upon the Path

If in ourselves, in our dwelling, space and spacing must be safeguarded and cultivated, the arrival at the borders of ourselves, of our world, opens out onto new places – places that are still virgin or to be cleared. We can venture into them alone and try to appropriate them, to make them our own. But if the threshold has been built with the intention of meeting with the other, there is no doubt that, beyond this threshold, his or her call will join our own, paving new paths in the spaces opened.

Once the threshold has been built, if we agree to cross it, we then have to discover the path, or the paths, that lead towards the other. In such an undertaking, we must listen to the attraction that has encouraged us to leave our own dwelling. Does it remain once the threshold has been passed? Where does it lead us? Do we hear a call from the other that corresponds to the call we have already heard? Could it guide us while letting our own call, our own wish, be? And what will then be the sign capable of signifying to each other the motive for which we have made our way in this direction?

Let us stop for a while at the threshold and the path. It is important that we might cross them in both directions; that is, that the return to our own dwelling, to ourselves, within ourselves, be secured. No doubt, we will return modified, but to come back home, to and within ourselves, is necessary. Taking shelter, gathering within the self are essential for the one who left one's own home, who ventured into spaces still unknown, who exposed oneself to the other, the foreigner or the stranger with regard to oneself. Only time, a space-time arranged in time, allows us not to appropriate these new regions, the call or the response of the other, and the traces left in us by this breaking out of our everyday dwelling. This does not mean that what attracted us outside is not more intimate than the intimacy that we have already experienced. But how to become familiar with such an appeal, coming from beyond us? How to prepare for it a memory and a becoming within ourselves?

All the more so since in order to respond, to correspond to it, we have to cross regions unknown to us but already

marked with beacons, already populated, cluttered with past constructions: cultures, words, relationships. These regions are perhaps still virgin for us, but not in themselves. How can we make our way without getting lost: without forgetting the appeal, forgetting ourselves?

The path that brings us towards the other is not necessarily the one that leads us towards ourselves. Of course, if we have perceived the appeal, we have been called there where we already were. But that through which we are urged to leave our usual dwelling, that through which we are invited to respond, does not always correspond to the call that we have heard. A simple example: the other can appeal to me as mother, daughter or sister there where I felt myself appealed to as a lover. The meeting up of our paths towards one another is not ensured, and even less so the return of each one to one's own home. That through which we are moved by the words of the other is not necessarily that which is addressed to us as an appeal. Supposing that the other already knows the real intention of the call and the person to whom he, or she, wants to address it.

It is no longer a question of moving in a space arranged by the words of only one subject, but of taking the risk to open one's own world in order to move forward to meet with another world. Which constrains us, at each moment, to a double listening: to the language in which we already dwell, but also to the saying that the other addresses to us. Our coming into presence with one another can only happen through the intertwining of this double listening. Only this prepares a place in which we can approach one another.

Coming closer, once again, cannot amount to a simple spatial proximity in space or time, at least as categories defined more or less objectively, independently of the subjective life of each one. With regard to some aspects, however, spatio-temporal proximity has to be taken into account. For example, coming closer to the other can provide sensory apprehensions that our culture generally neglects or undervalues. Furthermore, perceiving through our eyes or through our ears does not obey the same temporal rhythms, and these rhythms are different again when we apprehend through our mind. It is the same for other senses, including touch itself, which had a share in this mysterious perception of the call, when we were still at home and had not yet met with the other.

How can we bring together and harmonize these various dimensions and rhythms of the encounter – in ourselves and between us? How can we place ourselves in relation to the appeal that we have perceived? How to respond, to correspond to it? Can wanting to do so with words be sufficient – even if they try to unite within them poetry and thought, thought and poetry? Is it not such a choice which has led us to lose the traces of the other in our human becoming?

Nevertheless, voice and words have to keep an important role, notably before and after the meeting. Our eyes alone could not recognize the other at the crossroads of our paths. The help of language will be essential, notably for remembering the intimate touch of the appeal. And the sound of the voice, with its musical modulations and its capacity for communing, must prepare an external and internal space where the coming into presence of the one and the other will be possible.

The place of meeting cannot be merely ecstatic with respect to our real surroundings, nor can it reduce itself to a sensible immediacy. In the words that each tries to say to the other, or that are said of the other, the bodies and the earthly dwelling where they live must resonate. No word can reach the rhythm, even less the melody, allowing one to approach the other – outside oneself or within oneself – if it comes from an already existing discourse. It even risks losing all meaning, and becoming a cradle not for life, for growth and love, but only for illusions and spells. Each time, speech must bring together, for each one and in each one, earth and sky, mortals and divinities. Entering into presence with one another requires that we say to the other and hear from the other at what point we have arrived in the approach and harmony between these parts of ourselves, without forgetting the ways in which they communicate or commune with the present regions of the universe in which we live. Which does not mean that they are simply common to us – we dwell differently in them. The other and myself do not have the same relation with these parts of ourselves and of the universe. Moreover, these polarities will lose their dichotomous pattern from the moment we assume, in ourselves, the becoming of their union and we enter into exchange through this becoming.

Of course, if one of us is supposed to be the heavens and similar to God while the other remains only earth and barely human, the different parts of the universe and of ourselves run the risk of becoming paralysed in their oppositions, indeed their conflicts. The heavens then seem to be able to exist independently from the earth, the divine from the human, the head from the body that animates thinking.

The atmosphere seems to be extraneous to the oceans and the plant world that produce it. And man, brought into the world by woman, claims to create her while forgetting his real beginning.

If each one cares for his or her own part of earth and sky, mortals and divinities, then approaching one another becomes possible. But in the dividing up of these polarities between the one and the other, within the one or within the other, coming closer remains impossible.

Words can, in each one and between the one and the other, bring together earth and sky, mortals and divinities, on the condition that they do not say one single truth and do not designate the world and things from a single perspective. In such a new approach, two polarities of a world, rather artificially defined, no longer try to become reunited, but exchange, with an alliance in view, two manners of dwelling in the world and in oneself. Listening becomes essential, but it alone cannot lead the way. To approach one another, a double listening is necessary. And it is the conjunction between the two listenings that can prepare the beginnings of a common dwelling.

If it is not so, that which is heard might only give voice to the one or the other, unless it were to belong to a saying grounded in a lack of consideration of the one or the other, and of their being in relation. Such a saying has dominated our discourses for centuries and it is difficult to overcome it so that we might hear what the other is saying to us, and even speak with ourselves without the screen of a language foreign to dialogue – that is to say, of a language that remains in a tautological logic of the same, in which it is difficult to say in the present what is to be said. The

words are already dictated, substituting themselves for the one who tries to speak, speaking on one's own behalf. The subject would thus need to listen to what an already existing language enjoins it to say. Which perhaps has meaning when situating oneself in a world that is already there, but not for discovering a manner of saying to the other or of listening to what he, or she, has to say to us. About this, our tradition has seldom cared, striving instead to master living beings without being concerned about exchanging with them, indeed about receiving from them anything without any form of domination. This attitude is all the more harmful when the living world corresponds to the other part of humanity: woman. This part then remains torn between thing(s), nature and God without taking charge of what woman really is and what is proper to her.

In fact, what comes to face a speaking subject is another subject, and not only the horizon of a world that has been projected from a single discourse whose injunctions alone ought to be acknowledged. From what faces us, another language speaks to us, from beyond the world that we have appropriated. We need to listen to it, without relinquishing the discourse that is already ours. We need to listen without submitting ourselves or the other to a unique saying.

Our listening to words, and to what they have already established as nearness, in ourselves and around us, is thus questioned by the existence of other words, which again open the house of language in which we dwell. In such an event, and advent, what saying means is experienced. The practice of saying proves to be essential, and reveals that which is specifically human in it. It then gathers in its act all its dimensions: phonetic articulation, designation of

things and of the world, expression of feelings, calling and listening, bringing close while maintaining remoteness, a search for harmony between earth and sky, mortals and divinities – in each one, between the two, in the world where they dwell. Language is thus confronted with the task that it has to assume as one proper to humans. But such a responsibility is still almost unknown to it. And that which has dominated its saying – the safeguarding of the same or Same – must be partially relinquished in order to approach the work that is really its work: to make human beings capable of saying.

This requires our being able to speak with the other and not only to name things and the world in which they take place. And this means entering into a new epoch of language, an epoch in which saying is no longer constituted in an ecstatic – ek-static – manner with respect to the real and its becoming. Thus an epoch in which the projection of the subject onto things and the world will not revert to the subject itself, both sheltering but also preventing this subject from meeting with the one who speaks other words and dwells in another world. Hence leading to the renunciation of a still open and living space and time that we could arrange for dialogue(s) in difference. If such a space and time are, even only ideally, rendered ecstatic in relation to the present by a previous establishment that is determined by a single and unique subject, then to speak with the other is impossible. There is only an already existing circle of discourse in which we must, each one, take up a place.

Such an ek-stasy of the real, cutting us off from the becoming of our growing, is not yet our real dwelling. If we cannot leave it, the encounter with the other as other

remains inaccessible. We cannot experience it. The places of meeting, possible at the beginning, no longer exist. Of course, we may converse inside a horizon determined by the same – the Same. But this does not amount to experiencing what meeting with the other as other means, and what opening is required for such an event – or advent.

Giving up the ek-static closure of a world by a logic that secures its coherence through harmonization in the same, or Same, evokes the commentary of Stephan Georges' poem by Heidegger. There is, and there will be, no word for designating such a gesture. And a simple turning back will not allow us to discover it. To become aware of the circle in which I am, and to go around it, marking it with negativity with respect to the absolute, will remain a process or an act without words.

Does this then mean resignation? In a sense, yes. But accepting that I am not the whole also signifies the possibility of glimpsing a wider world, a greater completeness – that is, the possibility of overcoming a solitary destiny in order to be involved in a being-with-the-other that does not amount to a sharing of the same in the Same.

How to Welcome the Call of the Other?

Words from then on will have another status. It will no longer be a matter of having conversations or discussions with the other about a language already pronounced or still to be pronounced in the horizon of a supposedly common world. It will no longer be a matter of simply showing things to one another. What we have to speak, to say to each other, is not yet determined and will remain undetermined in a discourse existing outside us. Thus the first word we

have to speak to one another is our capacity and acceptance of being silent. It would be the first wave of recognition addressed to the other as such. In this silence, the other may come towards me, as I may move towards him, or her. This silence is not strictly speaking a displaying – as, for example, when one shows to the other a flag of certain colours, sometimes white or black – but rather, or first of all, gives an indication concerning my ability to relinquish the meaning organized according to my signs and rules alone. It announces to the other that I keep a place, not only in myself to appropriate what is coming towards me, but also outside of myself in order to preserve a space and a time to let the one who is coming arrive.

The renunciation of speaking according to a discourse that we know in advance is a word of welcome to the one who comes to us from beyond the horizon that has been opened, but also closed, by our language. It is a welcoming to another world, to another manner of speaking and saying than the one we know. It is the laying out of a space-time that must still be virgin in order for a meeting to happen. What arrives, in fact, is not an event that already has a place in our own language. Welcoming cannot be reduced to a tone of voice, to a choice of kind words amongst all those that we use, unless we know how relative and insufficient this aspect is. Welcoming requires an availability for that which has not yet occurred, an ability and a wanting to open ourselves to the unknown, to that which is still unfamiliar to us and, in a sense, will always remain unfamiliar.

Welcoming does not take place simply in our dwelling, in ourselves, unless we arrange a space there which will never

be ours, except as an availability on our part. Welcoming will first take place outside of us, even if this outside has a corresponding place within us and belongs to the most intimate part of ourselves. The welcome in ourselves, which we reserve for the other, is all the more non-appropriable since we accept the closeness of this other in ourselves. Since we try to receive the other there where we heard his or her call, in a part of ourselves that remains obscure to us, almost strange so that it seems inaccessible to us, although it constitutes the most intimate part of ourselves – that is, a place to which perhaps correspond words that do not intend to show, to make visible, and above all to demonstrate.

Such words are so strange to our culture because relations with the other have seldom been cultivated. Words which touch, stir, move or leave us waiting without reducing the event to a spectacular manifestation. Words which feed us without our assimilating them, making them our own, simply appropriating them. Words which approach without forcing the threshold, like a living element that comes from this side or beyond the limits of our dwelling. Such is the case for the light of the stars, the music of the wind, the song of the birds. They do not force us to do anything; rather they give assistance to our existence, put a surplus of life at our disposal, remind us of what or who we are. This happens on the condition that we do not intend to possess them, nor even to appropriate them through words, which remain always unable to express the energy, the life, that the light and music of the universe pass on to our perceptions, to the whole of ourselves.

To approach the other requires our trying to open a path that would not be first inspired by a showing or making

appear. To make one's own way towards closeness does not here demand passing from the darkness of the night to the light of the day, but rather finding a manner of speaking which could be accompanied by a nocturnal luminosity. To turn our eyes towards the heart of the intimate risks undoing its touch – dividing, distinguishing, cutting off and thus isolating. Our eyes are not capable of seeing, nor even contemplating, intimacy, at least not directly. They can only imagine something about intimacy from the light, the gestures, the words that it radiates. But intimacy as such will remain invisible, irreducible to appropriation, and thus strange to the logic of Western discourse, to the logos, except in its delusion, its lack, its derelictions and artificial ecstasies. Intimacy allows itself neither to be seen nor to be seized. Nevertheless it is probably the core of our being. And any attempt to appropriate it risks annihilating being itself. However, it is not a question of magic, of irrationality, of madness – it is a question of touch.

And it is true that touch first arouses gesture: the gesture of going with respect and reverence towards its source, or the gesture of taking hold, of seizing. It is a gesture that will first respond to the call of the other.

In fact, it should be the gesture of going towards oneself in order to perceive whether someone, in us, could correspond to the call. Whether this call rings out in an emptiness where it resonates while becoming amplified, whether it awakens a flesh still unable to answer except by its own moving, or whether it goes to meet another call, proper to the one who receives it – that is, whether the call that has been heard corresponds to a call sent out or held in, so that the two could try to make their way towards one

another and experience how they could listen to each other, approach one another, exchange with one another, enrich one another. The first gesture thus ought to be a listening to oneself or, more exactly, to the relation between that which touched us and that which we have in reserve for answering to this experience. It is a matter of listening to not merely an uttered word, which would be in search of its place in an already existing language to which the care of answering would be entrusted. If such were the case, language would be speaking with itself through us, continuing its age-old monologue.

The task before us is different: we need to be listening to a touch that perhaps already has a place in a discourse by which it has been appropriated or that remains silent, in some way virginal with respect to words. Virginal in an absolute sense, or touching again a space already appealed to but which has remained passive with respect to a possible response. Unless the first approach provoked only a withdrawal or an incorporation into our own body, our own horizon, without making the connection between what has been perceived and an other with whom it is fitting to meet.

The place where the call of the other reaches us ought to be unique. The one who sends it out is irreducible to anyone else and the circumstances of time and space are also singular. We are not prepared for this, in a way virginal, availability to the call of the other. Our culture has instead taught us to locate the other's fitting place in an already constituted meaning. In our own world, we could and even should, welcome the other in a place for guests, a room for guests. A space left vacant for the other would be preserved

in ourselves and, above all, in our dwelling. But this space would be part of the very architecture of our world, of our subjectivity. It would represent a sort of space for hospitality, which would be neutral or indifferent with respect to the one who is calling to us.

We are not yet then really available to the call of the other. This other occupies a space built for any other, outside of our being reached within ourselves and being questioned in the present. There where we offer hospitality to the other, we are already absent. We welcome or shelter the other because of some political-cultural paternalism or maternalism, some social idealism or ideology, some religious or moral commandment. But this welcome that we give to the other is not really addressed to him or her, and does not let them really be free.

It is not in some immutable dwelling in which we have reserved a place for just any guest that we must welcome the one who is calling us. The place in which we could welcome this other is still to be discovered, to be opened, to be arranged. It is important to feel and to listen with the whole of who we are there where we have been reached by the appeal, and to how we should respond to this being touched. No doubt, to give traditional hospitality is better than completely closing off one's own home to the other. But this does not yet amount to a sharing with the other. Unless we limit it to a material level, which preserves the possibility of arriving at desire by protecting life itself for the one who maintains the difference between need and desire.

To respond to the call of the other at the level of needs is more generous than simply closing one's door, but we are

not yet really called into question other than at the level of having. With regard to Being, it is another matter, one having to do precisely with desire. If our desire confines itself to a will for immutability, for permanence of self-identity, for the security of dwelling in sameness, for the perfection of a self-ideal, our desire remains closed to welcoming the other as other. Then one can only keep the other outside oneself, outside one's world, one's horizon, whatever the space that would be reserved for this other in one's own country, one's own city or home, indeed one's own bed, and whatever may be the bread shared. There is not yet a sharing of Being, which presupposes opening oneself to a becoming to which we agree to be attentive, to listen. Not merely an individual becoming in a horizon already defined by a culture, a language, a people. But a human becoming that calls into question what has already happened to humanity, and that allows and clears the way for new perspectives on Being, with new obligations and possibilities for human blossoming.

It is only at such a price that we can prepare a welcome for the other, whomever this other could be: a companion, a friend, a child, a foreigner. It is always a question of how to become capable of being with the other, and of making a new world, a third world, exist between us.

If our hospitality confines itself to offering a place or a room for guests, it is because we are not yet able to do better. We offer to the other that which we unconsciously reserve for ourselves: an enclosed space partly defined around a void. The place that we give to the other in fact amounts to a representation of the place that we ourselves occupy – a space apparently open in a closed world. As far

as we are concerned, we cannot perceive the place in which we live, because it is cluttered with our objects, our projections, our repetitions, our habits and tautologies. It is both enclosed and partly cluttered with our own emptiness.

We offer to the other a part of this enclosed and, in some way, empty, territory – a sort of prison cell, in fact like our own. To be sure, the other will be sheltered, but in an enclosed space, a place already defined by our norms, our rules, our lacks and our voids. The other will have the possibility of dwelling only in a loop of the interlacing of relations where we ourselves are situated by our culture, our language, our surroundings. Blind to our lack of freedom.

Moreover, do we not strive to save a place for the other hoping, more often than not unconsciously, that the other will put an end to our confinement, create a draught of air in our enclosed and saturated world? Will not an other, apparently staying outside and without any shelter, be the one who will reopen our world? Hence the gesture of welcoming him or her, indeed of making them guests of honour. No doubt in an ambiguous way.

Sharing Needs, Sharing Desire

But there is not yet in this an answer to the call of the other, except sometimes at the level of material needs. Even at this level, we often share with the belief that this will be given back to us in one way or another, even if only through the superior feeling that we experience – which is unconscious for most of us. Hegel was not wrong in condemning pity, the support of a status quo maintained by some masters in our human becoming, and in fact another name for contempt. We often give in order to receive, not necessarily

from an other, but rather as an effect of our gesture upon ourselves – to feel greater, more open and noble. Thus our gesture does not really address the other. Most of the time, we have not yet perceived that the other exists as such. If this were the case, perhaps we would hesitate to take an interest in him or her, ignoring what could happen to us. The other, it is true, is beyond our horizon. To address him, or her, means to agree to question this horizon – thus to risk the loss of our shelter, a shelter that is not only material but also cultural or spiritual. We accept this risk with difficulty, our tradition having generally forbidden us from doing that. Thus we sometimes transform a material sharing into a spiritual value. The other becomes an opportunity for making personal spiritual progress or benefits, that we imagine to be shareable – but with a God or in God, rather than with the other here and now present at our side.

It is true that sharing the spiritual is not a simple matter – unless we entrust all our progresses and profits to a community. But this often amounts to annihilating that which is most personal to us and to binding together, and even fixing, the community with that which ought to be the most precious leaven for our personal becoming. For lack of having discovered, or invented, the gestures, the words, the acts that are suitable for this personal spiritual becoming, capable of keeping it and ensuring its ground, we sacrifice it in a form of common energy. Then the lack of an appropriate differentiation makes our spiritual dimension regress because of an adhesion to a faith or to a group. Of course, this adhesion can sometimes be of some help. It represents nevertheless, with regard to the perception of a living transcendence that keeps the mind or the soul awake

and on the way, a double risk of becoming stuck or bogged down: in already established truths and in relations with the other(s) determined by them.

Spiritual community itself is not without danger. If a personal spiritual becoming ought to go hand in hand with respect for what already exists or could exist, if it remains open with its progress in view, the same seldom goes for a community. The issues there are often already fixed and rigid, having become sorts of imposed dogma that transform the frailty of a personal spiritual energy into an artificially affirmative, and even repressive, force.

What had to remain not fixed, a sort of sap for becoming, gets lost. The flesh and breath, mainspring and ground of our evolution, are forgotten to the advantage of almost warlike proclamations that speak more to possible enemies than say what the matter is, in this moment, regarding our perception of transcendence. We affirm a faith that binds us together, that makes us a people. And we then often give up a personal quest that is always risky, always uncertain, always still to be discovered, to be paved. Transcendence is presented to and imposed on us as a sort of object or objectivity, kept out of reach to ensure its inaccessibility to our sensible and even mental perceptions. Transcendence no longer requires us to accomplish a movement of withdrawing, of respecting and waiting towards an other who is irreducible to us and from whom some teaching, some favour could come. Swearing allegiance to already uttered words is presented to us as the way towards the transcendent, which then evades our approach – already past, never present or future. Such an issue, the most crucial in order to make our way towards that which always remains beyond our grasp, is imposed

on us as already defined; which does not favour, to say the least, an awakening that attracts us to itself, that gets us on the way towards it. And that constrains us to become beyond that which already is: both within us and outside of us.

Always already defined, the other has to become absolute in order to remain irreducible to our grasp. The other is no longer transcendent because he or she is different from us, but because otherness has been postponed until another world, beyond our horizon as mortals. And there are often already defined procedures that are supposed to lead us to the Other, but which make this Other inaccessible. We are separated from such an Other by words, by gestures that are to be repeated without us really perceiving their meaning. And this strengthens the status of a presumed transcendence, even if there were to be nothing beyond the path that ought to lead us to it. A path that risks removing us from rather than bringing us closer to a perception of what could be the transcendental. We find ourselves then separated from the other and from ourselves, having moreover lost the feeling that is able to conduct us towards one another, as well as the energy essential to realize such a journey. Thus, we are both enclosed, the one and the other, in spaces surrounded by strongholds and at the same time mixed together without any real alterity having been recognized. The other has become our Other. But this has to remain unrepresentable as truth; hence the importance of obstacles constructed in order to isolate us from one another.

We are simultaneously inside one another, or rather both merged in the same, and confronted with insurmountable

boundaries that make the Same inaccessible. We are thus deprived of the possibility of envisioning what governs us, and divided within ourselves between a part that we have to command and another, the most subtle and creative part, which ought to blindly submit to the command of that which remains foreign to it even though being the Same, at least for a part of humanity. What availability is left to us to welcome the other, here and now, if we are in this way reduced to one part that obeys duties and habits, and another part that is waiting for an inaccessible transcendence whose agents, they too, subject access to duties and habits? What free energy have we at our disposal for such a gesture, in the present and the future? Where will we find the strength, the space and the time for accomplishing it, for being faithful to it? Unless perhaps in an empty room, outside or within us, waiting for the other to submit to the same and the Same, on pain of being rejected, expelled.

We have not then begun to welcome the other, to correspond to his, or her, call. At best, we postpone this call until another world, in this way failing to care for the most human dimension of ourselves: relating to the other as other – that is, with respect for our difference(s).

Having relations with the same, at a natural or cultural level, does not represent a really human task. To be sure, one could argue here that it belongs to humans to respect the boundaries of their species, but such respect should be a way of becoming aware of the difference inside this species. Humanity cannot define itself only through its opposition to other species, an opposition that, moreover, it transposes between the different parts which compose it. Rather, it

must distinguish itself by another manner of dealing with difference(s).

Approaching the other, as far as humans are concerned, should not be submission to blind instinct – sexual attraction and possession, reproduction, subjection, appropriation, rejection, etc. – but the perception of our humanity as such; that is, access to that which transcends us, with regard to which silence, listening and words are tasks that are incumbent on us here and now. Not as a repetition of behaviours, notably linguistic ones, that we already know, but rather as an experience of a saying for which we are responsible. Through such a gesture, we become humans, women and men assuming their nature with a relational perspective that is different from that of the plant or animal kingdoms.

This demands that we be able to listen to our attractions, and also to contain them, in order to prepare a space between us where desire could be fulfilled through entering into dialogue.

Some passages in this chapter first appeared in 'The Path towards the Other' in *Beckett after Beckett*, ed. S. E. Contarski and A. Uhlmann (University of Florida Press, 2006), 39–51.