

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

The Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone

ITALICS

(1) How 'to talk religion'? Of religion? Singularly of religion, today? How dare we speak of it in the singular without fear and trembling, this very day? And so briefly and so quickly? Who would be so imprudent as to claim that the issue here is both identifiable and new? Who would be so presumptuous as to rely on a few aphorisms? To give oneself the necessary courage, arrogance or serenity, therefore, perhaps one must pretend for an instant to abstract, to abstract from everything or almost everything, in a certain way. Perhaps one must take one's chance in resorting to the most concrete and most accessible, but also the most barren and desert-like, of all abstractions.

Should one save oneself by abstraction or save oneself from abstraction? Where is salvation, safety? (In 1807, Hegel writes: "Who thinks abstractly?": "Thinking? Abstract?—*Sauve qui peut!*" he begins by saying, and precisely in French, in order to translate the cry—*Rette sich, wer kann!*—of that traitor who would flee, in a single movement, thought and abstraction and metaphysics: like the "plague.")

(2) Save, be saved, save oneself. Pretext for a first question: can a discourse on religion be dissociated from a discourse on salvation: which is to say, on the holy, the sacred, the safe and sound, the unscathed <indemne>,¹ the immune (sacer, sanctus, heilig, holy, and their alleged equivalents in so many languages)? And salvation, is it necessarily

1. *Translator's note:* the use of angle brackets < > indicates interpolations of the translator. Such brackets contain either a few words from the original or short emendations. Parentheses and square brackets reproduce those in the French text. All footnotes stem from the author except where otherwise indicated (as here).

redemption, before or after evil, fault or sin? Now, where is evil <le mal>? Where is evil today, at present? Suppose that there was an exemplary and unprecedented figure of evil, even of that radical evil which seems to mark our time as no other. Is it by identifying this evil that one will accede to what might be the figure or promise of salvation for our time, and thus the singularity of the religious whose return is proclaimed in every newspaper?

Eventually, we would therefore like to link the question of religion to that of the evil of abstraction. To radical abstraction. Not to the abstract figure of death, of evil or of the sickness of death, but to the forms of evil that are traditionally tied to radical extirpation and therefore to the deracination of abstraction, passing by way—but only much later—of those sites of abstraction that are the machine, technics, technoscience and above all the transcendence of tele-technology. "Religion and mechane," "religion and cyberspace," "religion and the numeric," "religion and digitality," "religion and virtual space-time": in order to take the measure of these themes in a short treatise, within the limits assigned us, to conceive a small discursive machine which, however finite and perfectible, would not be too powerless.

In order to think religion today abstractly, we will take these powers of abstraction as our point of departure, in order to risk, eventually, the following hypothesis: with respect to all these forces of abstraction and of dissociation (deracination, delocalization, disincarnation, formalization, universalizing schematization, objectification, telecommunication etc.), "religion" is at the same time involved in reacting antagonistically and reaffirmatively outbidding itself. In this very place, knowledge and faith, technoscience ("capitalist" and fiduciary) and belief, credit, trustworthiness, the act of faith will always have made common cause, bound to one another by the band of their opposition. Whence the aporia—a certain absence of way, path, issue, salvation—and the two sources.

(3) To play the card of abstraction, and the aporia of the no-way-out, perhaps one must first withdraw to a desert, or even isolate oneself on an island. And tell a short story that would not be a myth. Genre: "Once upon a time," just once, one day, on an island or in the desert, imagine, in order to "talk religion," several men, philosophers, professors, hermeneuticians, hermits or anchorites, took the time to mimic a small, esoteric and egalitarian, friendly and fraternal community. Perhaps it would be necessary in addition to situate such arguments, limit them in time and space, speak of the place and the setting, the moment past, one day, date the fugitive and the ephemeral, singularize, act as though one were keeping a diary out of which one were going to tear a few pages. Law of the genre: the ephemeris (and already you are speaking inexhaustibly of the day). Date: 28 February 1994. Place: an island, the isle of Capri. A hotel, a table around which we speak among friends, almost without any order,

without agenda, without order of the day, no watchword <mot d'ordre> save for a single word, the clearest and most obscure: religion. We believe we can pretend to believe—fiduciary act—that we share in some pre-understanding. We act as though we had some common sense of what “religion” means through the languages that we believe (how much belief already, to this moment, to this very day!) we know how to speak. We believe in the minimal trustworthiness of this word. Like Heidegger, concerning what he calls the Faktum of the vocabulary of being (at the beginning of Sein und Zeit), we believe (or believe it is obligatory that) we pre-understand the meaning of this word, if only to be able to question and in order to interrogate ourselves on this subject. Well—we will have to return to this much later—nothing is less pre-assured than such a Faktum (in both of these cases, precisely) and the entire question of religion comes down, perhaps, to this lack of assurance.

(4) At the beginning of a preliminary exchange, around the table, Gianni Vattimo proposes that I improvise a few suggestions. If I may be permitted, I would like to recall them here, in italics, in a sort of schematic and telegraphic preface. Other propositions, doubtless, emerged in a text of different character that I wrote afterwards, cramped by the merciless limits of time and space. An utterly different story, perhaps, but, from near or afar, the memory of words risked in the beginning, that day, will continue to dictate what I write.

I had at first proposed to bring to the light of day of reflection, misconstruing or denying it as little as possible, an effective and unique situation—that in which we then found ourselves: facts, a common commitment, a date, a place. We had in truth agreed to respond to a double proposition, at once philosophical and editorial, which in turn immediately raised a double question: of language and of nation. Now if, today, the “question of religion” actually appears in a new and different light, if there is an unprecedented resurgence, both global and planetary, of this ageless thing, then what is at stake is language, certainly—and more precisely the idiom, literalism, writing, that forms the element of all revelation and of all belief, an element that ultimately is irreducible and untranslatable—but an idiom that above all is inseparable from the social nexus, from the political, familial, ethnic, communitarian nexus, from the nation and from the people: from autochthony, blood and soil, and from the ever more problematic relation to citizenship and to the state. In these times, language and nation form the historical body of all religious passion. Like this meeting of philosophers, the international publication that was proposed to us turns out to be first of all “Western,” and then confined, which is also to say confined, to several European languages, those that “we” speak here in Capri, on this Italian island: German, Spanish, French, Italian.

(5) We are not far from Rome, but are no longer in Rome. Here we are literally isolated for two days, insulated on the heights of Capri, in the difference between the Roman

and the Italic, the latter potentially symbolizing everything that can incline—at a certain remove from the Roman in general. To think “religion” is to think the “Roman.” This can be done neither in Rome nor too far from Rome. A chance or necessity for recalling the history of something like “religion”: everything done or said in its name ought to keep the critical memory of this appellation. European, it was first of all Latin. Here, then, is a given whose figure at least, as limit, remains contingent and significant at the same time. It demands to be taken into account, reflected, thematized, dated. Difficult to say “Europe” without connoting: Athens—Jerusalem—Rome—Byzantium, wars of Religion, open war over the appropriation of Jerusalem and of Mount Moriah, over the “here I am” of Abraham or of Ibrahim before the extreme “sacrifice” demanded of him, the absolute offering of the beloved son, the demanded putting-to-death or death given to the unique descendant, repetition suspended on the eve of all Passion. Yesterday (yes, yesterday, truly, just a few days ago), there was the massacre of Hebron at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a place held in common and symbolic trench of the religions called “Abrahamic.” We represent and speak four different languages, but our common “culture,” let’s be frank, is more manifestly Christian, barely even Judaeo-Christian. No Muslim is among us, alas, even for this preliminary discussion, just at the moment when it is towards Islam, perhaps, that we ought to begin by turning our attention. No representative of other cults either. Not a single woman! We ought to take this into account: speaking on behalf of these mute witnesses without speaking for them, in place of them, and drawing from this all sorts of consequences.

(6) Why is this phenomenon, so hastily called the “return of religions,” so difficult to think? Why is it so surprising? Why does it particularly astonish those who believed naïvely that an alternative opposed Religion, on the one side, and on the other, Reason, Enlightenment, Science, Criticism (Marxist Criticism, Nietzschean Genealogy, Freudian Psychoanalysis and their heritage), as though the one could not but put an end to the other? On the contrary, it is an entirely different schema that would have to be taken as one’s point of departure in order to try to think the “return of the religious.” Can the latter be reduced to what the doxa confusedly calls “fundamentalism,” “fanaticism” or, in French, “integrism”? Here perhaps we have one of our preliminary questions, able to measure up to the historical urgency. And among the Abrahamic religions, among the “fundamentalisms” or the “integrisms” that are developing universally, for they are at work today in all religions, what, precisely, of Islam? But let us not make use of this name too quickly. Everything that is hastily grouped under the reference to “Islam” seems today to retain some sort of geopolitical or global prerogative, as a result of the nature of its physical violences, of certain of its declared violations of the democratic model and of international law (the “Rushdie case” and many others—and the “right to literature”), as a result of both the archaic and modern form of its crimes “in the

name of religion," as a result of its demographic dimensions, of its phallogocentric and theologico-political figures. Why? Discernment is required: Islam is not Islamism and we should never forget it, but the latter operates in the name of the former, and thus emerges the grave question of the name.

(7) Never treat as an accident the force of the name in what happens, occurs or is said in the name of religion, here in the name of Islam. For, directly or not, the theologico-political, like all the concepts plastered over these questions, beginning with that of democracy or of secularization, even of the right to literature, is not merely European, but Graeco-Christian, Graeco-Roman. Here we are confronted by the overwhelming questions of the name and of everything "done in the name of": questions of the name or noun "religion," of the names of God, of whether the proper name belongs to the system of language or not, hence, of its untranslatability but also of its iterability (which is to say, of that which makes it a site of repeatability, of idealization and therefore, already, of techné, of technoscience, of tele-technoscience in calling at a distance), of its link to the performativity of calling in prayer (which, as Aristotle says, is neither true nor false), of its bond to that which, in all performativity, as in all address and attestation, appeals to the faith of the other and deploys itself therefore in a pledge of faith.

(8) Light takes place. And the day. The coincidence of the rays of the sun and topographical inscription will never be separated: phenomenology of religion, religion as phenomenology, enigma of the Orient, of the Levant and of the Mediterranean in the geography of appearing <paraître>. Light (phos), wherever this arché commands or begins discourse and takes the initiative in general (phos, phainesthai, phantasma, hence spectre, etc.), as much in the discourse of philosophy as in the discourses of a revelation (Offenbarung) or of a revealability (Offenbarkeit), of a possibility more originary than manifestation. More originary, which is to say, closer to the source, to the sole and same source. Everywhere light dictates that which even yesterday was naïvely construed to be pure of all religion or even opposed to it and whose future must today be rethought (Aufklärung, Lumières, Enlightenment, Illuminismo). Let us not forget: even when it did not dispose of any common term to "designate," as Benveniste notes, "religion itself, the cult, or the priest, or even any of the personal gods," the Indo-European language already concurred in "the very notion of 'god' (deiwos), of which the 'proper meaning' is 'luminous' and 'celestial.'²

2. Emile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer Faber and Faber, (London, Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 445–46. We shall often cite Benveniste in order to leave him a responsibility—that of speaking for example with assurance of "proper meaning," precisely in the case of the sun or of light, but also with regard to everything else. This assurance seems greatly exaggerated and more than problematic. *Translator's note*: the published English translation has been modified throughout in the interest of greater literalness.

(9) In this same light, and under the same sky, let us this day name three places: the island, the Promised Land, the desert. Three aporetical places: with no way out or any assured path, without itinerary or point of arrival, without an exterior with a predictable map and a calculable programme. These three places shape our horizon, here and now. (But since thinking and speaking are called for here, they will be difficult within the assigned limits, and a certain absence of horizon. Paradoxically, the absence of horizon conditions the future itself. The emergence of the event ought to puncture every horizon of expectation. Whence the apprehension of an abyss in these places, for example a desert in the desert, there where one neither can nor should see coming what ought or could—perhaps—be yet to come. What is still left to come.)

(10) Is it a coincidence if we—almost all of us Mediterranean by origin and each of us Mediterranean by a sort of magnetism—have, despite many differences, all been oriented by a certain phenomenology (again light)? We who today have come together to meet on this island, and who ourselves must have made or accepted this choice, more or less secretly, is it a coincidence if all of us, one day, have been tempted both by a certain dissidence with respect to Husserlian phenomenology and by a hermeneutics whose discipline owes so much to the exegesis of religious texts? Hence the even more pressing obligation: not to forget those <of either gender> whom this implicit contract or this "being-together" is obliged to exclude. We should have, we ought to have, begun by allowing them to speak.

(11) Let us also remember what, rightly or wrongly, I hold provisionally to be evident: that, whatever our relation to religion may be, and to this or that religion, we are not priests bound by a ministry, nor theologians, nor qualified, competent representatives of religion, nor enemies of religion as such, in the sense that certain so-called Enlightenment philosophers are thought to have been. But we also share, it seems to me, something else—let us designate it cautiously—an unreserved taste, if not an unconditional preference, for what, in politics, is called republican democracy as a universalizable model, binding philosophy to the public "cause," to the res publica, to "public-ness," once again to the light of day, once again to the "lights" of the Enlightenment <aux Lumières>, once again to the enlightened virtue of public space, emancipating it from all external power (non-lay, non-secular), for example from religious dogmatism, orthodoxy or authority (that is, from a certain rule of the doxa or of belief, which, however, does not mean from all faith). In a less analogical manner (but I shall return to this later) and at least as long and in so far as we continue speaking here together, we shall doubtless attempt to transpose, here and now, the circumpect and suspensive attitude, a certain epoché that consists—rightly or wrongly, for the issue is serious—in thinking religion or making it appear "within the limits of reason alone."

(12) *Related question: what of this 'Kantian' gesture today? What would a book be like today which, like Kant's, is entitled, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone? This epoché also gives its chance to a political event, as I have tried to suggest elsewhere.³ It even belongs to the history of democracy, notably when theological discourse was obliged to assume the forms of the via negativa and even there, where it seems to have prescribed exclusive communities, initiatic teachings, hierarchy, esoteric insularity or the desert.⁴*

(13) *Before the island—and Capri will never be Patmos—there will have been the Promised Land. How to improvise and allow oneself to be surprised in speaking of it? How not to fear and how not to tremble before the unfathomable immensity of this theme? The figure of the Promised Land—is it not also the essential bond between the promise of place and historicity? By historicity, we could understand today more than one thing. First of all, a sharpened specificity of the concept of religion, the history of its history, and of the genealogies intermingled in its languages and in its name. Distinctions are required: faith has not always been and will not always be identifiable with religion, nor, another point, with theology. All sacredness and all holiness are not necessarily, in the strict sense of the term, if there is one, religious. We will have to return to the emergence and the semantics of this noun 'religion', passing by way both of its Roman Occidentality and of the bond it has contracted with the Abrahamic revelations. The latter are not solely events. Such events only happen by taking on the meaning of engaging the historicity of history—and the eventfulness <événementialité> of the event as such. As distinct from other experiences of "faith," of the "holy," of the "unscathed" and of the "safe and sound," of the "sacred," of the "divine"; as distinct from other structures that one would be tempted to call by a dubious analogy "religions," the Testamentary and Koranic revelations are inseparable from a historicity of revelation itself. The messianic or eschatological horizon delimits this historicity, to be sure, but only by virtue of having previously inaugurated it.*

(14) *With this emerges another historical dimension, a historicity different from what we evoked a moment ago, unless the two overlap in an infinite mirroring <en abyme>. How can this history of historicity be taken into account so as to permit the treatment today of religion within the limits of reason alone? How can a history of political and technoscientific reason be inscribed there and thus brought up to date, but also a history of radical evil, of its figures that are never simply figures and that—*

3. Cf. "Sauf le nom," in Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, ed. Tom Dutoit, trans. David Wood, John P. Leavy Jr., and Ian McLeod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), notably p. 80 ff.

4. In "How to avoid speaking: denials," in *Languages of the Unsayable: the Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. by Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 3–70, I treat in a more precise manner, in an analogous context, the themes of hierarchy and of "topology."

this is the whole evil—are always inventing a new evil? The radical "perversion of the human heart" of which Kant speaks,⁵ we now know is not one, nor given once and for all, as though it were capable only of inaugurating figures or tropes of itself. Perhaps we could ask ourselves whether this agrees or not with Kant's intention when he recalls that Scripture does indeed "represent" the historical and temporal character of radical evil even if it is only a "mode of representation" (Vorstellungsart) used by Scripture in function of human "frailty";⁶ and this, notwithstanding that Kant struggles to account for the rational origin of an evil that remains inconceivable to reason, by affirming simultaneously that the interpretation of Scripture exceeds the competence of reason and that of all the "public religions" that ever were, only the Christian religion will have been a "moral" religion (end of the first General Remark). Strange proposition, but which must be taken as seriously as possible in each of its premises.

(15) *There are in effect for Kant, and he says so explicitly, only two families of religion, and in all two sources or two strata of religion—and hence two genealogies of which it still must be asked why they share the same name whether proper or common <noun>: the religion of cult alone (des blossen Cultus) seeks "favours of God," but at bottom, and in essence, it does not act, teaching only prayer and desire. Man is not obliged to become better, be it through the remission of sins. Moral (moralische) religion, by contrast, is interested in the good conduct of life (die Religion des guten Lebenswandels); it enjoins him to action, it subordinates knowledge to it and dissociates it from itself, prescribing that man become better by acting to this end, in accordance with the following principle: "It is not essential and hence not necessary for everyone to know what God does or has done for his salvation," but it is essential to know what man himself must do in order to become worthy of this assistance." Kant thus defines a "reflecting (reflektierende) faith," which is to say, a concept whose possibility might well open the space of our discussion. Because it does not depend essentially upon any historical revelation and thus agrees with the rationality of purely practical reason, reflecting faith favours good will beyond all knowledge. It is thus opposed to "dogmatic (dogmatische) faith." If it breaks with this "dogmatic faith," it is insofar as the latter claims to know and thereby ignores the difference between faith and knowledge.*

Now the principle of such an opposition—and this is why I emphasize it—could not be simply definitional, taxonomic or theoretical; it serves not simply to classify heterogeneous religions under the same name; it could also define, even for us today, a place of conflict, if not of war, in the Kantian sense. Even today, albeit provisionally, it could help us structure a problematic.

5. I. Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Book I, section 3.

6. *Ibid.*, Book I, section 4.

Are we ready to measure without flinching the implications and consequences of the Kantian thesis? The latter seems strong, simple and dizzying: the Christian religion would be the only truly "moral" religion; a mission would thus be reserved exclusively for it and for it alone: that of liberating a "reflecting faith." It necessarily follows therefore that pure morality and Christianity are indissociable in their essence and in their concept. If there is no Christianity without pure morality, it is because Christian revelation teaches us something essential about the very idea of morality. From this it follows that the idea of a morality that is pure but non-Christian would be absurd; it would exceed both understanding and reason, it would be a contradiction in terms. The unconditional universality of the categorical imperative is evangelical. The moral law inscribes itself at the bottom of our hearts like a memory of the Passion. When it addresses us, it either speaks the idiom of the Christian—or is silent.

This thesis of Kant (which we would like later to relate to what we will call "globalatinization" <mondialatinisation>⁷)—is it not also, at the core of its content, Nietzsche's thesis at the same time that he is conducting an inexorable war against Kant? Perhaps Nietzsche would have said "Judaeo-Christian," but the place occupied by Saint Paul among his privileged targets clearly demonstrates that it was Christianity, a certain internalizing movement within Christianity, that was his primary enemy and that bore for him the gravest responsibility. The Jews and European Judaism even constituted in his eyes a desperate attempt to resist, in so far as there was any resistance, a last-ditch protest from within, directed against a certain Christianity.

This thesis doubtless tells us something about the history of the world—nothing less. Let us indicate, rather schematically, at least two of its possible consequences, and two paradoxes among many others:

1. In the definition of "reflecting faith" and of what binds the idea of pure morality indissolubly to Christian revelation, Kant recurs to the logic of a simple principle, that which we cited a moment ago verbatim: in order to conduct oneself in a moral manner, one must act as though God did not exist or no longer concerned himself with our salvation. This shows who is moral and who is therefore Christian, assuming that a Christian owes it to himself to be moral: no longer turn towards God at

7. Translator's note: It should be noted that the French neologism created by Derrida—"mondialatinisation"—emphasizes the notion of "world," whereas the English word used in this translation: "globalatinization"—stresses that of "globality." Since "globe" suggests "earth" rather than "world," the use of "globalatinization" here tends to efface an important distinction made throughout this chapter. This interest of this problem, however, is that it may not "simply" be one of translation. For if, as Derrida argues in this chapter, the major idiom and vehicle of the process of *mondialatinisation* today is precisely Anglo-American, then the very fact that the notion of "globality" comes to supplant that of "world" in the most common usage of this language must itself be highly significant. This difficulty of translation, in short, adds a new question to those raised in this chapter: what happens to the notion of "world," and to its distinction from "earth" and "globe," if the predominant language of "mondialatinization" tends to speak not of "world" but of "globality"?

the moment of acting in good faith; act as though God had abandoned us. In enabling us to think (but also to suspend in theory) the existence of God, the freedom or the immortality of the soul, the union of virtue and of happiness, the concept of "postulate" of practical reason guarantees this radical dissociation and assumes ultimately rational and philosophical responsibility, the consequence here in this world, in experience, of this abandonment. Is this not another way of saying that Christianity can only answer to its moral calling and morality, to its Christian calling if it endures in this world, in phenomenal history, the death of God, well beyond the figures of the Passion? That Christianity is the death of God thus announced and recalled by Kant to the modernity of the Enlightenment? Judaism and Islam would thus be perhaps the last two monotheisms to revolt against everything that, in the Christianizing of our world, signifies the death of God, death in God, two non-pagan monotheisms that do not accept death any more than multiplicity in God (the Passion, the Trinity etc.), two monotheisms still alien enough at the heart of Graeco-Christian, Pagano-Christian Europe, alienating themselves from a Europe that signifies the death of God, by recalling at all costs that "monotheism" signifies no less faith in the One, and in the living One, than belief in a single God.

2. With regard to this logic, to its formal rigour and to its possibilities, does not Heidegger move in a different direction? He insists, indeed, in *Sein und Zeit* upon the character of originary conscience (Gewissen), being-responsible-guilty-indebted (Schuldigsein) or attestation (Bezeugung) as both pre-moral (or pre-ethical, if "ethical" still refers to that meaning of ethos considered by Heidegger to be derivative, inadequate and of recent origin) and pre-religious. He would thus appear to go back before and beyond that which joins morality to religion, meaning here, to Christianity. This would in principle allow for the repetition of the Nietzschean genealogy of morals, but dechristianizing it where necessary and extirpating whatever Christian vestiges it still might contain. A strategy all the more involuted and necessary for a Heidegger who seems unable to stop either settling accounts with Christianity or distancing himself from it—with all the more violence in so far as it is already too late, perhaps, for him to deny certain proto-Christian motifs in the ontological repetition and existential analytics.

What are we calling here a "logic," its "formal rigour" and its "possibilities"? The law itself, a necessity that, it is clear, undoubtedly programmes an infinite spiral of outbidding, a maddening instability among these "positions." The latter can be occupied successively or simultaneously by the same "subjects." From one religion to the other, the "fundamentalisms" and the "integrism" hyperbolize today this outbidding. They exacerbate it at a moment when—we shall return to this later—globalatinization

(this strange alliance of Christianity, as the experience of the death of God, and tele-technoscientific capitalism) is at the same time hegemonic and finite, ultra-powerful and in the process of exhausting itself. Simply, those who are involved in this outbidding can pursue it from all angles, adopting all "positions," either simultaneously or successively, to the uttermost limit.

Is this not the madness, the absolute anachrony of our time, the disjunction of all self-contemporaneity, the veiled and cloudy day of every today?

(16) This definition of reflecting faith appears in the first of the four Parerga added at the end of each section of Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone. These Parerga are not integral parts of the book; they "do not belong within" "religion in the limits of pure reason," they "border upon" it. I stress this for reasons that are in part topological, even theo-architectonic: these Parerga situate perhaps the fringe where we might be able, today, to inscribe our reflections. All the more since the first Parergon, added in the second edition, thereby defines the secondary task (parergon) which, concerning what is morally indisputable, would consist in surmounting all the difficulties connected to transcendent questions. When translated into the element of religion, moral ideas pervert the purity of their transcendence. They can do this in two times two ways, and the resulting square could today frame, providing that the appropriate transpositions are respected, a programme of analysis of the forms of evil perpetrated at the four corners of the world "in the name of religion." We will have to limit ourselves to an indication of the titles of this programme and, first, of the criteria (nature/supernatural, internal/external, theoretical elucidation/practical action, constative/performative): (a) the allegedly internal experience (of the effects of grace): the fanaticism or enthusiasm of the illuminated (Schwärmerei); (b) the allegedly external experience (of the miraculous): superstition (Aberglaube); (c) the alleged elucidations of the understanding in the consideration of the supernatural (secrets, Geheimnisse): illuminatism, the frenzy of the initiates; (d) the risky attempt of acting upon the supernatural (means of obtaining grace): thaumaturgy.

When Marx holds the critique of religion to be the premise of all ideology-critique, when he holds religion to be the ideology par excellence, even for the matrix of all ideology and of the very movement of fetishization, does his position not fall, whether he would have wanted it or not, within the parergonal framework of this kind of rational criticism? Or rather, more plausible but also more difficult to demonstrate, does he not already deconstruct the fundamentally Christian axiomatics of Kant? This could be one of our questions, the most obscure one no doubt, because it is not at all certain that the very principles of the Marxist critique do not still appeal to a heterogeneity between faith and knowledge, between practical justice and cognition. This heterogeneity, by the way, may ultimately not be irreducible to the inspiration or to the spirit

of Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone. All the more since these figures of evil discredit, as much as they accredit, the "credit" which is the act of faith. They exclude as much as they explain, they demand perhaps more than ever this recourse to religion, to the principle of faith, even if it is only that of a radically fiduciary form of the "reflecting faith" already mentioned. And it is this mechanics, this machine-like return of religion, that I would here like to question.

(17) How then to think—within the limits of reason alone—a religion which, without again becoming "natural religion," would today be effectively universal? And which, for that matter, would no longer be restricted to a paradigm that was Christian or even Abrahamic? What would be the project of such a 'book'? For with Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, there is a World involved that is also an Old-New Book or Testament. Does this project retain a meaning or a chance? A geopolitical chance or meaning? Or does the idea itself remain, in its origin and in its end, Christian? And would this necessarily be a limit, a limit like any other? A Christian—but also a Jew or a Muslim—would be someone who would harbour doubts about this limit, about the existence of this limit or about its reducibility to any other limit, to the current figure of limitation.

(18) Keeping these questions in mind, we might be able to gauge two temptations. In their schematic principle, one would be "Hegelian": ontotheology which determines absolute knowledge as the truth of religion, in the course of the final movement described in the conclusions of The Phenomenology of Spirit or of Faith and Knowledge, which announces in effect a "religion of modern times" (Religion der neuen Zeit) founded on the sentiment that "God himself is dead." "Infinite pain" is still only a "moment" (rein als Moment), and the moral sacrifice of empirical existence only dates the absolute Passion or the speculative Good Friday (spekulativer Karfreitag). Dogmatic philosophies and natural religions should disappear and, out of the greatest "asperity," the harshest impiety, out of kenosis and the void of the most serious privation of God (Gottlosigkeit), ought to resuscitate the most serene liberty in its highest totality. Distinct from faith, from prayer or from sacrifice, ontotheology destroys religion, but, yet another paradox, it is also perhaps what informs, on the contrary, the theological and ecclesiastical, even religious, development of faith. The other temptation (perhaps there are still good reasons for keeping this word) would be "Heideggerian": beyond such ontotheology, where the latter ignores both prayer and sacrifice. It would accordingly be necessary that a "revealability" (Offenbarkeit) be allowed to reveal itself, with a light that would manifest (itself) more originarity than all revelation (Offenbarung). Moreover, the distinction would have to be made between theo-logy (the discourse on God, faith or revelation) and theio-logy (discourse on being-divine, on the essence and the divinity of the divine). The experience of the

sacred, the holy or the saved (heilig) would have to be reawakened unscathed. We would have to devote all our attention to this chain, taking as our point of departure this last word (heilig), this German word whose semantic history seems to resist the rigorous dissociation that Levinas wishes to maintain between a natural sacredness that would be "pagan," even Graeco-Christian, and the holiness < sainteté >⁸ of (Jewish) law, before or under the Roman religion. As for the "Roman,"⁹ does not Heidegger proceed, from Sein und Zeit on, with an ontologico-existential repetition and rehearsal of Christian motifs that at the same time are hollowed out and reduced to their originary possibility? A pre-Roman possibility, precisely? Did he not confide to Löwith, several years earlier, in 1921, that in order to assume the spiritual heritage that constitutes the facticity of his "I am," he ought to have said: "I am a 'Christian theologian'?" Which does not mean "Roman." To this we shall return.

(19) In its most abstract form, then, the aporia within which we are struggling would perhaps be the following: is revealability (Offenbarkeit) more originary than revelation (Offenbarung), and hence independent of all religion? Independent in the struc-

8. The Latin (even Roman) word used by Levinas, for example in *Du sacré au saint* [From the Sacred to the Holy] (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977) is, to be sure, only the translation of a Hebrew word (*kidouch*).

9. Cf., for example, M. Heidegger, *Andenken* (1943): "Poets, when they are in their being, are prophetic. But they are not 'prophets' in the Judaeo-Christian sense of the word. The 'prophets' of these religions do not restrict themselves to the anticipatory-founding word of the Sacred (*das vorausgründende Wort des Heiligen*). They immediately announce the god upon whom one can subsequently count as upon the certain guarantee of salvation in superterrestrial beatitude. The poetry of Hölderlin should not be disfigured with the 'religious' element of 'religion,' which remains the business of the Roman way of interpreting (*eine Sache der römischen Deutung*) the relations between humans and gods." The poet is not a "Seer" (*Seher*) nor a Diviner (*Wahrsager*). "The Sacred (*das Heilige*) that is uttered in poetic prediction only opens the time of an apparition of the gods and indicates the region where it resides (*die Ortschaft des Wohnens*) on this earth of man required by the destiny of history . . . His dream [the poet's] is divine, but it does not dream a god." (*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. IV, p. 114.)

More than twenty years later, in 1962, this protest is renewed against Rome, against the essentially Roman figure of religion. It brings together into a single configuration modern humanism, technics, politics and law. In the course of his trip to Greece, after visiting the orthodox monastery of Kaisariani, above Athens, Heidegger notes: "What the little church possesses that is Christian remains in harmony with ancient Greece, a pervasive spirit that does not bow before the theocratic thought seeped in canon law (*dem kirchenstaatlich-juristischen Denken*) of the Roman Church and its theology. On the site where today there is the convent, there was formerly a 'pagan' sanctuary (*ein "heidnisches" Heiligtum*) dedicated to Artemis" (*Aufenthalte, Séjours*, [Paris, Éditions du Rocher, 1989], French translation by F. Veizin slightly modified, p. 71).

Prior to this, when his journey brings him close to the island of Corfu—yet another island—Heidegger recalls that another island, Sicily, appeared to Goethe to be closer to Greece; and the same recollection associates in two phrases the "traits of a romanized, Italian (*römisch-italienischen*) Greece," seen in the "light of modern humanism," and the coming of the "machine age" (*ibid.*, p. 19). And since the island also figures our gathering-place < lieu d'instance >, let us not forget that for Heidegger, this Greek voyage remains above all a "sojourn" (*Aufenthalt*), a modest (*Scheu*) stopover < halte > in the vicinity of Delos, the visible or manifest, a meditation of unveiling via its name. Delos is also the "saintly" or "sacred" island (*die heilige Insel*); *ibid.*, p. 50).

tures of its experience and in the analytics relating to them? Is this not the place in which "reflecting faith" at least originates, if not this faith itself? Or rather, inversely, would the event of revelation have consisted in revealing revealability itself, and the origin of light, the originary light, the very invisibility of visibility? This is perhaps what the believer or the theologian might say here, in particular the Christian of originary Christendom, of that Urchristentum in the Lutheran tradition to which Heidegger acknowledges owing so much.

(20) Nocturnal light, therefore, more and more obscure. Let us step up the pace in order to finish: in view of a third place that could well have been more than archi-originary, the most anarchic and anarchivable place possible, not the island nor the Promised Land, but a certain desert, that which makes possible, opens, hollows or infinitizes the other. Ecstasy or existence of the most extreme abstraction. That which would orient here "in" this desert, without pathway and without interior, would still be the possibility of a religio and of a relegere, to be sure, but before the "link" of religare, problematic etymology and doubtless reconstructed, before the link between men as such or between man and the divinity of the god it would also be like the condition of the "link" reduced to its minimal semantic determination: the holding-back < halte > of scruple (religio), the restraint of shame, a certain *Verhaltenheit* as well, of which Heidegger speaks in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, the respect, the responsibility of repetition in the wager < gage > of decision or of affirmation (re-legere) which links up with itself in order to link up with the other. Even if it is called the social nexus, link to the other in general, this fiduciary "link" would precede all determinate community, all positive religion, every onto-anthropo-theological horizon. It would link pure singularities prior to any social or political determination, prior to all intersubjectivity, prior even to the opposition between the sacred (or the holy) and the profane. This can therefore resemble a desertification, the risk of which remains undeniable, but it can—on the contrary—also render possible precisely what it appears to threaten. The abstraction of the desert can thereby open the way to everything from which it withdraws. Whence the ambiguity or the duplicity of the religious trait or retreat, of its abstraction or of its subtraction. This deserted re-treat thus makes way for the repetition of that which will have given way precisely for that in whose name one would protest against it, against that which only resembles the void and the indeterminacy of mere abstraction.

Since everything has to be said in two words, let us give two names to the duplicity of these origins. For here origin is duplicity itself, the one and the other. Let us name these two sources, these two fountains or these two tracks that are still invisible in the desert. Let us lend them two names that are still "historical," there where a certain concept of history itself becomes inappropriate. To do this, let us refer—provisionally, I emphasize this, and for pedagogical or rhetorical reasons—first to the "messianic," and

second to the chora, as I have tried to do more minutely, more patiently and, I hope, more rigorously elsewhere.¹⁰

(21) First name: the messianic, or messianicity without messianism. This would be the opening to the future or to the coming of the other as the advent of justice, but without horizon of expectation and without prophetic prefiguration. The coming of the other can only emerge as a singular event when no anticipation sees it coming, when the other and death—and radical evil—can come as a surprise at any moment. Possibilities that both open and can always interrupt history, or at least the ordinary course of history. But this ordinary course is that of which philosophers, historians and often also the classical theoreticians of the revolution speak. Interrupting or tearing history itself apart, doing it by deciding, in a decision that can consist in letting the other come and that can take the apparently passive form of the other's decision: even there where it appears in itself, in me, the decision is moreover always that of the other, which does not exonerate me of responsibility. The messianic exposes itself to absolute surprise and, even if it always takes the phenomenal form of peace or of justice, it ought, exposing itself so abstractly, be prepared (waiting without awaiting itself) for the best as for the worst, the one never coming without opening the possibility of the other. At issue there is a "general structure of experience." This messianic dimension does not depend upon any messianism, it follows no determinate revelation, it belongs properly to no Abrahamic religion (even if I am obliged here, "among ourselves," for essential reasons of language and of place, of culture, of a provisional rhetoric and a historical strategy of which I will speak later, to continue giving it names marked by the Abrahamic religions).

(22) An invincible desire for justice is linked to this expectation. By definition, the latter is not and ought not to be certain of anything, either through knowledge, consciousness, conscience, foreseeability or any kind of programme as such. This abstract messianicity belongs from the very beginning to the experience of faith, of believing, of a credit that is irreducible to knowledge and of a trust that "founds" all relation to the other in testimony. This justice, which I distinguish from right, alone allows the hope, beyond all "messianisms," of a universalizable culture of singularities, a culture in which the abstract possibility of the impossible translation could nevertheless be announced. This justice inscribes itself in advance in the promise, in the act of faith or in the appeal to faith that inhabits every act of language and every address to the other. The universalizable culture of this faith, and not of another or before all others, alone permits a "rational" and universal discourse on the subject of "religion." This messianicity,

stripped of everything, as it should, this faith without dogma which makes its way through the risks of absolute night, cannot be contained in any traditional opposition, for example that between reason and mysticism. It is announced wherever, reflecting without flinching, a purely rational analysis brings the following paradox to light: that the foundation of law—law of the law, institution of the institution, origin of the constitution—is a "performative" event that cannot belong to the set that it founds, inaugurates or justifies. Such an event is unjustifiable within the logic of what it will have opened. It is the decision of the other in the undecidable. Henceforth reason ought to recognize there what Montaigne and Pascal call an undeniable "mystical foundation of authority." The mystical thus understood allies belief or credit, the fiduciary or the trustworthy, the secret (which here signifies "mystical") to foundation, to knowledge, we will later say also, to science as "doing," as theory, practice and theoretical practice—which is to say, to a faith, to performativity and to technoscientific or tele-technological performance. Wherever this foundation founds in foundering, wherever it steals away under the ground of what it founds, at the very instant when, losing itself thus in the desert, it loses the very trace of itself and the memory of a secret, "religion" can only begin and begin again: quasi-automatically, mechanically, machine-like, spontaneously. Spontaneously, which is to say, as the word indicates, both as the origin of what flows from the source, sponte sua, and with the automaticity of the machine. For the best and for the worst, without the slightest assurance or anthropo-theological horizon. Without this desert in the desert, there would be neither act of faith, nor promise, nor future, nor expectancy without expectation of death and of the other, nor relation to the singularity of the other. The chance of this desert in the desert (as of that which resembles to a fault, but without reducing itself to, that via negativa which makes its way from a Graeco-Judaeo-Christian tradition) is that in uprooting the tradition that bears it, in atheologizing it, this abstraction, without denying faith, liberates a universal rationality and the political democracy that cannot be dissociated from it.

(23) The second name (or first name prior to all naming), would be chora, such as Plato designates it in the *Timaeus*,¹¹ without being able to reappropriate it in a consistent self-interpretation. From the open interior of a corpus, of a system, of a language or a culture, chora would situate the abstract spacing, place itself, the place of absolute exteriority, but also the place of a bifurcation between two approaches to the desert. Bifurcation between a tradition of the "via negativa" which, in spite of or within its Christian act of birth, accords its possibility to a Greek—Platonic or Plotinian—tradition that persists until Heidegger and beyond: the thought of that which is beyond being (epekeina tes ousias). This Graeco-Abrahamic hybridization

10. See "Chora," in Derrida, *On the Name*, and *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) and "Force of Law," in this volume.

11. I must refer here to the reading of this text, in particular to the "political" reading of it, that I propose in "How to avoid speaking, demob," *Phoca*, and "soul to nom."

remains anthropo-theological. In the figures of it known to us, in its culture and in its history, its "idion" is not universalizable. It speaks solely at the borders or in view of the Middle-Eastern desert, at the source of monotheistic revelations and of Greece. It is there that we can try to determine the place where, on this island today, "we" persist and insist. If we insist, and we must for some time still, upon the names that are given us as our heritage, it is because, in respect of this borderline place, a new war of religions is redeploying as never before to this day, in an event that is at the same time both interior and exterior. It inscribes its seismic turbulence directly upon the fiduciary globality of the technoscientific, of the economic, of the political and of the juridical. It brings into play the latter's concepts of the political and of international right, of nationality, of the subjectivity of citizenry, of the sovereignty of states. These hegemonical concepts tend to reign over a world, but only from their finitude: the growing tension of their power is not incompatible, far from it, with their precariousness any more than with their perfectibility. The one can never do anything without recalling itself to the other.

(24) The surge <déferlement> of "Islam" will be neither understood nor answered as long as the exterior and interior of this borderline place have not been called into question; as long as one settles for an internal explanation (interior to the history of faith, of religion, of languages or cultures as such), as long as one does not define the passageway between this interior and all the apparently exterior dimensions (technoscientific, tele-biotechnological, which is to say also political and socioeconomic, etc.).

For, in addition to investigating the ontotheologico-political tradition that links Greek philosophy to the Abrahamic revelations, perhaps we must also submit to the ordeal of that which resists such interrogation, which will have always resisted, from within or as though from an exteriority that works and resists inside. Chora, the "ordeal of chora"¹² would be, at least according to the interpretation I believed justified in attempting, the name for place, a place name, and a rather singular one at that, for that spacing which, not allowing itself to be dominated by any theological, ontological or anthropological instance, without age, without history and more "ancient" than all oppositions (for example, that of sensible/intelligible), does not even announce itself as "beyond being" in accordance with a path of negation, a *via negativa*. As a result, chora remains absolutely impassible and heterogeneous to all the processes of historical revelation or of anthropo-theological experience, which at the very least suppose its abstraction. It will never have entered religion and will never permit itself to be sacralized, sanctified, humanized, theologized, cultivated, historicized. Radically heterogeneous to the safe and sound, to the holy and the sacred, it never admits of any indemnification. This cannot even be formulated in the present, for chora never presents itself as such. It

is neither Being, nor the Good, nor God, nor Man, nor History. It will always resist them, will have always been (and no future anterior, even, will have been able to reappropriate, inflect or reflect a chora without faith or law) the very place of an infinite resistance, of an infinitely impassible persistence <restance>: an utterly faceless other.

(25) Chora is nothing (no being, nothing present), but not the Nothing which in the anxiety of Dasein would still open the question of being. This Greek noun says in our memory that which is not reappropriable, even by our memory, even by our "Greek" memory; it says the immemoriality of a desert in the desert of which it is neither a threshold nor a mourning. The question remains open, and with it that of knowing whether this desert can be thought and left to announce itself "before" the desert that we know (that of the revelations and the retreats, of the lives and deaths of God, of all the figures of kenosis or of transcendence, of religio or of historical "religions"); or whether, "on the contrary," it is "from" this last desert that we can glimpse that which precedes the first <l'avant-premier>, what I call the desert in the desert. The indecisive oscillation, that reticence (epoché or *Verhaltenheit*) already alluded to above (between revelation and revealability, *Offenbarung* and *Offenbarkeit*, between event and possibility or virtuality of the event), must it not be respected for itself? Respect for this singular indecision or for this hyperbolic outbidding between two originarities, the order of the "revealed" and the order of the "revealable," is this not at once the chance of every responsible decision and of another "reflecting faith," of a new "tolerance"?

(26) Let us suppose it agreed upon, among ourselves, that all of us here are for "tolerance," even if we have not been assigned the mission of promoting it, practising it or founding it. We would be here to try to think what "tolerance" could henceforth be. I immediately place quotation marks around this word in order to abstract and extract it from its origins. And thereby to announce, through it, through the density of its history, a possibility that would not be solely Christian. For the concept of tolerance, *stricto sensu*, belongs first of all to a sort of Christian domesticity. It is literally, I mean behind this name, a secret of the Christian community. It was printed, emitted, transmitted and circulated in the name of the Christian faith and would hardly be without relation to the rise, it too Christian, of what Kant calls "reflecting faith"—and of pure morality as that which is distinctively Christian. The lesson of tolerance was first of all an exemplary lesson that the Christian deemed himself alone capable of giving to the world, even if he often had to learn it himself. In this respect, the French Enlightenment, *les Lumières*, was no less essentially Christian than the *Aufklärung*. When it treats of tolerance, Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* reserves a dual privilege for the Christian religion. On the one hand it is exemplarily tolerant; to be sure, it teaches tolerance better than any other religion, before every other religion. In short, a little in the manner of Kant, believe it or not, Voltaire seems to think that Christianity is the

12. See "Sauf le nom," p. 76. Translator's note: In the published English version, "l'épreuve de Khôra" is translated more idiomatically as "the test of Chora."

sole "moral" religion, since it is the first to feel itself obliged and capable of setting an example. Whence the ingenuity, and at times the inanity of those who sloganize Voltaire and rally behind his flag in the combat for critical modernity—and, far more seriously, for its future. For, on the other hand, the Voltairian lesson was addressed above all to Christians, "the most intolerant of all men."¹³ When Voltaire accuses the Christian religion and the Church, he invokes the lesson of originary Christianity, "the times of the first Christians," Jesus and the Apostles, betrayed by "the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion." The latter is "in all its ceremonies and in all its dogmas, the opposite of the religion of Jesus."¹⁴

Another "tolerance" would be in accord with the experience of the "desert in the desert"; it would respect the distance of infinite alterity as singularity. And this respect would still be religio, religio as scruple or reticence, distance, dissociation, disjunction, coming from the threshold of all religion in the link of repetition to itself, the threshold of every social or communitarian link.¹⁵

Before and after the logos which was in the beginning, before and after the Holy Sacrament, before and after the Holy Scriptures.

POST-SCRIPTUM

Crypts . . .

(27) [. . .] **Religion?** Here and now, this very day, if one were still supposed to *speak* of it, of religion, perhaps one could attempt to think it in *itself* or to devote oneself to this task. No doubt, but to try above all to *say* it and to *utter a verdict* concerning it, with the necessary rigour, which is to say, with the reticence, modesty, respect or fervour, in a word the scruple (*religio*) demanded at the very least by that which is or claims

13. Even if Voltaire responds to the question "What is tolerance?" by stating that "It is the prerogative of humanity," the example of excellence here, the most elevated inspiration of this "humanity" remains Christian: "Of all the religions, Christianity is without doubt that which ought to inspire the greatest tolerance, even if until now Christians have been the most intolerant of men" (*Philosophical Dictionary*, article "Tolerance").

The word "tolerance" thus conceals a story: it tells above all an intra-Christian history and experience. It delivers the message that Christians address to other Christians. Christians ("the most intolerant") are reminded, by a co-religionist and in a mode that is essentially co-religionist, of the word of Jesus and of the authentic Christianity at its origins. If one were not fearful of shocking too many people all at once, one could say that by their vehement anti-Christianity, by their opposition above all to the Roman Church, as much as by their declared preference, sometimes nostalgic, for primitive Christianity, Voltaire and Heidegger belong to the same tradition: proto-Catholic.

14. Voltaire, "Tolerance," *Philosophical Dictionary*.

15. As I have tried to do elsewhere (*Specters of Marx*, p. 23 ff.), I propose to think the condition of justice in relation to a certain sundering <*déliasion*>, in relation to the always-safe, always-to-be-saved possibility of this secret of disassociation, rather than through the bringing-together (*Versammlung*) towards which Heidegger retraces it, in his concern, doubtless legitimate in part, to extract *Dike* from the authority of *Ius*, which is to say, from its more recent ethico-judicial representations.

to be, in its essence, a religion. As its name indicates, it would be necessary, therefore, one would be tempted to conclude, to speak of this essence with a sort of *religio*-sity. In order not to introduce anything alien, leaving it thus intact, safe, *unscathed*. Unscathed in the experience of the unscathed that it will have wanted to be. Is not the unscathed <*l'indemne*>¹⁶ the very matter—the thing itself—of religion?

But no, on the contrary, someone will say. One would not be speaking *of* it if one were to speak *in its name*, if one were to settle for *reflecting* religion as in a mirror specularly, religiously. Moreover, someone else might say, or is it the same one, to break with it, even to suspend for an instant one's religious affiliation, has this not been the very resource, since time immemorial, of the most authentic faith or of the most originary sacredness? One must in any case take into account, if possible in an areligious, or even irreligious manner, what religion at present might *be*, as well as what is *said* and *done*, what *is happening* at this very moment, in the world, in history, *in its name*. Wherever religion can no longer reflect or at times assume or bear its name. And one should not say lightly, as though in passing, 'this very day,' "at this very moment" and "in the world," "in history," while forgetting what happens *there*, returning to or surprising *us*, still under the name of religion, even in the name of religion. What *happens to us there* concerns precisely the experience and radical interpretation of everything that these words are felt to mean: the unity of a "world" and of a "being-in-the-world," the concept of world or of history in its Western tradition (Christian or Graeco-Christian, extending to Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger), and no less that of *day* as well as that of the *present*. (Much later we will have to get around to scrutinizing these two motifs, each as enigmatic as the other: *presence* unscathed by the present, on the one hand, *and believing* unscathed by belief, on the other; or yet again: the sacrosanct, the safe and sound on the one side, *and faith*, trustworthiness or credit on the other.) Like others before, the new "wars of religion" are unleashed over the human earth (which is not the world) and struggle even today to control the sky *with finger and eye*: digital systems and virtually immediate panoptical visualization, "air space," telecommunications

16. *Indemnis*: that which has not suffered damage or prejudice, *damnum*; this latter word will have given in French "*dani*" ("au grand *dani*": to the detriment or displeasure of) and comes from *dap-no-m*, tied to *daps, dapis*, that is, to the sacrifice offered the Gods as ritual compensation. In this latter case, one could speak of *indemni-fication* and we will use this word here or there to designate both the process of compensation and the restitution, sometimes sacrificial, that *reconstitutes* purity intact, renders integrity safe and sound, restores cleanliness <*propreté*> and property unimpaired. This is indeed what the word "unscathed" <*indemne*> says: the pure, non-contaminated, untouched, the sacred and holy before all profanation, all wound, all offence, all lesion. It has often been chosen to translate *heilig* ("sacred, safe and sound, intact") in Heidegger. Since the word *heilig* will be at the centre of these reflections, we therefore had to elucidate here and now the use that we shall be making of the words "unscathed," "indemnity," "indemnification." In what follows, we shall associate them regularly with the words "immune," "immunity," "immunization," and above all, "auto-immunity."

satellites, information highways, concentration of capitalistic mediatic power — in three words: *cutious mots* —, *digital culture*, jet and TV without which there could be no religious manifestation today, for example no voyage or discourse of the Pope, no organized emanation <rayonnement> of Jewish, Christian or Muslim cults, whether 'fundamentalist'¹⁷ or not. Given this, the cyberspatialized or cyberspaced wars of religion have no stakes other than this determination of the "world," of "history," of the "day" and of the "present." The stakes certainly can remain implicit, insufficiently thematized, poorly articulated. By repressing them, on the other hand, many others can also be dissimulated or displaced. Which is to say, as is always the case with the topics of repression, inscribed in other places or other systems; this never occurs without symptoms and fantasies, without spectres (*phantasmata*) to be investigated. In both cases and according to both logics, we ought to take into account every *declared* stake in its greatest radicality as well as asking ourselves what the depths of such radicality might virtually encrypt, down to its very roots. The *declared* stakes already appear to be without limit: what is the "world," the "day," the "present" (hence, all of history, the earth, the humanity of man, the rights of man, the rights of man and of woman, the political and cultural organization of society, the difference between man, god and animal, the phenomenality of the day, the value or 'indemnity' of life, the right to life, the treatment of death, etc.)? What is the present, which is to say: what is history? time? being? being in its purity <*dans sa*

17. There is insufficient space to multiply in this regard the images or the indications, one could say the icons, of our time: the *organization*, *conception* (generative forces, structures and capital) as well as the *audiovisual representation* of cultic or socio-religious phenomena. In a digitalized 'cyberspace', prosthesis upon prosthesis, a heavenly glance, monstrous, bestial or divine, something like an eye of CNN, watches permanently: over Jerusalem and its three monotheisms, over the multiplicity, the unprecedented speed and scope of the moves of a Pope versed in televisual rhetoric (of which the last encyclical, *Evangelium vitae*, against abortion and euthanasia, for the sacredness or holiness of a life that is safe and sound—unscathed, *heilig*, holy—for its reproduction in conjugal love—sole immunity admitted, with priestly celibacy, against human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV)—is immediately transmitted, massively "marketed" and available on CD-ROM; everything down to the signs of presence in the mystery of the Eucharist is "cederomized"; over airborne pilgrim-ages to Mecca; over so many miracles transmitted live (most frequently, healings, which is to say, returns to the unscathed, *heilig*, holy, indemnifications) followed by commercials, before thousands in an American television studio; over the international and televisual diplomacy of the Dalai Lama, etc.

So remarkably adapted to the scale and the evolutions of global demography, so well adjusted to the technoscientific, economic and mediatic powers of our time, the power of all these phenomena to bear witness finds itself formidably intensified, at the same time as it is collected in a digitalized space by supersonic airplanes or by audiovisual antennae. The ether of religion will always have been hospitable to a certain spectral virtuality. Today, like the sublimity of the starry heavens at the bottom of our hearts, the "cederomized" "cyberspaced" religion also entails the accelerated and hypercapitalized relaunching of founding spectres. On CD-ROM, heavenly trajectories of satellites, jet, TV, e-mail or Internet networks. Actually or virtually universalizable, ultra-internationalizable, incarnated by new 'corporations' that are increasingly independent of the powers of states (democratic or not, it makes little difference at bottom, all of that has to be reconsidered, like the "globalatinity" of international law in its current state, which is to say, on the threshold of a process of accelerated and unpredictable transformation).

propriété — (that is, unscathed, safe, sacred, holy, *heilig*)? What of holiness or of sacredness? Are they the same thing? What of the divinity of God? How many meanings can one give to *theion*? Is this a good way to pose the question?

(28) **Religion?** *In the singular?* Perhaps, *may-be* (this should always remain possible) there is *something else*, of course, and other interests (economic, politico-military, etc.) behind the new "wars of religion," behind what presents itself under the name of religion, beyond what defends or attacks in its name, kills, kills itself or kills one another and for that invokes declared stakes, or in other words, names *indemnity* in the light of day. But inversely, if what is thus *happening to us*, as we said, often (but not always) assumes the figures of evil and of the worst in the unprecedented forms of an *atrocious* "war of religions," the latter in turn does not always speak its name. Because it is not certain that in addition to or in face of the most spectacular and most barbarous crimes of certain "fundamentalisms" (of the present or of the past), *other over-armed forces* are not *also* leading "wars of religion," albeit unavowed. Wars or military "interventions," led by the Judaeo-Christian West in the name of the best causes (of international law, democracy, the sovereignty of peoples, of nations or of states, even of humanitarian imperatives), are they not also, from a certain side, wars of religion? The hypothesis would not necessarily be defamatory, nor even very original, except in the eyes of those who hasten to believe that all these just causes are not only secular but *pure* of all religiosity. To determine a war of religion *as such*, one would have to be certain that one can delimit the religious. One would have to be certain that one can distinguish all the predicates of the religious (and, as we shall see, this is not easy; there are at least *two* families, two strata or sources that overlap, mingle, contaminate each another without ever merging; and just in case things are still too simple, one of the two is precisely the drive to remain unscathed, on the part of that which is allergic to contamination, *save by itself, auto-immunely*). One would have to dissociate the essential traits of the religious as such from those that establish, for example, the concepts of ethics, of the juridical, of the political or of the economic. And yet, nothing is more problematic than such a dissociation. The fundamental concepts that often permit us to isolate or to *pretend* to isolate the *political*—restricting ourselves to this particular circumscription—remain religious or in any case theologico-political. A single example. In one of the most rigorous attempts to isolate in its purity the sphere of the political (notably by separating it from the economic and the religious), in order to identify the political and the political enemy in wars of religion, such as the Crusades, Carl Schmitt was obliged to acknowledge that the ostensibly purely political categories to which he resorted were the product of a secularization or of a theologico-political heritage. And when he denounced the process of "depoliticization" or of

neutralization of the political that was underway, it was explicitly with respect to a European legal tradition that in his eyes doubtless remained indissociable from "our" thought of the political.¹⁸ Even supposing that one accepts such premises, the unprecedented forms of today's wars of religion could also imply radical challenges to our project of delimiting the political. They would then constitute a response to everything that our idea of democracy, for example, with all its associated juridical, ethical and political concepts, including those of the sovereign state, of the citizen-subject, of public and private space, etc., still entails that is religious, inherited in truth from a determinate religious stratum.

Henceforth, despite the ethical and political urgencies that do not permit the response to be put off, reflection upon the Latin noun "religion" will no longer be held for an academic exercise, a philological embellishment or an etymological luxury: in short, for an alibi destined to suspend judgement or decision, at best for another *epoché*.

(29) Religion, in the *singular*? Response: 'Religion is **the response**.' Is it not there, perhaps, that we must seek the beginning of a response? Assuming, that is, that one knows what *responding* means, and also *responsibility*. Assuming, that is, that one knows it—and believes in it. No response, indeed, without a principle of responsibility: one must respond to the other, before the other and for oneself. And no responsibility without a *given word*, a sworn faith <*foi jurée*>, without a pledge, without an oath, without some *sacrament* or *ius iurandum*. Before even envisaging the semantic history of testimony, of oaths, of the given word (a genealogy and interpretation that are indispensable to whomever hopes to think religion under its proper or secularized forms), before even recalling that some sort of "I promise the truth" is always at work, and some sort of "I make this commitment before the other from the moment that I address him, even and perhaps above all to commit perjury," we must formally take note of the fact that **we are already speaking Latin**. We make a point of this in order to recall that the world today speaks Latin (most often via Anglo-American) when it authorizes itself in the *name of religion*. Presupposed at the origin of all address, coming from the other to *whom it is also addressed*, the wager <*gageure*> of a sworn promise, taking immediately God as its witness, cannot not but have already, if one can put it this way, engendered God quasi-mechanically. *A priori* ineluctable, a descent of God *ex machina* would stage a transcendental addressing machine. One would thus have begun by posing, retrospectively, the absolute right of anteriority, the absolute "birthright" <*le droit*

18. Without even speaking of other difficulties and of other possible objections to the Schmittian theory of the political, and thus also of the religious. I take the liberty of referring here to *Politiques de l'amitié*, (Paris: Galilée, 1994; English trans. *Politics of Friendship*, London: Verso Books, 1997).

d'ainesse absolu - of a One who is not born. For in taking God as witness, even when he is not named in the most 'secular' <*laïque*> pledge of commitment, the oath cannot *not* produce, invoke or convoke him as already there, and therefore as unengendered and unengenderable, prior to being itself: unproducible. And absent in place. Production and reproduction of the unproducible absent in place. Everything begins with the presence of *that* absence. The "deaths of God," before Christianity, in it and beyond it, are only figures and episodes. The unengenderable thus re-engendered is the empty place. Without God, no absolute witness. No absolute witness to be taken as witness in testifying. But with God, a God that is present, the existence of a third (*terstis, testis*) that is absolute, all attestation becomes superfluous, insignificant or secondary. Testimony, which is to say, testament as well. In the irrepressible invoking of a witness, God would remain then one *name of the witness*, he would be *called* as witness, thus *named*, even if sometimes the named of this name remains unpronounceable, indeterminable, in short: unnameable in his very name; and even if he ought to remain absent, non-existent, and above all, in every sense of the word, unproducible. God: the witness as "nameable-unnameable," present-absent witness of every oath or of every possible pledge. As long as one supposes, *concesso non dato*, that religion has the slightest relation to what we thus call God, it would pertain not only to the general history of nomination, but, more strictly here, under its name of *religio*, to a history of the *sacramentum* and of the *testimonium*. It would *be* this history, it would merge with it. On the boat that brought us from Naples to Capri, I told myself that I would begin by recalling this sort of too luminous evidence, but I did not dare. I also told myself, silently, that one would blind oneself to the phenomenon called "of religion" or of the "return of the religious" *today* if one continued to oppose so naïvely Reason *and* Religion, Critique or Science *and* Religion, technoscientific Modernity *and* Religion. Supposing that what was at stake was to understand, would one understand anything about "what's-going-on-today-in-the-world-with-religion" (and why "in the world"? What is the "world"? What does such a presupposition involve?, etc.) if one continues to believe in this opposition, even in this incompatibility, which is to say, if one remains within a *certain* tradition of the Enlightenment, one of the many Enlightenment of the past three centuries (not of an *Aufklärung*, whose critical force is profoundly rooted in the Reformation), but yes, this light of Lights, of the *Lumières*, which traverses like a single ray a *certain* critical and anti-religious vigilance, anti-Judaeo-Christiano-Islamic, a *certain* filiation "Voltaire–Feuerbach–Marx–Nietzsche–Freud–(and even)–Heidegger"? Beyond this opposition and its determinate heritage (no less represented on the other side, that of religious authority), perhaps we might be able to try to "understand" how the imperturbable and interminable development of critical and technoscientific reason, far from

“Almost literally . . .” he says. As always, recourse to knowledge is temptation itself. Knowing is *temptation*, albeit in a somewhat more singular sense than believed when referring habitually (habitually, at least) to the Evil Genius or to some original sin. The temptation of knowing, the temptation of knowledge, is to believe not only that one knows what one knows (which wouldn’t be too serious), but also that one knows what knowledge is, that is, free, structurally, of belief or of **faith**—of the fiduciary or of trustworthiness. The temptation to believe in knowledge, here for example in the precious authority of Benveniste, can hardly be separated from a certain fear and trembling. Before what? Before a scholarship that is recognized, no doubt, and legitimate and respectable, but also before the confidence with which, authorizing himself without trembling through this authority, Benveniste (for example) proceeds with the cutting edge of assured distinction. For example, between the *proper* meaning and its other, the *literal* sense and its other, as though precisely *that itself* which is here in question (for example the response, responsibility or religion, etc.) did not arise, in a quasi-automatic, machine-like or mechanical manner, out of the hesitation, indecision and margins between the two ostensibly assured terms. *Scruple*, hesitation, indecision, reticence hence modesty <*pudeur*>, respect, *restraint* before that which should remain sacred, holy or safe: unscathed, immune)—this too is what is meant by *religio*. It is even the meaning that Benveniste believes obliged to retain with reference to the “proper and constant usages” of the word during the classical period.²⁰ Let us nevertheless cite this page of Benveniste while emphasizing the words “proper,” “literally,” an “almost literally” that is almost mind-boggling, and finally what is said to have “disappeared” and the “essential” that “remains.” The places to which we call attention situate in our eyes chasms over which a great scholar walks with tranquil step, as though he knew what he was talking about, while at the same time acknowledging that at bottom he really doesn’t know very much. And all this *goes on*, as we can see, in the enigmatic Latin derivation, in the “prehistory of Greek and Latin.” All that *goes on* in what can no longer be isolated as a *religious vocabulary*, which is to say, in a relationship of right to religion, in the experience of the promise or of the indemnificatory offering, of a word committing a future to the present but concerning an event that is past: ‘I promise you that it happened.’ What happened? Who, to be precise? A son, yours. How beautiful to have an example. Religion, nothing less:

20. *Ibid.*, p. 521. For example, “This is where the expression *religiosus* ‘to have scruples,’ comes from. . . . This usage is constant during the classical period. . . . In *animus religiosus*, a hesitation that holds back, a scruple that prevents, and not a sentiment that guides an action or that invites one to practice a cult. It seems to us that this meaning, demonstrated by an ancient usage beyond the slightest ambiguity, imposes a single interpretation for *religio* that which *U. vossius* . . . in *de religione christiana* . . .”

Together with *spondeo*, we must consider *re-spondeo*. The *proper* meaning of *respondeo* and the relation with *spondeo* emerge *literally* from a dialogue of Plautus (*Captivi*, 899). The parasite Ergasilus brings Hegion good news: his son, long disappeared, is about to return. Hegion *promises* Ergasilus to feed him all his days, *if what he says is true*. And the latter *commits himself* in turn:

898 [. . .] sponden tu istud?—Spondeo.

899 At ego tuum tibi aduenisse filium respondeo.

“Is this a *promise*?—It’s a *promise*.—And I, for my part, promise you that your son has arrived.”

This dialogue is constructed according to a legal formula: a *sponsio* by the one, a *re-sponsio* by the other, forms of a security that are henceforth reciprocal: “I guarantee you, in return, that your son has really arrived.”

This exchange of guarantees (cf. our expression *answer for* . . .) gives rise to the meaning, already well established in Latin, “respond.” *Respondeo*, *responsum*, is said of the interpreters of the gods, of priests, notably of the haruspices, *giving a promise in return for the offering*, depositing a security in return for a gift; it is the “response” of an oracle, of a priest. This explains a legal usage of the verb: *respondere de iure*, “to give a legal consultation.” The jurist, with his competence, guarantees the value of the opinion he gives.

Let us note a symmetrical Germanic expression: old engl. *and-swaru* ‘response’ (engl. answer), compared to the got. *swaran* ‘to swear, pronounce solemn words’: it is *almost literally respondeo*.

Thus we can determine precisely, in the prehistory of Greek and of Latin, the meaning of a term that is of the *greatest importance in religious vocabulary*, and the value that is derived from the root **spend* with respect to other verbs that indicate offering in general.

In Latin, *an important part of the initial distinction has disappeared, but the essential remains* and this is what determines the juridical notion of *sponsio* on the one hand, and on the other, the link with the Greek concept of *spondé*.²¹

(32) But religion does not follow the movement of **faith** any more necessarily than the latter rushes towards faith in God. For if the concept of “religion” implies an institution that is separable, identifiable, circumscribable, tied through its letter to the Roman *ius*, its essential relation both to faith and to God is anything but self-evident. When we speak, **we Europeans**, so ordinarily and so confusedly today about a “return of the religious,” what do we thereby name? To what do we refer?

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 475–26. Only the foreign words and the expression ‘answer for’ are emphasized by Benveniste.

The “religious,” the religiosity that is vaguely associated with the experience of the sacredness of the divine, of the holy, of the saved or of the unscathed (*heilig*)—is it religion? In what and to what extent does a “sworn faith,” a belief have to be *committed* or *engaged*? Inversely, not every sworn faith, given word, trustworthiness, trust or confidence in general is necessarily inscribed in a “religion,” even if the latter does mark the convergence of two experiences that are generally held to be equally religious:

1. the experience of *belief*, on the one hand (believing or credit, the fiduciary or the trustworthy in the act of faith, fidelity, the appeal to blind confidence, the testimonial that is always beyond proof, demonstrative reason, intuition); and
2. the experience of the unscathed, of *sacredness* or of *holiness*, on the other?

These two veins (or two strata or two sources) of the religious should be distinguished from one another. They can doubtless be associated with each other and certain of their possible co-implications analysed, but they should never be confused or reduced to one another as is almost always done. In principle, it is possible to sanctify, to sacralize the unscathed or to maintain oneself *in the presence* of the sacrosanct in various ways without bringing into play an act of belief, if at least belief, faith or fidelity signifies here acquiescing to the testimony of the other—of the *utterly other* who is inaccessible in its absolute source. And there where every other is utterly other *<où tout autre est tout autre>*. Conversely, if it carries beyond the presence of what would offer itself to be seen, touched, proven, the acquiescence of trust still does not in itself necessarily involve the sacred. (In this context two points deserve consideration: first, the distinction proposed by Levinas between the sacred and the holy; we shall do that elsewhere; secondly, the necessity for these two heterogeneous sources of religion to mingle their waters, if one can put it that way, without ever, it seems to us, amounting simply to the same.)

33) We met, thus, at Capri, **we Europeans**, assigned to languages (Italian, Spanish, German, French) in which the same word, *religion*, should mean, or so we thought, the same thing. As for the trustworthiness of this word, we shared our presupposition with Benveniste. The latter seems in effect to believe himself capable of recognizing and isolating, in the article on *sponsio* that we evoked a moment ago, what he refers to as “religious vocabulary.” But everything remains problematic in this respect. How can discourses, or rather, as was just suggested, “discursive practices,” be articulated and made to cooperate in attempting to take the measure of the question, “What is religion?”

“What is . . . ?” which is to say, *on the one hand*, what is it in its *essence*? And *on the other*, what *is* it (present indicative) at present? What is it doing, what is being done with it at present, today, today in the world? So many ways of insinuating, in each of these words—*being, essence, present, world*—a response into the question. So many ways of imposing the answer. Of pre-imposing it or of prescribing it *as* religion. There we might have, perhaps, a pre-definition: however little may be known of religion *in the singular*, we do know that it is always a response and responsibility that it is always a response and responsibility that is prescribed, not chosen freely in an act of pure and abstractly autonomous will. There is no doubt that it implies freedom, will and responsibility, but let us try to think this; will and freedom *without autonomy*. Whether it is a question of sacredness, sacrificiality or of faith, the other makes the law, the law is other: to give ourselves back, and up, to the other. To every other and to the utterly other.

The said “discursive practices” would respond to several types of programme:

1. Assuring oneself of a provenance by **etymologies**. The best illustration would be given by the divergence concerning the *two possible etymological sources* of the word *religio*: (a) *relegere*, from *legere* (“harvest, gather”): Ciceronian tradition continued by W. Otto, J.-B. Hofmann, Benveniste; (b) *religare*, from *ligare* (“to tie, bind”). This tradition would go from Lactantius and Tertullian to Kobbert, Ernout-Meillet, Pauly-Wissowa. In addition to the fact that etymology never provides a law and only provides material for thinking on the condition that it allows itself to be thought as well, we shall attempt later to define the implication or tendency *<charge> common to the two sources* of meaning thus distinguished. Beyond a case of simple synonyms, the two semantic sources perhaps overlap. They would even repeat one another not far from what in truth would be the origin of repetition, which is to say, the division of the same.
2. The search for historico-semantic **filiations** or **genealogies** would determine an immense field, with which the meaning of the word is put to the test of historical transformations and of institutional structures: history and anthropology of religions, in the style of Nietzsche, for example, as well as in that of Benveniste when he holds “Indo-European institutions” as “witnesses” to the history of meaning or of an etymology—which in itself, however, proves nothing about the effective use of a word.
3. An analysis above all concerned with **pragmatic** and functional effects, more structural and also more political, would not hesitate to investigate the usages or applications of the lexical resources, where, in the face of new regularities, of unusual recurrences, of unprecedented contexts, discourse liberates words and meaning from all archaic memory and from all supposed origins.

These three biases seem, from different points of view, legitimate. But even if they sound, as I believe they do, to irrefutable imperatives, my provisional hypothesis (which I advance all the more prudently and timidly for not being able to justify it efficiently in the limited space and time available) is that here, in Capri, the last type ought to dominate. It should not exclude the others—that would lead to too many contradictions—but it should privilege the signs of what in the world, *today*, singularly, the use of the word “religion” as well as experience of “religion” associated with the word, there where no memory and no history could suffice to announce or certify it, at least not at first sight. I would have had therefore to invent an operation, a recursive machine, if one prefers, whose economy not only does justice, in the space and time available, to these three demands, to each of the imperatives that we would at least, to be irrefutable, but which would also organize the hierarchy and the dynamics. At a certain speed, at a rhythm given within the narrow limits <available>.

Etymologies, filiations, genealogies, pragmatics. We will not be able to undertake here all the analyses required by distinctions that are indispensable but rarely respected or practised. There are many of them (religion/faith, belief; religion/piety; religion/cult; religion/theology; religion/theology; religion/ontotheology; or yet again, religious/divine—mortal or immortal; religious/sacred—saved—unscathed—immune—*heilig*). But among them, before or after them, we will have to test the quasi-transcendental privilege we believe ourselves obliged to maintain at the distinction between, *on the one hand*, the experience of belief (trust, trustworthiness, confidence, faith, the credit accorded the *good faith of the utterly other*—the experience of witnessing) and, *on the other*, the experience of sacredness, holiness, of the unscathed that is safe and sound (*heilig*, holy). These come from two distinct sources or foci. “Religion” figures their *ellipse* because it both apprehends the two foci but also sometimes shrouds their irreducible duality in a manner precisely that is secret and *reticent*.

In any case, the history of the word ‘religion’ should in principle forbid every non-Christian from using the name “religion,” in order to recognize in it what “we” would designate, identify and isolate there. Why add here this qualification of “non-Christian”? In other words, why should the concept of religion be solely for a Christian? Why, in any case, does the question deserve to be posed and the hypothesis taken seriously? Benveniste also recalls that there is no “common” Indo-European term for what we call “religion.” The Indo-Europeans did not conceive of a “separate institution” what Benveniste, for his part, calls “the omnipresent reality that is religion.” Even today, wherever such a “separate institution” is not recognized, the word “religion” is inadequate. There has not always been, therefore, nor will there always and everywhere, nor will there always and everywhere (“with

humans” or elsewhere) be *something*, a thing that is *one and identifiable*, identical with itself, which, whether religious or irreligious, all agree to call “religion.” And yet, one tells oneself, **one still must respond**. Within the Latin sphere, the origin of *religio* was the theme of challenges that in truth were interminable. Between two readings or two lessons, therefore, two provenances: on the one hand, supported by texts of Cicero, *relegere*, what would seem to be the avowed formal and semantic filiation: bringing together in order to return and begin again; whence *religio*, scrupulous attention, respect, patience, even modesty, shame or piety—and, on the other hand (Lactantius and Tertullian) *religare*, etymology “invented by Christians,” as Benveniste says,²² and linking religion to the *link*, precisely, to obligation,

22. *Ibid.*, p. 516 ff. The Indo-European vocabulary does not dispose of any “common term” for “religion” and it is in “the nature itself of this notion not to lend itself to a single and constant appellation.” Correlatively, we would have considerable difficulty in discovering, as such, what one would retrospectively be tempted to identify under this name, which is to say, an institutional reality resembling what we call “religion.” We would in any case have difficulty in finding anything of that order in the form of a socially separable entity. Moreover, when Benveniste proposes to study solely *two terms*, Greek and Latin, which, he says, “can pass for equivalents of ‘religion,’” we ought for our part to underscore two significant traits, two paradoxes as well, even two logical scandals:

1. Benveniste presupposes thus an assured meaning of the word “religion,” since he authorizes himself to identify its “equivalents.” However, it seems to me that he at no point thematizes or problematizes this pre-comprehension or this presupposition. Nothing permits one to authorize the hypothesis that in his eyes the “Christian” meaning provides here the guiding reference, since, as he himself says, “the interpretation by *religare* (‘bond, obligation’) . . . invented by Christians [is] historically false.”
2. On the other hand, when, after the Greek word *threskeia* (“cult and piety, ritual observance,” and much later “religion”), Benveniste retains—and this is the other term of the pair—the word *religio*, it is only as an “equivalent” (which could hardly mean identical) to “religion.” We find ourselves confronted by a paradoxical situation that describes very well, at an interval of one page, the double and disconcerting use that Benveniste makes, deliberately or not, of the word “equivalent”—which we emphasize thus:
 - (a) “We shall retain solely two terms [*threskeia* and *religio*] which, one in Greek and the other in Latin, can pass for equivalents of ‘religion’” (p. 517). Here, then, are two words that can pass, in short, for equivalents of one of them, which itself, on the following page, is said not to have any equivalent in the world, not at least in “Western languages,” which would render it “infinitely more important in all respects”!
 - (b) “We now come to the second term, infinitely more important in all respects: it is the Latin *religio*, which remains, in all Western languages, the sole and constant word, for which no *equivalent* or substitute has ever been able to impose itself” (p. 518; emphasis added). It is a “proper meaning” (attested to by Cicero), and it is the “proper and constant usages” (pp. 519, 521) that Benveniste intends to identify for this word which is in short an equivalent (among others, but without equivalent!) for that which cannot be designed in short by anything but itself, which is to say, by an equivalent without equivalent.

At bottom, is this not the least deficient definition of religion? In any case, what Benveniste’s formal or logical inconsistency designates is perhaps the most faithful reflection, even the most theatrical symptom of what actually occurred in the “history of humanity,” and what we here call the “globalization” of “religion.”

ment, and hence to obligation, to debt, etc., between men or between man and At issue would still be, in an entirely different place, on an entirely different time, a division of the source and of the meaning (and we are not yet done with dualization). This debate on the *two sources*, etymological but also “religious,” of the word *religio* is without doubt fascinating and passionate (it is related to the question itself, in so far as one of the two disputed sources has been claimed to be Christian). But whatever its interest or necessity might be, such a divergence is for us limited in scope. In the first place, because nothing gets decided at the source, as we have just suggested.²³ Secondly, because the two competing etymologies can be traced to the same, and in a certain manner to the possibility of repetition, which produces the same as much as it confirms it. In both cases (*re-legere* or *re-ligare*), what is at issue is indeed a persistent bond that bonds itself first and foremost to itself. What is at issue is indeed a reunion <*rassemblement*>, a re-assembling, a re-lecting. A resistance or a reaction to dis-junction. To absolute alterity. “Recollect—*recolleger*,” is moreover the translation proposed by Benveniste,²⁴ who glosses it as: “return for a new choice, return to revise a previous operation,” whence the sense of “scruple,” but also of choice, of reading and of election, of intelligence, since there can be no selectivity without the bonds of collectivity and recollection. Finally, in the bond to the self, marked by the enigmatic “re-,” that one should perhaps try to reconstrue the passage between these different meanings (*re-legere*, *re-ligare*, *re-pondeo*, in which Benveniste analyses what he also calls, elsewhere, the “relation” *re-pondeo*). All the categories of which we could make use to translate the common meaning of the “re-” would be inadequate, and first of all because they can only introduce into the definition what has to be defined, as though it already had been defined. For example, in pretending to know what is the “proper meaning,” Benveniste says, of words such as repetition, resumption, renewal, reflection, relation, recollection—in short, religion, “scruple,” response and responsibility. Whatever side one takes in this debate, it is to the ellipse of these double Latin terms that the entire modern (geo-theologico-political) problematic of the “return of the religious” refers. Whoever would not acknowledge either the legitimacy of this double foci or the Christian prevalence that has imposed itself globally within the history of Latinity would have to refuse the very premises of such a debate.²⁵ And with that, any attempt to *think* a situation in which, as in times past, there will perhaps

no longer exist, just as once it did not yet exist, any “common Indo-European term for ‘religion.’”²⁶

(35) But, **one still must respond**. And without waiting. Without waiting too long. **In the beginning**, Maurizio Ferraris at the Hotel Lutétia. “I need,” he tells me, “we need a theme for this meeting in Capri.” In a whisper, yet without whispering, almost without hesitating, machine-like, I respond, “Religion.” Why? From where did this come to me, and yes, mechanically? Once the theme was agreed upon, discussions were improvised—between two walks at night towards Faraglione, which can be seen in the distance, between Vesuvius and Capri. (Jensen refers to it, Faraglione, and Gradiva returns perhaps, the ghost of light, the shadowless shadow of noon, *das Mittagsgespenst*, more beautiful than all the great ghosts of the island, better “habituated” than they, as she puts it, “to being dead,” and for a long time.) I had thus subsequently to justify an answer to the question, why I had named, all of a sudden, machine-like, “religion”? And this justification would have become, today, my response to the question of *religion*. Of religion today. For, of course, it would have been madness itself to have proposed to treat religion *itself*, in general or in its essence; rather the troubled question, the common concern is: “What is going on today with it, with what is designated thus? What is going on there? What is happening and so badly? What is happening under this old name? What in the world is suddenly emerging or re-emerging under this appellation?” Of course, this form of question cannot be separated from the more fundamental one (on the essence, the concept and the history of religion *itself*, and of what is called “religion”). But its approach, first of all, should have been, according to me, more direct, global, massive and immediate, spontaneous, without defence, almost in the style of a philosopher obliged to issue a brief press release. The response that I gave almost without hesitation to Ferraris must have come back to me from afar, resonating from an alchemist’s cavern, in whose depths the word was a precipitate. “Religion,” a word dictated by who knows what or whom: by everyone perhaps, by the reading of the nightly news televised on an international network, by the everyman we believe we see, by the state of the world, by the whole of what is as it goes (God, its synonym in short, or History as such, and so on). Today once again, today finally, today otherwise, the great question would still be religion and what some hastily call its “return.” To say things in this way and to believe that one knows of what one speaks, would be to begin by no longer understanding anything at all: as though religion, the question of religion was *what succeeds in returning*, that which all of a sudden would come as a surprise to what one believes one knows: man, the earth, the world,

²³ See Section 33, points 1 and 2.

²⁴ Benveniste, *Indo-European Language*, p. 521.

²⁵ Something that Heidegger doubtless would have done, given that in his view, the claimed “return of the religious” would signify nothing but the persistence of a Roman deconstruction of “religion.” This would go together with a dominant juridical system and concept of the state that themselves could be inseparable from the “machine age” (see Section 29, and note 25).

²⁶ Benveniste, *Indo-European Language*, p. 516.

...telling, thus under the rubric of anthropology, of history or of every other branch of human science or of philosophy, even of the "philosophy of religion." First and foremost to avoid. It is typical and examples of it could be multiplied. If there is a question of religion, it ought no longer to be a "question-of-religion." Nor simply a response to this question. We shall see why and wherein the question of religion is part of all the question of the question. Of the origins and the borders of the question—as of the response. "The thing" tends thus to drop out of sight as soon as one believes oneself able to master it under the title of a discipline, a knowledge or a philosophy. And yet, despite the impossibility of the task, a demand is addressed to it should be delivered <tenir>, done, or left to "deliver itself" <se tenir>—this course, in a few traits, in a limited number of words. Economy dictated by publishing exigencies. But why, always the question of number, where there ten commandments, subsequently multiplied by so and so many? Where here would be the ellipsis we are enjoined to say in keeping it silent. Where the reticence? And what the ellipsis, the silent figure and the "keeping quiet" of reticence were precisely, we come to that later, religion? We are asked, in the collective name of several European publishers, to state a position in a few pages on religion, and that does not appear monstrous today, when a serious treatise on religion would demand the construction of new Libraries of France and of the universe, even if, not believing that it is thinking anything new, one would content oneself with remembering, archiving, classifying, taking note in a memoir, of what one believes one already knows. Faith and knowledge: between believing one knows and knowing one believes, an alternative is not a game. Let us choose, then, I told myself, a quasi-aphoristic form as one chooses a machine, the least pernicious machine to treat of religion in a certain number of pages: 25 or a few more, we were given; and, let us say, arbitrarily, to de-cipher or anagrammatize the 25, 52 very unequal sequences, as many notes dispersed in a non-identified field, a field that is nonetheless already overreaching, like a desert about which one isn't sure if it is sterile or not, or like a field of ruins and of mines and of wells and of caves and of cenotaphs and of scattered seedings; but a non-identified field, not even like a world (the Christian history of this word, "world," already puts us on guard; the world is not the universe, the cosmos, nor the earth).

In the beginning, the title will have been my first aphorism. It condenses two additional titles, entering into a contract with them. We are committed to deform them, dragging them elsewhere while developing if not their negative or their unconscious, at least the logic of what they might have let speak about religion independently of the meanings they wanted to say. In Capri, at the beginning of the journey, improvising, I spoke of light and in the name of the island (of the necessity

of dating, that is, of signing a finite meeting in its time and in its space, from the singularity of a place, of a Latin place: Capri, which is not Delos, nor Patmos nor Athens, nor Jerusalem, nor Rome). I had insisted on the light, the relation of all religion to fire and to light. There is the light of revelation and the light of the Enlightenment. Light, *phos*, revelation, orient and origin of our religions, photographic instantaneity. Question, demand: in view of the Enlightenment of today and of tomorrow, in the light of other Enlightenments (*Aufklärung*, *Lumières*, *illuminismo*) how to think religion in the daylight of today without breaking with the philosophical tradition? In our "modernity," the said tradition demarcates itself in an exemplary manner—it will have to be shown why—in basically Latin titles that name religion. First of all in a book by Kant, in the epoch and in the spirit of the *Aufklärung*, if not of the *Lumières*: *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) was also a book on radical evil. (What of reason and of radical evil today? And if the "return of the religious" was not without relation to the return—modern or postmodern, for once—of certain phenomena, at least, of radical evil? Does radical evil destroy or institute the possibility of religion?) Then, the book of Bergson, that great Judaeo-Christian, *The Two Sources of Morality and of Religion* (1932), between the two world wars and on the eve of events of which one knows that one does not yet know how to think them, and to which no religion, no religious institution in the world remained foreign or survived *unscathed, immune, safe and sound*. In both cases, was the issue not, as today, that of thinking religion, the possibility of religion, and hence of its interminable and ineluctable return?

(37) "To think religion?" you say. As though such a project would not dissolve the very question in advance. To hold that religion is properly thinkable, and even if thinking is neither seeing, nor knowing, nor conceiving, is still to hold it in advance in respect; thus, over short or long, the affair is decided. Already in speaking of these notes as of a machine, I have once again been overcome by a desire for economy, for concision: by the desire to draw, in order to be quick, the famous conclusion of the *Two Sources* . . . towards another place, another discourse, other argumentative stakes. The latter could always be—I do not exclude it—a hijacked translation, or a rather free formalization. The book's concluding words are memorable: "the effort required to accomplish, down to our refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods." What would happen if Bergson were made to say something entirely different from what he believed he wanted to say but what perhaps was surreptitiously dictated to him? What would happen if he had, as though despite himself, left a place or a passage for a sort of symptomatic retraction, following the very movement of hesitation, indecision and of scruple, of that turning back (*retractare*, says Cicero to define the religious act or

ing) in which perhaps the *double source*—the double stratum or the double root—of *religio* consists? Were such the case, then that hypothesis would receive perhaps a doubly *mechanical* form. “Mechanical” would have to be understood here a meaning that is rather “mystical.” Mystical or secret because contradictory and abstracting, both inaccessible, disconcerting and familiar, *unheimlich*, uncanny to the very extent that this machinality, this ineluctable automatization produces and produces what *at the same time detaches from and reattaches to* the family (*heimisch*, homely), to the familiar, to the domestic, to the proper, to the *oikos* of the biological and of the economic, to the *ethos*, to the place of dwelling. This quasi-simultaneous automaticity, as irreflective as a reflex, repeats again and again the subtle movement of abstraction and attraction that *at the same time detaches and reattaches to* the country, the idiom, the literal or to everything confusedly collected under the terms “identity” or “identitarian”; in two words, that which at the same time ex-propriates and re-appropriates, de-racinates and re-enracinates, *ex-propriates* according to a logic that we will later have to formalize, that of auto-immune auto-indemnification.

Before speaking so calmly of the “return of the religious” today, two things have to be explained in one. Each time what is involved is a machine, a tele-machine:

The said “return of the religious,” which is to say the spread of a complex and overdetermined phenomenon, is not a simple *return*, for its globality and its figures (tele-techno-media-scientific, capitalistic and politico-economic) remain original and unprecedented. And it is not a *simple return of the religious*, for it comport, as one of its two tendencies, a radical destruction of the religious (*stricto sensu*, the Roman and the statist, like everything that incarnates the European political or juridical order against which all non-Christian “fundamentalisms” or “integrism” are waging war, to be sure, but also certain forms of Protestant or even Catholic orthodoxy). It must be said as well that in face of them, another self-destructive affirmation of religion, I would dare to call it auto-immune, could well be at work in all the projects known as “pacifist” and economic, “catholic” or not, which appeal to universal fraternization, to the reconciliation of “men, sons of the same God,” and above all when these brothers belong to the monotheistic tradition of the Abrahamic religions. It will always be difficult extricating this pacifying movement from a *double horizon* (the one hiding or dividing the other):

(a) The *kenotic* horizon of the death of God and the anthropological re-immanentization (the rights of man and of *human life* above all obligation towards absolute and transcendent truth of commitment before the divine

order: an Abraham who would henceforth refuse to sacrifice his son and would no longer envisage what was always madness). When one hears the official representatives of the religious hierarchy, beginning with the most mediatic and most Latinoglobal and cederomized of all, the Pope, speak of this sort of ecumenical reconciliation, one also hears (not only, to be sure, but also) the announcement or reminder of a certain “death of God.” Sometimes one even has the impression that he speaks only of that—which speaks through his mouth. And that another death of God comes to haunt the Passion that animates him. But what’s the difference, one will say. Indeed.

(b) This declaration of peace can also, pursuing war by other means, dissimulate a *pacifying* gesture, in the most European-colonial sense possible. Inasmuch as it comes from Rome, as is often the case, it would try first, and first in Europe, upon Europe, to impose surreptitiously a discourse, a culture, a politics and a right, to impose them on all the other monotheist religions, including the non-Catholic Christian religions. Beyond Europe, through the same schemes and the same juridico-theologico-political culture, the aim would be to impose, in the name of peace, a globalatinization. The latter become henceforth European-Anglo-American in its idiom, as we said above. The task seems all the more urgent and problematic (incalculable calculation of religion for our times) as the demographic disproportion will not cease henceforth to threaten external hegemony, leaving the latter no strategems other than internalization. The field of this war or of this pacification is henceforth without limit: all the religions, their centres of authority, the religious cultures, states, nations or ethnic groups that they represent have unequal access, to be sure, but often one that is immediate and potentially without limit, to the same world market. They are at the same time producers, actors and sought-after consumers, at times exploiters, at times victims. <At stake in the struggle> is thus the access to world (transnational or trans-state) networks of telecommunication and of tele-technoscience. Henceforth religion “in the singular” accompanies and even precedes the critical and tele-technoscientific reason, it watches over it as its shadow. It is its wake, the shadow of light itself, the pledge of faith, the guarantee of trustworthiness, the fiduciary experience presupposed by all production of shared knowledge, the testimonial performativity engaged in all technoscientific performance as in the entire capitalistic economy indissociable from it.

2. The same movement that renders indissociable religion and tele-technoscientific reason in its most critical aspect reacts inevitably *to itself*. It secretes its own antidote but also its own power of auto-immunity. We are here in a space where all

self-protection of the unscathed, of the safe and sound, of the sacred (*heilig*, holy) must protect itself against its own protection, its own police, its own power of rejection, in short against its own, which is to say, against its own immunity. It is this terrifying but fatal logic of the *auto-immunity of the unscathed* that will always associate Science and Religion.²⁷

On the one hand, the 'lights' and Enlightenment of tele-technoscientific critique and reason can only suppose trustworthiness. They are obliged to put into play an irreducible "faith," that of a "social bond" or of a "sworn faith," of a testimony ("I promise to tell you the truth beyond all proof and all theoretical demonstration, believe me, etc."), that is, of a performative of promising at work even in lying or perjury and without which no address to the other would be possible. Without the performative experience of this elementary act of faith, there would neither be 'social bond' nor address of the other, nor any performativity in general: neither convention, nor institution, nor constitution, nor sovereign state, nor law, nor above all, here, that structural performativity of the productive performance that binds from its very inception the knowledge of the scientific community to doing, and science to technics. If we regularly speak here of technoscience, it is not in order to cede to a contemporary stereotype, but in order to recall that, more clearly than ever before, we now know that the scientific act is, through and through, a practical intervention and a technical performativity in the very energy of its essence. And for this very reason it plays with place, putting distances and speeds to work. It delocalizes, removes or brings close, actualizes or virtualizes, accelerates or decelerates. But wherever this tele-technoscientific critique develops, it brings into play and confirms the fiduciary credit of an elementary faith which is, at least in its essence

27. The "immune" (*immunis*) is freed or exempted from the charges, the service, the taxes, the obligations (*munus*, root of the common of community). This freedom or this exemption was subsequently transported into the domains of constitutional or international law (parliamentary or diplomatic immunity), but it also belongs to the history of the Christian Church and to canon law; the immunity of temples also involved the inviolability of the asylum that could be found there (Voltaire indignantly attacked this "immunity of temples" as a "revolting example" of "contempt for the laws" and of "ecclesiastical ambition"); Urban VIII created a congregation of ecclesiastical immunity: against taxes and military service, against common justice (privilege designated as that of the *for*) and against police searches, etc. It is especially in the domain of biology that the lexical resources of immunity have developed their authority. The immunitary reaction protects the "indemnity" of the body proper in producing antibodies against foreign antigens. As for the process of auto-immunization, which interests us particularly here, it consists for a living organism, as is well known and in short, of protecting itself against itself by destroying its own immune system. As the phenomenon of these antibodies is extended to a broader zone of pathology and as one resorts increasingly to the positive virtues of immuno-depressants destined to limit the mechanisms of rejection and to facilitate the tolerance of certain organ transplants, we feel ourselves authorized to speak of a sort of general logic of auto-immunization. It seems indispensable to us today for thinking the relations between faith and knowledge, religion and science, as well as the duplicity of sources in general.

or calling, religious (the elementary condition, the milieu of the religious if not religion itself). We speak of trust and of credit or of trustworthiness in order to underscore that this elementary act of faith also underlies the essentially economic and capitalistic rationality of the tele-technoscientific. No calculation, no assurance will ever be able to reduce its ultimate necessity, that of the testimonial signature (whose theory is not necessarily a theory of the subject, of the person or of the ego, conscious or unconscious). To take note of this is to give oneself the means of understanding why, in principle, today, there is no incompatibility, in the said "return of the religious," between the "fundamentalisms," the "integrism" or their "politics" and, on the other hand, rationality, which is to say, the tele-techno-capitalistico-scientific fiduciarity, in all of its mediatic and globalizing dimensions. This rationality of the said "fundamentalisms" can also be hypercritical²⁸ and not recoil before what can sometimes resemble a deconstructive radicalization of the critical gesture. As for the phenomena of ignorance, of irrationality or of "obscurantism" that are so often emphasized and denounced, so easily and with good reason, they are often residues, surface effects, the reactive slag of immunitary, indemnificatory or auto-immunitary reactivity. They mask a deep structure or rather (but also at the same time) a fear of self, a reaction against that with which it is partially linked: the dislocation, expropriation, delocalization, deracination, disidiomatization and dis-possession (in all their dimensions, particularly sexual—*phallic*) that the tele-techno-scientific machine does not fail to produce. The reactivity of resentment opposes this movement to itself by dividing it. It *indemnifies* itself thus in a movement that is at once immunitary and auto-immune. The reaction to the machine is as automatic (and thus machinal) as life itself. Such an internal splitting, which opens distance, is also peculiar or "proper" to religion, appropriating religion for the "proper" (inasmuch as it is also the *unscathed*: *heilig*, holy, sacred, saved, immune and so on), appropriating religious indemnification to all forms of property, from the linguistic idiom in its "letter," to blood and soil, to the family and to the nation. This internal and immediate reactivity, at once immunitary and auto-immune, can alone account for what will be called the religious resurgence in its double and contradictory phenomenon. The word *resurgence* <*déferlement*>

28. This is testified to by certain phenomena, at least, of "fundamentalism" or of "integrism," in particular in "Islamism," which represents today the most powerful example of such fundamentalisms as measured by the scale of global demography. The most evident characteristics are too well known to dwell on (fanaticism, obscurantism, lethal violence, terrorism, oppression of women, etc.). But it is often forgotten that, notably in its ties to the Arab world, and through all the forms of brutal immunitary and indemnificatory reactivity against a techno-economical modernity to which a long history prevents it from adapting, this "Islamism" also develops a radical critique of what ties democracy today, in its limits, in its concept and its effective power, to the market and to the tele-technoscientific reason that dominates it.

imposes itself upon us to suggest the redoubling of a wave that appropriates even that to which, enfolding itself, it seems to be opposed—and simultaneously gets carried away itself, sometimes in terror and terrorism, taking with it precisely that which protects it, its own “antibodies.” Allying itself with the enemy, hospitable to the antigens, bearing away the other with itself, this resurgence grows and swells with the power of the adversary. From the shores of whatever island, one doesn’t know, here is the resurgence we believe we see coming, without doubt, in its spontaneous swelling, irresistibly automatic. But we believe we see it coming without any horizon. We are no longer certain that we see and that there is a future where we see it coming. The future tolerates neither foresight nor providence. It is therefore in it, rather, caught and surprised by this resurgence, that “we” in truth are carried away—and it is this that we would like to *think*, if this word can still be used here.

Religion today allies itself with tele-technoscience, to which it reacts with all its forces. It is, *on the one hand*, globalization; it produces, weds, exploits the capital and knowledge of tele-mediatisation; neither the trips and global spectacularizing of the Pope, nor the interstate dimensions of the “Rushdie affair,” nor planetary terrorism would otherwise be possible, at this rhythm—and we could multiply such indications *ad infinitum*. But, *on the other hand*, it reacts immediately, *simultaneously*, declaring war against that which gives it this new power only at the cost of dislodging it from all its proper places, *in truth from place itself*, from the *taking-place* of its truth. It conducts a terrible war against that which protects it only by threatening it, according to this double and contradictory structure: immunitary and auto-immunitary. The relation between these two motions or these two sources is ineluctable, and therefore automatic and mechanical, between one which has the form of the machine (mechanization, automatization, machination or *mechane*), and the other, that of living spontaneity, of the *unscathed* property of life, that is to say, of another (claimed) self-determination. But the auto-immunitary haunts the community and its system of immunitary survival like the hyperbole of its own possibility. Nothing in *common*, nothing immune, safe and sound, *heilig* and holy, nothing unscathed in the most autonomous living present without a risk of auto-immunity. As always, the risk charges itself twice, the same finite risk. Two times rather than one: with a menace and with a chance. In two words, it must take charge of—one could also say: take in trust—the *possibility* of that **radical evil** without which good would be for nothing.²⁹

29. *Translator's note*, “sans lequel on ne saurait bien faire” in addition to the ambiguity of the more literal meaning of this phrase, (a) “without which nothing good could be done,” and (b) “without which nothing could be done well,” the French expression here recalls the colloquial idiom “ça commence à bien faire: y en a marre,” which adds the ironic connotation of “that’s enough!” to the dialectic of good and evil.

... and pomegranates

(Having posed these premises or general definitions, and given the diminishing space available, we shall cast the fifteen final propositions in a form that is even more granulated, grainy, disseminated, aphoristic, discontinuous, juxtapositional, dogmatic, indicative or virtual, economic; in a word, more than ever telegraphic.)

(38) Of a discourse to come—on the to-come and repetition. Axiom: no to-come without heritage and the possibility of *repeating*. No to-come without some sort of *iterability*, at least in the form of a covenant with oneself and *confirmation* of the originary *yes*. No to-come without some sort of messianic memory and promise, of a messianicity older than all religion, more originary than all messianism. No discourse or address of the other without the possibility of an elementary promise. Perjury and broken promises require the *same* possibility. No promise, therefore, without the promise of a confirmation of the *yes*. This *yes* will have implied and will always imply the trustworthiness and fidelity of a faith. No faith, therefore, nor future without everything technical, automatic, machine-like supposed by iterability. In this sense, the technical is the possibility of faith, indeed its very chance. A chance that entails the greatest risk, even the menace of **radical evil**. Otherwise, that of which it is the chance would not be faith but rather programme or proof, predictability or providence, pure knowledge and pure know-how, which is to say annulment of the future. Instead of opposing them, as is almost always done, they ought to be thought together, as *one and the same possibility*: the machine-like and faith, and the same holds for the machinal and all the values entailed in the sacrosanct (*heilig*, holy, safe and sound, unscathed, intact, immune, free, vital, fecund, fertile, strong, and above all, as we will soon see, “swollen”)—more precisely in the sacrosanctity of the **phallic** effect.

(39) This double value, is it not, for example, that signified by a phallus in its differentiability, or rather by the **phallic**, the effect of the phallus, which is not necessarily the property of man? Is it not the phenomenon, the *phainesthai*, the day of the *phallus*?—but also, by virtue of the law of iterability or of duplication that can *detach* it from its pure and proper presence, it is not also its *phantasma*, in Greek, its ghost, its spectre, its double or its fetish? Is it not the *colossal automaticity* of the erection (the maximum of life to be kept unscathed, indemnified, immune and safe, sacrosanct), but also and precisely by virtue of its reflex character, that which is most mechanical, most separable from the life it represents? The phallic—is it not also, as distinct from the penis and once detached from the body, the marionette that is erected, exhibited, fetishized and paraded in processions? Is this not where one grasps, virtuality of virtuality, the power or potency of a logic powerful

enough to account for (*logon didonai*)—counting on and calculating the incalculable—everything that binds the tele-technoscientific machine, this enemy of life in the service of life, to the very source and resource of the religious: to faith in the most living as dead and automatically *sur-viving*, resuscitated in its spectral *phantasma*, the holy, safe and sound, unscathed, immune, sacred—in a word, everything that translates *heilig*? Matrix, once again, of a cult or of a culture of the generalized fetish, of an unlimited fetishism, of a fetishizing adoration of the Thing itself. One could, without being arbitrary, read, select, connect everything in the semantic genealogy of the unscathed—“saintly, sacred, safe and sound, *heilig, holy*”—that speaks of force, **life-force**, fertility, growth, augmentation, and above all *swelling*, in the spontaneity of erection or of pregnancy.³⁰ To be brief, it does not suffice to

30. Let us worry <Egrenons> the premises here of a work to come. Let them be drawn first, and once again, from that rich chapter of Benveniste's *Indo-European Language and Society*, addressing the Sacred and the Holy after having opportunely recalled several “methodological difficulties.” It is true that to us these “difficulties” seem even more serious and more fundamental than to Benveniste—even if he is willing to acknowledge the risk of “seeing the object of study dissolve bit by bit” (p. 445). Maintaining the cult of “original meaning” (religion itself, and the “sacred”), Benveniste identifies, through the enormously complex network of idioms, filiations and etymologies studied, the recurrent and insistent theme of the “fertility” of the “strong,” of the “powerful,” in particular in the figure or the imaginal scheme of *swelling*.

We may be permitted the following long citation, while referring the reader to the article itself for the rest: “The adjective *sura* does not signify merely ‘strong’; it is also a qualification of a number of gods, of several heroes including Zarathustra, and of certain notions such as ‘dawn.’ Here, comparison with related forms of the same root can lead us to the original meaning. The Vedic verb *su-sva* signifies ‘to swell, grow,’ implying ‘force’ and ‘prosperity’; whence *sura-*, ‘strong, valiant.’ The same conceptual relation joins in Greek the present *kuein*, ‘to be pregnant, carry in the womb,’ the noun *kúma*, ‘swelling (of waves), flood,’ on the one hand, and *kúros*, ‘force, sovereignty,’ *kúrios*, ‘sovereign,’ on the other. This juxtaposition brings out the initial identity of the meaning of ‘swell’ and, in each of the three languages, a specific evolution . . . In Indo-Iranian no less than in Greek the meaning evolves from ‘swelling’ to ‘strength’ or ‘prosperity’ . . . Between *gr. kuéo*, ‘to be pregnant,’ and *kúrios*, ‘sovereign,’ between *Av. sura*, ‘strong,’ and *spénta*, relations are thus restored which, little by little, make more precise the singular origin of the notion of ‘sacred’ . . . The holy and sacred character is thus defined through a notion of exuberant and fecund force, capable of bringing to life, of causing the productions of nature to burst forth” (pp. 448–49).

One could also inscribe under the title of the “two sources” the remarkable fact, often emphasized by Benveniste, that “almost every-where” there corresponds to the “notion of the ‘sacred’ not one but two distinct terms.” Benveniste analyses them, notably in German (the Gothic *weihs*, “consecrated,” and the Runic *hailag*, *ger. heilig*) in Latin *sacer* and *sanctus*, in Greek *hágios* and *hierós*. At the origin of the German *heilig*, the Gothic adjective *hails* translates the idea of “soundness, health, physical integrity,” translation of the Greek *hygies*, *hygiainon*, “in good health.” The corresponding verbal forms signify “render or become healthy, heal.” (One might situate here—although Benveniste does not—the necessity for every religion or all sacralization also to involve healing—*heilen*—health, hail or promise of a cure—*cura*, *Sorge*—horizon of redemption, of the restoration of the unscathed, of indemnification). The same for the English, “holy,” neighbour of “whole” (“entire, intact,” therefore “safe, saved, unscathed in its integrity, immune”). The Gothic *hails*, “in good health, in possession of physical integrity,” carries with it a wish, as does the Greek *khairé*, “hail!” Benveniste underscores its “religious value”: “Whoever possesses ‘hail’—*le salut*—, that is, whose physical integrity is intact, is also capable of conferring ‘hail.’ “To be intact” is the luck that one wishes, predicts or expects. It is natural to have seen in such perfect integrity a divine grace, a sacred meaning. By its very nature, divinity possesses the gift of integrity, of being hail, of luck, and can impart it to human beings. . . . In the course of history the primitive Gothic term *weihs* was replaced by *hail*, *hailag*,” (pp. 441–42).

recall here all the phallic cults and their well-known phenomena at the core of so many religions. The three “great monotheisms” have inscribed covenants or founding promises in an *ordeal of the unscathed* that is always a circumcision, be it “exterior or interior,” literal or, as was said before Saint Paul, in Judaism itself, “circumcision of the heart.” And this would perhaps be the place to enquire why, in the most lethal explosions of a violence that is inevitably ethnico-religious—why, on all sides, women in particular are singled out as victims (not “only” of murders, but also of the rapes and mutilations that precede and accompany them).

(40) The religion of the living—is this not a tautology? Absolute imperative, holy law, law of salvation: saving the living intact, the unscathed, the safe and sound (*heilig*) that has the right to absolute respect, restraint, modesty. Whence the necessity of an enormous task: reconstituting the chain of analogous motifs in the sacrosanctifying attitude or intentionality, in relation to that which is, should remain or should be allowed to be what it is (*heilig*, living, strong and fertile, erect and fecund: safe, whole, unscathed, immune, sacred, holy and so on). Salvation and health. Such an intentional attitude bears several names of the same family: respect, modesty, restraint, inhibition, *Achtung* (Kant), *Scheu*, *Verhaltenheit*, *Gelassenheit* (Heidegger), restraint or *holding-back* <*halte*> in general.³¹ The poles, themes, causes are not the same (the law, sacredness, holiness, the good to come and so on), but the movements appear quite analogous in the way they relate to them, *suspending* themselves, and *in truth interrupting themselves*. All of them

31. Elsewhere, in a seminar, I attempt to reflect in a more sustained manner on this value of the hold and on its lexical ramifications, in particular surrounding the use of *halten* by Heidegger. In addition to *Aufenthalt* (stopover, ethos, often involving the *heilig*), *Verhaltenheit* (modesty or respect, scruple, reserve or silent discretion that suspends itself in and as reticence) would be only one example, albeit a major one for what concerns us here and taking into account the role played by this concept in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* with respect to the “last god,” or the “other god,” the god who comes or the god who passes. I refer here, in particular regarding this last theme, to the recent study by Jean-François Courtine, “Les traces et le passage de Dieu dans les *Beiträge zur Philosophie* de Martin Heidegger” (“The traces and passing of God in Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*”), in *Archivio di filosofia*, 1994, nos. 1–3. When he refers to Heidegger’s insistence on modern nihilism as “uprooting” (*Entwurzelung*), Courtine rightly associates it with what is said of—and always implicitly against—the *Gestell* and all “technical-instrumental manipulation of beings” (*Machenschaft*), with which he even associates “a critique of the idea of creation directed primarily against Christianity” (p. 528). This seems to go in the direction of the hypothesis developed above: Heidegger directs suspicion at the same time against “religion” (especially Christian-Roman), against belief, and against that in technics which menaces the safe and sound, the unscathed or the immune, the sacrosanct (*heilig*). The interest of his “position” consists, simplifying considerably, in the way it tends to take its distance <*se déprendre*> from both religion and technics, or rather from what is called *Gestell* and *Machenschaft*, as though they were the same. The same, yes, as what we are trying to say here as well, modestly and in our fashion. And the same neither excludes nor effaces any of the differential folds. But once this same possibility is recognized or thought, it is not certain that it calls only for a Heideggerian “response,” nor that the latter is alien or exterior to this same possibility, be it the logic of the unscathed, or the auto-immune indemnification that we are trying to approach here. We shall return to this later in this text and elsewhere.

involve or mark a restraint <halte>. Perhaps they constitute a sort of universal, not "religion" as such, but a universal structure of religiosity. For if they are not in themselves properly religious, they always open the possibility of the religious without ever being able to limit or restrain it. This possibility remains divided. On the one hand, to be sure, it is respectful or inhibited abstention before what remains sacred mystery, and what ought to remain intact or inaccessible, like the mystical-immunity of a secret. But in thus holding back, the same halting also opens an access without mediation or representation, hence not without an intuitive violence, to that which remains unscathed. That is another dimension of the mystical. Such a universal allows or promises perhaps the global translation of *religio*, that is: scruple, respect, restraint, *Verhaltenheit*, reserve, *Scheu*, shame, discretion, *Gelassenheit*, etc.—all stop short of that which must or should remain safe and sound, intact, unscathed, before what must be allowed to be what it ought to be, sometimes even at the cost of sacrificing itself and in prayer: the other. Such a universal, such an "existential" universality, could have provided at least the mediation of a *scheme* to the globalatinization of *religio*. Or in any case, to its possibility.

What would then be required is, in the same movement, to account for a double postulation: *on the one hand*, the absolute respect of **life**, the "Thou shalt not kill" (at least thy neighbour, if not the living in general), the "fundamentalist" prohibition of abortion, of artificial insemination, of performative intervention in the genetic potential, even to the ends of gene therapy, etc.; *and on the other* (without even speaking of wars of religion, of their terrorism and their killings) the no less universal sacrificial vocation. It was not so long ago that this still involved, here and there, human **sacrifice**, even in the "great monotheisms." It always involves sacrifice of the living, more than ever in large-scale breeding and slaughtering, in the fishing or hunting industries, in animal experimentation. Be it said in passing that certain ecologists and certain vegetarians—at least to the extent that they believe themselves to have remained pure of (unscathed by) all carnivorousness, even symbolic³²—would be the only "religious" persons of the time to respect one of these two pure sources of religion and indeed to bear responsibility for what could well be the future of a religion. What are the *mechanics* of this double postulation (respect of life and sacrificiality)? I refer to it as *mechanics* because it reproduces, with the regularity of a technique, the instance of the non-living or, if you prefer, of the dead in the living. It was also the automation according to the phallic effect of which we spoke above. It was the marionette, the dead machine yet more than living, the spec-

tral fantasy of the dead as the principle of life and of sur-vival <*sur-vie*>. This mechanical principle is apparently very simple: life has absolute value only if it is worth *more than* life. And hence only in so far as it mourns, becoming itself in the labour of infinite mourning, in the indemnification of a spectrality without limit. It is sacred, holy, infinitely respectable only in the name of what is worth more than it and what is not restricted to the naturalness of the bio-zoological (sacrificeable)—although true sacrifice ought to sacrifice not only "natural" life, called "animal" or "biological," but also that which is worth more than so-called natural life. Thus, respect of life in the discourses of religion as such concerns "human life" only in so far as it bears witness, in some manner, to the infinite transcendence of that which is worth more than it (divinity, the sacrosanctness of the law).³³ The price of human life, which is to say, of anthropo-theological life, the price of what ought to remain safe (*heilig*, sacred, safe and sound, unscathed, immune), as the absolute price, the price of what ought to inspire respect, modesty, reticence, this price is priceless. It corresponds to what Kant calls the dignity (*Würdigkeit*) of the end in itself, of the rational finite being, of absolute value beyond all comparative market price (*Marktpreis*). This dignity of life can only subsist beyond the present living being. Whence, transcendence, fetishism and spectrality; whence, the religiosity of religion. This excess above and beyond the living, whose life only has absolute value by being worth more than life, more than itself—this, in short, is what opens the space of death that is linked to the automaton (exemplarily "phallic"), to technics, the machine, the prosthesis: in a word, to the dimensions of auto-immune and self-sacrificial supplementarity, to this death-drive that is silently at work in every community, every *auto-co-immunity*, constituting it as such in its iterability, its heritage, its spectral tradition. Community as *com-mon auto-immunity*: no community <is possible> that would not cultivate its own auto-immunity, a principle of sacrificial self-destruction ruining the principle of self-protection (that of maintaining its self-integrity intact), and this in view of some sort of invisible and spectral sur-vival. This self-contesting attestation keeps the auto-immune community alive, which is to say, open to something other and more than itself: the other, the future, death, freedom, the coming or the love of the other, the space and time of a spectralizing messianicity beyond all messianism. It is there that the possibility of religion persists: the *religious* bond (scrupulous, respectful, modest, reticent, inhibited) between the value of life, its absolute "dignity," and the theological machine, the "machine for making gods."³⁴

33. Concerning the association and disassociation of these two values (*sacer* and *sanctus*), we refer below to Benveniste and to Levinas.

34. *Translator's note*: Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Breerton, with the assistance of W. Horstall Carter (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), p. 31.

32. That is, of what in Western cultures remains sacrificial, up to and including its industrial, sacrificial and "carno-phallogo-centric" implementation. On this latter concept, I take the liberty of referring to "Eating Well, or the calculation of the subject," in Jacques Derrida, *Events — Interviews, 1974–94*, ed. Deborah Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 275–87.

(41) Religion, as a response that is both ambiguous and ambi-valent <à double détente et à double entente> is thus an ellipsis: the ellipsis of **sacrifice**. Is a religion imaginable without sacrifice and without prayer? The sign through which Heidegger believes ontotheology can be recognized is when the relation to the absolute Being or to the supreme Cause has freed itself of both, thereby losing access to sacrificial offering no less than to prayer. But there as well, two sources: the individual law, the *double bind*, also the dual foci, the ellipsis or originary duplicity of religion, consists therein, that the law of the unscathed, the salvation of the safe, the humble respect of that which is sacrosanct (*heilig, holy*) *both requires and excludes* sacrifice, which is to say, the indemnification of the unscathed, the price of immunity. Hence: auto-immunization and the sacrifice of sacrifice. The latter always represents the same movement, the price to pay for not injuring or wronging the absolute other. **Violence** of sacrifice in the name of non-violence. Absolute respect enjoins first and foremost sacrifice of self, of one's most precious interest. If Kant speaks of the "holiness" of the moral law, it is while explicitly holding a discourse on "sacrifice," which is to say, on another instantiation of religion "within the limits of reason *alone*": the Christian religion as the only "moral" religion. Self-sacrifice thus sacrifices the most proper in the service of the most proper. As though *pure* reason, in a process of auto-immune indemnification, could only oppose religion as such to a religion or *pure* faith to this or that belief.

(42) In our "wars of religion," **violence** has two ages. The one, already discussed above, appears "contemporary," in sync or in step with the hypersophistication of military tele-technology—of "digital" and cyberspaced culture. The other is a "new archaic violence," if one can put it that way. It counters the first and everything it represents. Revenge. Resorting, in fact, to the same resources of mediatic power, it *reverts* (according to the return, the resource, the repristination and the law of internal and autoimmune reactivity we are trying to formalize here) as closely as possible to the body proper and to the premachinal living being. In any case, to its desire and to its phantasm. Revenge is taken against the decorporalizing and expropriating machine by resorting—reverting—to bare hands, to the sexual organs or to primitive tools, often to weapons other than firearms <*l'arme blanche*>. What is referred to as "killings" and "atrocities"—words never used in "clean" or "proper" wars, where, precisely, the dead are no longer counted (guided or "intelligent" missiles directed at entire cities, for instance)—is here supplanted by tortures, beheadings and mutilations of all sorts. What is involved is always avowed vengeance, often declared as **sexual** revenge: rapes, mutilated genitals or severed hands, corpses exhibited, heads paraded, as not to long ago in France, impaled on the end of stakes (phallic processions of "natural religion.") This is the case, for example,

but it is only an example, in Algeria today, in the name of Islam, invoked by both belligerent parties, each in its own way. These are also symptoms of a reactive and negative recourse, the vengeance of the body proper against an expropriatory and delocalizing tele-technoscience, identified with the globality of the market, with military-capitalistic hegemony, with the globalatinization of the European democratic model, in its double form: secular and religious. Whence—another figure of double origin—the foreseeable alliance of the worst effects of fanaticism, dogmatism or irrationalist obscurantism with hypercritical acumen and incisive analysis of the hegemonies and the models of the adversary (globalatinization, religion that does not speak its name, ethnocentrism putting on, as always, a show of "universalism," market-driven science and technology, democratic rhetoric, "humanitarian" strategy or "keeping the peace" by means of peace-keeping forces, while never counting the dead of Rwanda, for instance, in the same manner as those of the United States of America or of Europe). This archaic and ostensibly more savage radicalization of 'religious' violence claims, in the name of "religion," to allow the living community to rediscover its roots, its place, its body and its idiom intact (unscathed, safe, pure, proper). It spreads death and unleashes self-destruction in a desperate (auto-immune) gesture that attacks the blood of its own body: as though thereby to eradicate uprootedness and reappropriate the sacredness of life safe and sound. Double root, double uprootedness, double eradication.

(43) Double rape. A *new cruelty* would thus ally, in wars that are also wars of religion, the most advanced technoscientific calculability with a reactive savagery that would like to attack the body proper directly, the **sexual** thing that can be raped, mutilated or simply denied, desexualized—yet another form of the same violence. Is it possible to speak today of this double rape, to speak of it in a way that wouldn't be too foolish, uninformed or inane, while "ignoring" "psychoanalysis"? To ignore psychoanalysis can be done in a thousand ways, sometimes through extensive psychoanalytic knowledge that remains culturally disassociated. Psychoanalysis is ignored when it is not integrated into the most powerful discourses today on right, morality, politics, but also on science, philosophy, theology, etc. There are a thousand ways of avoiding such consistent integration, even in the institutional milieu of psychoanalysis. No doubt, "psychoanalysis" (we have to proceed more and more quickly) is receding in the West; it never broke out, never really crossed the borders of a part of "old Europe." This "fact" is a legitimate part of the configuration of phenomena, signs, symptoms that we are questioning here under the title of "religion." How can one invoke a new Enlightenment in order to account for this "return of the religious" without bringing into play at least some sort of logic of the unconscious? Without bringing it to bear on the question of radical evil and working out

the reaction to radical evil that is at the centre of Freudian thought? This question can no longer be separated from many others: the repetition-compulsion, the "death-drive," the difference between "material truth" and "historical truth" that opposes itself upon Freud with respect to "religion," precisely, and that works itself out above all in closet proximity to an interminable **Jewish question**. It is true that psychoanalytic knowledge can in turn uproot and reawaken faith by opening itself to a new space of testimoniality, to a new instance of attestation, to a new experience of the symptom and of truth. This new space would have to be also, although not exclusively, legal and political. We shall have to return to this.

(4) We are constantly trying to think the interconnectedness, albeit otherwise, of knowledge *and* faith, technoscience *and* religious belief, calculation *and* the sacred. In the process we have not ceased to encounter the alliance, holy or not, of the calculable and the incalculable. As well as that of the immunerable and of the number, of the binary and of the digital. Demographic calculation, for instance, today concerns *one* of the aspects, as least, of the "religious question" in its geopolitical dimension. As to the future of a religion, the question of number concerns as much the quantity of "populations" as the living indemnity of "peoples." This does not merely signify that the religious factor has to be taken into account, but that the manner in which the faithful are counted must be changed in an age of globalization. Whether it is "exemplary" or not, the **Jewish question** continues to be a rather good example (sample, particular case) for future elaboration of this demographic-religious problematic. In truth, this question of *numbers* obsesses, as is well known, the Holy Scriptures and the monotheisms. When they feel themselves threatened by an **expropriative and delocalizing** tele-technoscience, "peoples" also fear new forms of invasion. They are terrified by alien "populations," whose growth as well as presence, indirect or virtual—but as such, all the more oppressive—becomes incalculable. New ways of counting, therefore. There is more than one way of interpreting the unheard-of survival of the small "Jewish people" and the global extension of its religion, single source of the two monotheisms which share in a certain domination of the world and of which, in dignity at least, it is the equal. There are a thousand ways of interpreting its resistance to attempts at extermination as well as to a demographic disproportion, the like of which is not known. But what will come of this survival the day (already arrived, perhaps) when globalization will be saturated? Then, "globalization," a term so frequently encountered in American discourse,³⁵ will perhaps no longer allow the surface of the human earth

to be segmented into micro-climates, those historical, cultural, political micro-zones, little Europe and the Middle East, in which the Jewish people had such great difficulty surviving and bearing witness to its faith. "I understand Judaism as the possibility of giving the Bible a context, of keeping this book readable," says Levinas. Does not the globalization of demographic reality and calculation render the probability of such a "context" weaker than ever and as threatening for survival as the worst, the radical evil of the "final solution"? "God is the future," says Levinas also—while Heidegger sees the "last god" announcing himself in the every absence of future: "The last god: his occurring (*Wesung*) is found in the hint (*im Wink*), in the onset of an arrival still outstanding (*dem Anfall und Ausbleib der Ankunft*), as well as in the flight of the gods that are past and of their hidden metamorphosis."³⁶

This question is perhaps the most grave and most urgent for the state and the nations of Israel, but it concerns also all the Jews, and doubtless also, if less obviously, all the Christians in the world. Not at all Muslims today. And to this day, this is a fundamental difference between the three original "great monotheisms."

(45) Is there not always another *place* of dispersion? Where the source today divides itself again, like *the same* dissociating itself between faith and knowledge? The original reactivity to an **expropriative and delocalizing** tele-technoscience must respond to at least two figures. The latter are superimposed upon one another, they relay or replace each other, producing in truth at the very place of the emplacement nothing but indemnifying and auto-immune supplementarity:

1. Violent sundering <*arrachement*>, to be sure, from the radicality of roots (*Entwürzelung*, Heidegger would say; we cited him above) and from all forms of originary *physis*, from all the supposed resources of a force held to be authentically generative, sacred, unscathed, "safe and sound" (*heilig*): ethnic identity, descent, family, nation, blood and soil, proper name, proper idiom, proper culture and memory.
2. But also, more than ever, the counter-fetishism of the same desire inverted, the animist relation to the tele-technoscientific machine, which then becomes a machine of evil, and of radical evil, but a machine to be manipulated as much as to be exorcised. Because this evil is to be domesticated and because one increasingly *uses* artifacts and prostheses of which one is totally ignorant, in a growing disproportion between knowledge and know-how, the space of such technical experience tends to become more animistic, magical, mystical. The spectral

36. *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 256, French translation and cited by J.-E. Courtine, "Les traces et le passage de Dieu," p. 533. On a certain question of the future, Judaism and Jewishness, I permit myself to refer to *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 9-63.

35. *Translator's note*: Although Derrida uses the English word "globalisation," here, elsewhere he consistently uses the French term "mondialisation" and the neologism "mondialisationisation," which have been translated throughout as "globalization" and "globalizationisation."

aspect of this experience persists and then tends to become—in proportion to this disproportion, one might say—increasingly **primitive and archaic**. So much so that its rejection, no less than its apparent appropriation, can assume the form of a religiosity that is both structural and invasive. A certain ecologist spirit can participate in this. (But a distinction must be drawn here between a vague ecologist ideology and ecological discourses and politics that are often both competent and rigorous.) Never in the history of humanity, it would seem, has the disproportion between scientific incompetence and manipulatory competence been as serious. It is not even measurable any longer with respect to machines that are used everyday, with a mastery that is taken for granted and whose proximity is ever closer, more interior, more domestic. To be sure, in the recent past every soldier did not *know* how his firearm functioned although he *knew* very well how to use it. Yesterday, all the drivers of automobiles or travellers in a train did not always know very well how “it works.” But their relative incompetence stands in no common (quantitative) measure nor in any (qualitative) analogy with that which today characterizes the relationship of the major part of humanity to the machines by which they live or with which they strive to live in daily familiarity. Who is capable of explaining scientifically to children how telephones function today (by undersea cables or by satellite), and the same is true of television, fax, computer, electronic mail, CD-ROMS, magnetic cards, jet planes, the distribution of nuclear energy, scanners, echography, etc.?

46) The same religiosity is obliged to ally the reactivity of the **primitive and archaic** return, as we have already said, *both* to obscurantist dogmatism *and* to hypercritical vigilance. The machines it combats by striving to appropriate them are also machines for destroying historical tradition. They can displace the traditional structures of national citizenship, they tend to efface both the borders of the state and the distinctive properties of languages. As a result, the religious reaction (rejection and assimilation, introjection and incorporation, impossible indemnification and mourning) normally follows two avenues that compete with each other and are apparently antithetical. Both of them, however, can as easily oppose or support a “democratic” tradition: *either* the fervent return to national citizenship (patriotism of the home in all its forms, affection for the nation-state, awakening of nationalism or of ethnocentrism, most often allied with Churches or religious authorities), *or*, on the contrary, a protest that is universal, cosmopolitan or ecumenical: “Ecologists, humanists, believers of all countries, unite in an International of anti-tele-technologism!” What is involved here, moreover, is an International that—and it is the singularity of our time—can only develop through the networks of combats, using the means of the adversary. At the same speed against an adver-

sary that in truth is the same. The same <but> double, which is to say, what is called the contemporary in the blatant anachrony of its dislocation. Auto-immune indemnification. This is why these “contemporary” movements are obliged to search for their salvation (the safe and sound as the sacrosanct), as well as their health in the paradox of a new alliance between the tele-technoscientific and the **two** sources of religion (the unscathed, *heilig, holy*, on the one hand, and faith or belief, the fiduciary on the other). The ‘humanitarian’ would provide a good example of this. “Peacekeeping forces” as well.

(47) Of what should one take particular note in trying to formalize, in a concise manner, the axiom of the **two** sources around each of the two “logics” if you like, or each of the two distinct “resources” of what in the West goes by the Latinate name, “religion”? Let us remember the hypothesis of these two sources: on the one hand, the fiduciar-*ity* of confidence, trustworthiness <*fiabilité*> or of trust <*fiance*> (belief, faith, credit and so on), and on the other, the unscathed-*ness* of the unscathed (the safe and sound, the immune, the holy, the sacred, *heilig*). Perhaps what in the first place ought to be stressed is this: each of these axioms, as such, already reflects and presupposes the other. An *axiom* always affirms, as its name indicates, a value, a price; it confirms or promises an evaluation that should remain intact and entail, like every value, an act of faith. Secondly, both of these two axioms renders possible, but not necessary, something like a religion, which is to say, an instituted apparatus consisting of dogmas or of articles of faith that are both determinate and inseparable from a given historical *socius* (Church, clergy, socially legitimated authority, people, shared idiom, community of the faithful committed to the same faith and sanctioning the same history). But the gap between the opening of this *possibility* (*as a universal structure*) and the *determinate necessity* of this or that religion will always remain irreducible; and sometimes <it operates> within each religion, between on the one hand that which keeps it closest to its “pure” and proper possibility, and on the other, its own historically determined necessities or authorities. Thus, one can always criticize, reject or combat this or that form of sacredness or of belief, even of religious authority, in the name of the most originary possibility. The latter can be *universal* (faith or trustworthiness, “good faith” as the condition of testimony, of the social bond and even of the most radical questioning) or already *particular*, for example belief in a specific originary event of revelation, of promise or of injunction, as in the reference to the Tables of the Law, to early Christianity, to some fundamental word or scripture, more archaic and more pure than all clerical or theological discourse. But it seems impossible to deny the *possibility* in whose name—thanks to which—the derived *necessity* (the authority or determinate belief) would be put in question, suspended, rejected or

criticized, even deconstructed. One can *not* deny it, which means that the most one can do is to deny it. Any discourse that would be opposed to it would, in effect, always succumb to the figure or the logic of denial <denégation>. Such would be the place where, before and after all the Enlightenments in the world, reason, critique, science, tele-technoscience, philosophy, **thought** in general, retain the *same* resource as religion in general.

48) This last proposition, in particular in so far as it concerns **thought**, calls for several essential qualifications. It is impossible here to devote to it the necessary elaborations or to multiply, which would be easy, references to all those who, before and after all the Enlightenments in the world, believed in the independence of critical reason, of knowledge, technics, philosophy and thought with respect to religion and even to all faith. Why then privilege the example of Heidegger? Because of its extreme character and of what it tells us, in these times, about a certain "extremity." Without doubt, as we recalled it above, Heidegger wrote in a letter to Löwith in 1921: "I am a 'Christian theologian.'"³⁷ This declaration would merit extended interpretation and certainly does not amount to a simple declaration of faith. But it neither contradicts, annuls nor excludes this other certainty: Heidegger not only declared, very early and on several occasions, that philosophy was in its very principle "atheistic," that the idea of philosophy is "madness" for faith (which at the least supposes the converse), and the idea of a Christian philosophy as absurd as a "squared circle." He not only excluded the very possibility of a philosophy of religion. He not only proposed a radical separation between philosophy and theology, the positive study of faith, if not between thought and theology,³⁸ the discourse on the divinity of the divine. He not only attempted a "destruction" of all forms of the ontotheological, etc. He also wrote, in 1953: "Belief [or faith] has no place in thought (*Der Glaube hat im Denken keinen Platz*)."³⁹ The context of this firm declaration is,

37. This letter to Löwith, dated 19 August 1921, was recently cited in French by J. Barash, *Heidegger et son siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1995), p. 80, n. 3, and by Françoise Dastur, in "Heidegger et la théologie," *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, May–August 1994, nos. 2–3, p. 229. Together with that of Jean-François Courtine cited above, the latter study is one of the most illuminating and richest, it seems to me, that have been published on this subject in recent years.

38. I take the liberty, in regard to these questions, of referring once again to "How to avoid speaking." As to the divinity of the divine, the *theion*, which would thus be the theme of a theology, distinct both from theology and from religion, the multiplicity of its meanings should not be overlooked. Already in Plato, and more specifically in the *Timaeus*, where there are no less than four concepts of the divine (see on this point the remarkable work of Serge Margel, *Le Tombeau du dieu artisan*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1995). It is true that this multiplicity does not prevent but on the contrary commands one to return to the unitary pre-comprehension, to the horizon of meaning as it is called, of the same word. Even if, in the final accounting, this horizon itself must be abandoned.

39. "The Anaximander fragment," in Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper, 1984), p. 57. "Der Spruch des Anaximander," *Hefewege*, Klostermann, 1990, p. 313.

to be sure, rather particular. The word *Glaube* seems to concern *first of all* a form of belief: credulity or the blind acceptance of authority. Heidegger was concerned with translating a *Spruch* (a saying, a sentence, decree, decision, poem, in any case a saying that cannot be reduced to its statement, whether theoretical, scientific or even philosophical, and that is tied in a singular and performative way to language). In a passage that concerns presence (*Anwesen, Präsenz*) and presence in the representation of representing (*in der Repräsentation des Vorstellens*), Heidegger writes: "We can not scientifically prove (*beweisen*) the translation nor ought we simply by virtue of any authority put our trust in it [accredit it, believe it] (*glauben*). The reach of proof [inferred as "scientific"] is too short. Belief has no place in thinking (*Der Glaube hat im Denken keinen Platz*)." Heidegger thus dismisses, back to back, scientific proof (which might suggest that to the same extent he accredits non-scientific testimony) and belief, here credulous and orthodox confidence that, closing its eyes, acquiesces and dogmatically sanctions authority (*Autorität*). Certainly, and who would contradict this? But Heidegger still extends with force and radicality the assertion that belief *in general* has no place in the experience or the act of thinking *in general*. And there we would have difficulty following him. First along his own path. Even if one succeeds in averting, in as rigorous a manner as possible, the risk of confusing modalities, levels, contexts, it still seems difficult to dissociate faith in general (*Glaube*) from what Heidegger himself, under the name of *Zusage* ("accord, acquiescing, trust or confidence"), designates as that which is most irreducible, indeed most originary in thought, prior even to that questioning said by him to constitute the piety (*Frömmigkeit*) of thinking. It is well known that without calling this last affirmation into question, he subsequently explained that it is the *Zusage* that constitutes the most proper movement of thinking, and that without it (although Heidegger does not state it in this form) the question itself would not emerge.⁴⁰ This recall to a sort of faith, this recall to the trust of the *Zusage*, "before" all questioning, thus "before" all knowledge, all philosophy, etc., finds a particularly striking formulation relatively late (1957). It is formulated in the form—rare for Heidegger, whence the interest often attached to it—not of self-criticism or remorse but of a return to a formulation that demands to be nuanced, refined, let us say, to be re-engaged differently. But this gesture is less novel and singular than it might seem. Perhaps we will try to show elsewhere (it would require more time and space) that it accords with everything which, beginning with the existential analytics of the thought of being and of the truth of being, reaffirms continuously what we will call (in Latin, alas, and in a manner too Roman for Heidegger) a certain *testimonial*

40. On these issues—and since I am unable to develop them here—I take the liberty of referring to *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 179 ff. Cf. also Dastur, "Heidegger et la théologie," p. 233, n. 21.

acredness or, we would even go so far as to say, a sworn word <foi jurée>. This reaffirmation continues throughout Heidegger's entire work. It resides in the decisive and largely underestimated motif of attestation (*Bezeugung*) in *Sein und Zeit* as well as in all the other motifs that are inseparable from and dependent upon it, which is to say, all the existentials and, specifically, that of conscience (*Gewissen*), originary responsibility or guilt (*Schuldigsein*) and *Entschlossenheit* (resolute determination). We cannot address here the immense question of the ontological repetition, in all these concepts, of a so markedly Christian tradition. Let us therefore limit ourselves to situating a principle of reading. Like the experience of authentic attestation (*Bezeugung*) and like everything that depends upon it, the point of departure of *Sein und Zeit* resides in a situation that cannot be radically alien to what is called *faith*. Not religion, to be sure, nor theology, but that which in faith acquiesces before or beyond all questioning, in the already common experience of a language and of a "we." The reader of *Sein und Zeit* and the signatory who takes him as witness are already situated in this element of faith from the moment that Heidegger says "we" to justify the choice of the "exemplary" being that is *Dasein*, the questioning being that must be interrogated as an exemplary witness. And what renders possible, for this "we," the positing and elaboration of the question of being, the unfolding and determining of its "formal structure" (*das Gefragte, das Erfragte, das Befragte*), prior to all questioning—is it not what Heidegger then calls a *Faktum*, that is, the vague and ordinary pre-comprehension of the meaning of being, and first of all of the words "is" or "be" in language or in a language (§ 2)? This *Faktum* is not an empirical fact. Each time Heidegger employs this word, we are necessarily led back to a zone where acquiescence is *de rigueur*. Whether this is formulated or not, it remains a requirement prior to and in view of every possible question, and hence prior to all philosophy, all theology, all science, all critique, all reason, etc. This zone is that of a faith incessantly reaffirmed throughout an open chain of concepts, beginning with those that we have already cited (*Bezeugung, Zusage, etc.*), but it also communicates with everything in Heidegger's way of thinking that marks the reserved holding-back of restraint (*Verhaltenheit*) or the sojourn (*Aufenthalt*) in modesty (*Scheu*) in the vicinity of the unscathed, the sacred, the safe and sound (*das Heilige*), the passage or the coming of the last god that man is doubtless not yet ready to receive.⁴¹ That the movement proper to this faith does not constitute a religion is all too evi-

41. On all these themes, the corpus that would have to be invoked is immense and we are incapable of doing justice to it here. It is above all determined by the discourse of a conversation between the Poet (to whom is assigned the task of saying, and hence of saving, the unscathed, *das Heilige*) and the Thinker, who searches for the signs of the god. On the *Beitrag*, particularly rich in this respect, I refer once again to the study of Jean-François Courtine and to all the texts that it evokes and interprets.

dent. Is it, however, untouched <indemne> by all religiosity? Perhaps. But by all "belief," by that "belief" that would have "no place in thinking"? This seems less certain. Since the major question remains, in our eyes, albeit in a form that is still quite new: "What does it mean to believe?" we will ask (elsewhere) how and why Heidegger can at the same time affirm one of the possibilities of the "religious," of which we have just schematically recalled the signs (*Faktum, Bezeugung, Zusage, Verhaltenheit, Heilige, etc.*) and reject so energetically "belief" or "faith" (*Glaube*).⁴² Our hypothesis again refers back to the two sources or two strata of religion which we distinguished above: the experience of sacredness and the experience of belief. More receptive to the first (in its Graeco-Hölderlinian or even archeo-Christian tradition), Heidegger was probably more resistant to the second, which he constantly reduced to figures he never ceased to put into question, not to say "destroy" or denounce: dogmatic or credulous belief in authority, to be sure, but also belief according to the religions of the Book and ontotheology, and above all, that which in the belief in the other could appear to him (wrongly, we would say) to appeal necessarily to the egological subjectivity of an *alter ego*. We are speaking here of the belief that is demanded, required, of the faithful belief in what, having come from the utterly other <de l'autre tout autre>, there where its originary presentation in person

42. Samuel Weber has reminded me, and I thank him for doing so, of the very dense and difficult pages devoted by Heidegger to "The Thought of the Eternal Return as Belief (*als ein Glaube*)" in his *Nietzsche* (Neske, 1961, vol. I, p. 382; English trans. David Farrell Krell [San Francisco: Harper, 1991], pp. 121–32). In re-reading these passages it strikes me as impossible in a footnote to do justice to their richness, complexity and strategy. I will try to return to this elsewhere. While waiting, however, just these two points: (1) Such a reading would suppose a patient and thoughtful sojourn with the holding (*Halt, Haltung, Sichhalten*) discussed above (n. 31), throughout Heidegger's way of thinking. (2) This "holding" is an essential determination of belief, at least as Heidegger interprets it in his reading of Nietzsche and notably of the question posed in *The Will to Power*: "What is a belief? How is it born? All belief is a holding-for-true (*Jeder Glaube ist ein Für-Wahr-halten*)." No doubt that Heidegger remains very careful and suspensive in his interpretation of this "concept of belief" (*Glaubensbegriff*) in Nietzsche, which is to say of the latter's "concept of truth and of 'holding-himself (*Sichhalten*) in truth and for truth.'" He even declares that he abandons the task, as well as that of representing the Nietzschean grasp of the difference between religion and philosophy. Nevertheless, he multiplies preliminary indications in referring to sentences dating from the period of *Zarathustra*. These indications reveal that in his eyes, if belief is constituted by "holding-for-true" and by "holding-oneself in truth," and if truth signifies for Nietzsche the "relation to the entity in its totality," then belief, which consists in "taking for true something represented (*ein Vorgestelltes als Wahres nehmen*)," remains therefore metaphysical in some way, and therefore unequal to what in thought should exceed both the order of representation and the totality of the entity. This would be consistent with the affirmation cited above: "*Der Glaube hat im Denken keinen Platz*." Of the Nietzschean definition of belief (*Für-Wahr-halten*), Heidegger declares first that he retains only one thing, but "the most important," which is to say, "holding to what is true and maintaining oneself in it" (*das Sichhalten an das Wahre und im Wahren*). And a little further on he adds: "If maintaining-oneself in the true constitutes a modality of human life, then no decision concerning the essence of belief and Nietzsche's concept of belief in particular can be made before his conception of truth as such and its relation to 'life' has been elucidated, which is to say, for Nietzsche: its relation to the entity in its totality (*zum Seienden im Ganzen*). Without having acquired a sufficient notion of the Nietzschean conception of belief, we would not attempt to say what the word 'religion' signifies for him . . ." (p. 386; trans. p. 124).

would forever be impossible (**witnessing** or given word in the most elementary and irreducible sense, promise of truth up to and including perjury), would constitute the condition of *Mitsein*, of the relation to or address of the other in general.

(49) Beyond the culture, semantics or history of law—moreover intertwined—which determine this word or this concept, the experience of **witnessing** situates a convergence of *these* two sources: the *unscathed* (the safe, the sacred or the saintly) and the *fiduciary* (trustworthiness, fidelity, credit, belief or faith, “good faith” implied in the worst “bad faith”). We speak of *these* two sources there, in one place of their convergence, for the figure of the two sources, as we have verified, proliferates, can no longer be counted, and therein lies perhaps another reason of our questioning. In testimony, truth is promised beyond all proof, all perception, all intuitive demonstration. Even if I lie or perjure myself (and always and especially when I do), I promise truth and ask the other to believe the other that I am, there where I am the only one able to bear witness and where the order of proof or of intuition will never be reducible to or homogeneous with the elementary trust <fiduciarité>, the “good faith” that is promised or demanded. The latter, to be sure, is never pure of all iterability nor of all technics, and hence of all **calculability**. For it also promises its repetition from the very first instant. It is involved <engagé> in every address of the other. From the first instant it is co-extensive with this other and thus conditions every “social bond,” every questioning, all knowledge, performativity and every tele-technoscientific performance, including those of its forms that are the most synthetic, artificial, prosthetic, calculable. The act of faith demanded in bearing witness exceeds, through its structure, all intuition and all proof, all knowledge (“I swear that I am telling the truth, not necessarily the ‘objective truth,’ but the truth of what I believe to be the truth, I am telling you this truth, believe me, believe what I believe, there, where you will never be able to see nor know the irreplaceable yet universalizable, exemplary place from which I speak to you; perhaps my testimony is false, but I am sincere and in good faith, it is not false <as> testimony”). What therefore does the promise of this axiomatic (quasi-transcendental) performative do that conditions and foreshadows “sincere” declarations no less than lies and perjuries, and thus all address of the other? It amounts to saying: “Believe what I say as one believes in a miracle.” Even the slightest testimony concerning the most plausible, ordinary or everyday thing cannot do otherwise: it must still appeal to faith as would a miracle. It offers itself like the miracle itself in a space that leaves no room for disenchantment. The experience of disenchantment, however indubitable it is, is only one modality of this “miraculous” experience, the reactive and passing effect, in each of its historical determinations, of the testimonially miraculous. That one should be called upon to believe in testi-

mony as in a miracle or an “extraordinary story”—this is what inscribes itself without hesitation in the very concept of bearing witness. And one should not be amazed to see examples of “miracles” invading all the problematics of testimony, whether they are classical or not, critical or not. *Pure* attestation, if there is such a thing, pertains to the experience of faith and of the miracle. Implied in every “social bond,” however ordinary, it also renders itself indispensable to Science no less than to Philosophy and to Religion. This source can collect or scatter itself, rejoin or disjoin itself. Either at the same time or successively. It can appear contemporaneous with itself where testimonial trust in the pledge <gage> of the other unites belief in the other with the sacralization of a presence-absence or with a sanctification of the law, as law of the other. It can divide itself in various ways. First of all, in the alternative between sacredness without belief (index of this algebra: “Heidegger”) and faith in a holiness without sacredness, in a desacralizing truth, even making of a certain disenchantment the condition of authentic holiness (index: “Levinas”—notably the author of *From the Sacred to the Holy*). As a follow-up, it can dissociate itself when what constitutes the said “social bond” in belief is also an interruption. There is no opposition, fundamentally, between “social bond” and “social unraveling.” A certain interruptive unraveling is the condition of the “social bond,” the very respiration of all “community.” This is not even the knot of a reciprocal condition, but rather the possibility that every knot can come undone, be cut or interrupted. This is where the *socius* or the relation to the other would disclose itself to be the secret of testimonial experience—and hence, of a certain faith. If belief is the ether of the address and relation to the utterly other, it is <to be found> in the experience itself of non-relationship or of absolute *interruption* (indices: “Blanchot,” “Levinas” . . .). Here as well, the hypersanctification of this non-relation or of this transcendence would come about by way of desacralization rather than through secularization or laicization, concepts that are too Christian; perhaps even by way of a certain “atheism,” in any case by way of a radical experience of the resources of “negative theology”—and going beyond even this tradition. Here we would have to separate—thanks to another vocabulary, for example Hebraic (the holiness of *kidouch*)—the sacred and the holy, and no longer settle for the Latinate distinction, recalled by Benveniste, between the natural sacredness in things and the holiness of institutions or of the law.⁴³ This interruptive disjunction enjoins a sort of incommensurable equality within absolute dissymmetry. The law of this untimeliness interrupts and makes history, it undoes all contemporaneity and opens the very space of faith. It designates disenchantment as the *very resource of the religious*.

43. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language*, particularly pp. 449, 453–56, 468.

The first and the last. Nothing seems therefore more uncertain, more difficult to sustain, nothing seems here or there more imprudent than a self-assured discourse on the age of disenchantment, the era of secularization, the time of laicization, etc.

(50) **Calculability**: question, apparently arithmetic, of two, or rather of $n + One$, through and beyond the demography of which we spoke above. Why should there always have to be *more than one* source? There would not have to be two sources of religion. There would be faith and religion, faith or religion, because *there are at least two*. Because there are, for the best and for the worst, division and iterability of the source. This supplement introduces the incalculable at the heart of the calculable. (Levinas: "It is this being-two <être à deux> that is human, that is spiritual.") But the more than One <plus d'Un>⁴⁴ is at once more than two. There is no alliance of two, unless it is to signify in effect the pure madness of pure faith. The worst violence. The more than One is this $n + One$ which introduces the order of faith or of trust in the address of the other, but also the mechanical, machine-like division (testimonial affirmation and reactivity, "yes, yes," etc., answering machine and the possibility of **radical evil**: perjury, lies, remote-control murder, ordered at a distance even when it rapes and kills with bare hands).

(51) The possibility of **radical evil** both destroys and institutes the religious. Ontotheology does the same when it suspends sacrifice and prayer, the truth of this prayer that maintains itself, recalling Aristotle one more time, beyond the true and the false, beyond their opposition, in any case, according to a certain concept of truth or of judgement. Like benediction, prayer pertains to the originary regime of testimonial faith or of martyrdom that we are trying to think here in its most "critical" force. Ontotheology **encrypts** faith and destines it to the condition of a sort of Spanish Marrano who would have lost—in truth, dispersed, multiplied—everything up to and including the memory of his unique secret. Emblem of a still life: an opened pomegranate, one Passover evening, on a tray.

(52) At the bottom without bottom of this **crypt**, the One + n incalculably engenders all these supplements. *It makes violence of itself, does violence to itself and keeps itself from the other*. The auto-immunity of religion can only indemnify itself without assignable end. On the bottom without bottom of an always virgin impassibility, *chora* of tomorrow in languages we no longer know or do not yet speak. This place is unique, it is the One without name. It *makes way, perhaps*, but without the slightest generosity, neither divine nor human. The dispersion of ashes is not even promised there, nor death given.

⁴⁴ Translator's note: "Plus d'un" can also mean "one no more" (see "Specters of Marx," *passim*).

(This, perhaps, is what I would have liked to say of a certain Mount Moriah—while going to Capri, last year, close by the Vesuvius of Gradiva. Today I remember what I had just finished reading in Genet at Chatila, of which so many of the premises deserve to be remembered here, in so many languages, the actors and the victims, and the eves and the consequence, all the landscapes and all the spectres: "One of the questions I will not avoid is that of religion."⁴⁵ Laguna, 26 April 1995.)

Translated by Samuel Weber

⁴⁵ P. J. Genet, *Genet at Chatila* (Paris: Solin, 1993), p. 103.