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The Spacing of Time and the Place of Hospitality: Living Together According to Bruno Latour and Jacques Derrida

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In this article, I would like to pursue the question whether it is possible to understand Derridean ethics in terms of space rather than time. More precisely, I would like to ask whether what Derrida proposes as an ethics (and exactly what that is will have to be explained) falls under the general heading of future-oriented, 'eschatological' or 'messianic', ethics or whether it can be understood in terms of presence, more specifically of the demand to cohabit here and now in the world.

The framework for my discussion of Derrida's ethics is provided by Bruno Latour's discussion of the 'spatial' turn in contemporary thinking. Indeed, in 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public', Bruno Latour enjoins us to turn away from a thought of time and history towards a thought of space, world and cohabitation. It is worth quoting his explanation in full:

Philosophers define time as a 'series of successions' and space as a 'series of simultaneities'. Undoubtedly, while we filed away everything under the power of progress, we lived in the time of succession. Kronos would eat away all that was archaic and irrational in his own progeny, sparing only those predestined for a radiant future. But through a twist of history that neither reformists nor revolutionaries ever anticipated, Kronos has suddenly lost his voracious appetite. Strangely enough, we have changed time so completely that we have shifted from the time of Time to the time of Simultaneity. Nothing, it seems, accepts to simply reside in the past, and no one feels intimidated any more by the adjectives 'irrational', 'backward,' or 'archaic'. Time, the bygone time of cataclysmic substitution, has suddenly become something that neither the left nor the right seems to have been fully prepared to encounter: a monstrous time, the time of cohabitation. Everything has become contemporary. [...] Revolutionary time, the great Simplificator, has been replaced by cohabitation time, the great Complicator. In other words, space has replaced time as the great ordering principle.

The radical change of framework from time to space – we could also say, from history to world – requires that we also radically modify our understanding of politics. Latour explains:

The question is no longer: "Are you going to disappear soon? Are you the tell tale of something new coming to replace everything else? Is this the seventh seal of the Book of Apocalypse that you are now breaking?" An entirely new set of questions has now emerged: "Can we cohabitate with you? Is there a way for all

of us to survive together while none of our contradictory claims, interests, and passions can be eliminated?" ¹

Arguing as Latour does against all form of future-oriented politics might seem not only counter-intuitive, but also dangerous, since it seems to foreclose all possibilities for transformations. Indeed, if we agree that the world we live in is far from just, where else should we look for a just world than in the future? Isn't the openness of the future necessary for our hope in a better world? But Latour wants to draw our attention towards the danger of a future-oriented politics: such a politics runs the risk of making its job easier by disregarding the presence of certain political actors it judges to be 'on the wrong side of history'. The problem with our future-oriented conception of historical time, as Latour sees it, is that it makes us think of 'space' and 'world' in terms of oppositions. It introduces in the world an invisible dividing line between those historical actors that matter and those who do not, between those who understand where the world is going and as forward-looking already live in the future world, and those who are seen as archaic and backward because they live in the irrational world of the present.

The ability to pass judgment on who deserves to take part in the movement of history and who can justifiably be left behind is made from a position of presumed authoritative insight. As a result, we find in all future-oriented politics a certain disregard for the complexity of the present: the present word is seen only in light of the future. Bathed in this future light, whole sections of the present world are allowed to recede in darkness and disappear from view. Latour challenges us to approach the world, and the political questions of who deserves a place in this world, without any presumed insight into the future that would already put us in a position to separate the 'right' from the 'wrong' side of history. This lack of insight into the future complicates our present political task of building a common world, of learning to live together. It forces us to reckon with the contradictory claims of political actors, which we would much rather dismiss as 'irrational' or 'backward'.

As I said, I would like to ask whether Derrida's ethical thought would be discarded by Latour for being irredeemably future-oriented and forward-looking, or whether Derrida could be seen as an ally in the 'spatial' turn in ethics and politics.² On the surface, the answer appears to be obvious. If Derrida's work champions the self-deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, linking his ethics to any form of presence could only rest on the crudest misunderstanding. Furthermore, it is hard to ignore the emphasis Derrida puts on messianicity, the future-to-come, or eschatology, all of which seem unequivocally related to the future. Yet, if one probes deeper into Derrida's understanding of space and time, it appears that the answer is not so simple. Indeed, Derrida certainly complicates the Leibnizian opposition between time as series of succession and space as series of simultaneities so that his position does not seem to fit neatly in either the present-oriented or the future-oriented form of ethics and politics that Latour sets against one another. Furthermore, Derrida's understanding of the to-come will allow us to see in what way Latour's spatial politics still remains predicated on the power of the master of the house that Derrida's to-come radically unsettles.

1. The à-venir and the Spacing of Time

Before delving more deeply into Derrida's ethics, I want to discuss the specific temporality of the à-venir in Derrida's work. By relating the temporal mode of the à-venir to Derrida's analysis of difference as the spacing of temporalization, I hope to be able to show that this temporal mode is not, or at least not primordially, that of an orientation towards the future. Derrida attaches two temporal characteristics to his figure of the to-come.³ First, the to-come has nothing to do with a future present; it is not something that has not come yet but will or might come later. For Derrida this also means that the to-come does not have the form of an Idea in Kantian sense, nor that of a utopia, in so far as Kantian ideas or utopian projections, despite their intrinsic unrealizability, can nevertheless be imagined, represented or conceptualized: they can in some way or other be presented. The second characteristic is more puzzling, and harder to reconcile with a messianic promise. After having pointed out the absolute futurity of the to-come, Derrida often adds that what is to-come does not wait, but has the 'hardness, closeness, and urgency' of the real.⁴ The experience of the to-come is the experience of the 'singular urgency of a here and now', but one that is 'without presence'. 6 The question is then: what temporal form allows us to think both the never being present and the urgency of the here and now? According to the passages we have just cited, it has to be a 'here and now', an 'instant', but one that is without presence. Hence, I want to contend that the temporality of the à-venir is not a kind of future (a future that would never become present, an 'absolute' future) but a kind of present, a paradoxical 'present without presence'. The to-come is indeed related to absolute futurity, but I want to argue that it is important to understand this futurity as the consequence of the to-come's paradoxical 'temporal presence': it is because of its paradoxical presence (in the form of the paradoxical instant) that the to-come always remains to come, has never finished arriving.

A full account of the paradoxical temporality of the instant is beyond the scope of this paper, but a quick reminder of the temporal and spatial structure of differance should be enough to at least make the relation between the to-come and the famous blink that closes the eye in *Voice and Phenomenon* plausible. In the 'Différance' essay, spacing appears, alongside with temporization, as another name for differance. While spacing seems to underline the spatial meaning of the French *différer*: to differ, to be distinct, discernible, separate, temporization underlines its temporal meaning: to defer, postpone, relay through a detour. If Derrida coins the neologism differance, it is because he wants to think both at the same time, joined together. Differance names the dynamic division of an interval that allows for meaning, for presence. What Derrida thinks under the heading of differance is neither the priority of space over time, nor that of time over space, but the pre-spatial, pre-temporal 'origin' of space and time: the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time.

According to Hegel, space is the absence of relation and difference. Time is the truth of space because it is the first relation of nature to itself, the element in which comparison, relation, and hence identity and difference, can appear. As Derrida explains in 'Ousia and Grammē', 'To the extent that it *is*, that is, to the extent that it becomes and is produced, that it manifests itself in its essence, that it *spaces* itself, in itself relating to itself, that is, in negating itself, space is time. It temporalizes itself, it relates itself to itself and mediates itself as time'. ¹¹ Space as the element of coexistence only is what is by temporalizing itself, that is, through the active relation of one point to the other (e.g. in the drawing of a line, which takes time). ¹² This seems to grant absolute priority to time over space. But, while Hegel will show that the truth of time is eternity, the circle

that forever turns around itself (and hence does not move), Derrida goes on to show that the truth of time is in its turn a certain exteriority or space. As he writes in *Voice and Phenomenon*: 'the temporalization of sense is from the very beginning "spacing." [...] Space is "in" time. [...] It is outside-of-itself as the self-relation of time". Indeed, the now-point is not a temporal unit but needs to be temporalized in order to give rise to time. Time as this temporalization of the now is the instantaneous destruction of the now by another now, the constant self-othering of the same. At the same time, there is time as the passage of one now into another only if there is certain complicity or co-implication that maintains together several nows. It is thanks to the disappearance of the 'first' now that the 'second' now can appear as now, but if the second now is the total destruction of the first now (and hence the absolute rebirth of the now), there is no passage of time. Passage requires that what passes also remains, be inscribed as trace in the new now.

This movement of temporalization does not give rise to a circle in which all nows would be synthesized and in which the gap between each of them would be subsumed into a higher interiority. Rather, for Derrida, the movement of temporalization needs to be understood as the becoming-space of time. Time is essentially spaced, and this in at least two senses: the first sense is that of the necessary inscription of the now that allows it to remain, to leave a trace despite the absolute passage of time, and without which there would be no passage and hence no time at all. But the second, and more primary, sense is that of the interval that is opened at the heart of the now itself. The now is split, and it is by means of that iteration (repetition and difference, maintaining and passing) that there can be time. There is at the heart of presence something other than presence, an absence that Derrida calls exteriority or space, thanks to which time passes, which means that it remains in and through the inscription of its differences.

What is 'first' then is the gap or spacing that divides and relates: a spacing that allows for identity (or 'self'-identification) but only as an effect of the spacing that has always split the now into two, leaving each haunted by the trace of another. Difference therefore does mean delay: the circle of self-presence, of time and of history never fully closes itself. Or it closes itself only by means of an irreducible exteriority, which also renders pure self-presence or coincidence impossible. But as Derrida points out, this is not the only, or even the most important, meaning of difference:

Differance [...] does not mean only (as some people have too often believed and so naively) deferral, lateness, delay, postponement. In the incoercible differance the here-now unfurls. Without lateness, without delay, but without presence, it is the precipitation of an absolute singularity singular because differing, precisely [justement], and always other, binding itself necessarily to the form of the instant, in *imminence and in urgency*. ¹⁶

The instant about which Derrida speaks here is not the now-point that is presumed to be pure and indivisible. As Derrida's reading of Husserl showed, this kind of instant takes time: it blinks and closes the eye. ¹⁷ Rather, the instant is here the space or exteriority that has always already inserted itself in the now. It is the blind spot of the blink.

If there is an eschatology in Derrida, then, its end is not to be thought as a future moment in time, but as the spacing of the now: the intrusion of space or exteriority in the passage of time itself. Derrida's *eskhaton* is not situated at the end of the temporal line, but outside of it as its absolute exterior. Accordingly, in relating to the *eskhaton*, I am not directed towards the absolute future of time, towards its utmost end, but towards that which here and now can come absolutely, as if from the outside. Hence, Derrida insists on separating eschatology from teleology. 'Is there not,' he asks, 'a messianic extremity, an *eskhaton* whose ultimate event (immediate rupture, unheard-of interruption, untimeliness of the infinite surprise, heterogeneity without accomplishment) can exceed, *at each instant*, the final term of a *phusis*, as well as the work, production and *telos* of any history?" It is in passing beyond the totality of *phusis* and of history that there can be a coming or an event, which is more than the repetition of the same or the realization of some *telos*, and therefore that there can be a true future. This 'passing beyond' is possible *at each instant*.

In opposing the totality and the kind of eschatology it includes to another kind of eskhaton as 'absolute exteriority', we seem to be repeating the Levinasian figure of the totality transcended by the Other, which Derrida criticized in 'Violence and Metaphysics'. Derrida does not, however, oppose exteriority to totality. Rather, exteriority is necessarily inscribed within totality and the totality is necessarily rent by exteriority. It is this tension or paradoxical relation between totality and exteriority that grants history its movement. History is opened and kept opened by the necessary or structural relation between the totality (history coming back to the Same, that is, non-history) and its opening (the empty centre which makes possible the 'play of the Same'). 19 Only exteriority and the (impossible) relation between history and exteriority can lead to a true thinking of history. In fact, a thinking that takes history seriously thinks history neither as an infinite line going on indefinitely (a false infinite: the infinite synthesis of points whose inability to complete itself would always leave something missing), nor as a circle circling around itself (positive infinity) but as another form of false infinity: as a finite system opening unto an unpresentable, inassimilable exteriority.²⁰ The opening as the moment of blindness guarantees the always possible irruption of the heterogeneous and thereby makes history and the future possible, since only such heterogeneity (the Impossible beyond any modal modification of presence) has the potential to radically transform our present.²¹

2. Ethics, Place and Hospitality

In the previous section, we have seen how time temporalizes itself not as a homogeneous flow, but thanks to an exteriority or a spacing. Furthermore, I have argued that this spacing is the structure of the to-come so that we should not, or at least not primordially, understand the to-come as turning us towards the future, but rather as turning us towards the blind spot of the now. In this section, I want to examine in more details the way in which this 'transcendental structure' of time as the spacing of the instant comes to structure the ethical figures associated with the to-come: hospitality, democracy, justice, etc. Here I want to focus especially on the discussion of hospitality because it will allow us to come back to the issue of cohabitation mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Indeed the discussion of hospitality and the to-come will allow us to highlight their relation between two kinds of spaces: the home, that is, 'the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there,

the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners'²² and the 'the space opened for there to be an event [...], the space opened for the other and others to-come'.²³ If the to-come is the intrusion of exteriority in interiority, or the intrusion of heterogeneity in the homogeneous, then Derridean ethics is better understood in spatial rather than temporal terms: it is not orient us towards a future to which it would make sense to sacrifice the present, but rather towards what remains exterior within the present. This orientation requires, as our discussion of hospitality will show, a certain way of relating to the space in which we dwell.

In his discussion of hospitality, Derrida shows how both mastery and openness are conditions of the possibility of any hospitable space. Hospitality defines the conditions of living together; it defines both the rules that make it possible to have a home and the conditions under which this home is opened to others. Indeed for there to be a home, there needs to be a certain delimited enclosure, a border that marks what belongs to me. At the same time, if the home is fully enclosed, if the border is absolutely tight, then the home is not inhabitable.²⁴ The threshold then functions both as the place of closure and the place of openness. It defines the rules of belonging and not-belonging, it separates the inside from the outside, but at the same time it delineates the criterion that will allow for the passage. Borders are never uncrossable, because they are a function of the criterion that defines belonging. The home is inherently, but always conditionally, hospitable. Yet this conditional hospitality, like the circle of economy, is only hospitable if it remains related to an unconditional demand at the heart of hospitability itself: if I am only ever opened to welcoming what I can anticipate, what I wait for and am ready for, then I am not opened to any coming, any visitation. Hospitality requires an openness beyond the conditional openness to what can be anticipated, to what I can see coming. One must 'let oneself be swept by the coming of the wholly other, the absolutely unforeseeable [inanticipable] stranger, the uninvited visitor, the unexpected visitation beyond welcoming apparatuses. If I welcome only what I am ready to welcome, if I welcome only the invited guest who is recognized in advance, then there is no hospitality. 25

Despite what one might think, it is not the role of unconditional hospitality to promote more open borders since this can be done without going beyond the bounds of conditional hospitality. by expanding the criterion used to define belonging, a criterion that is also the reason for exclusion. On the other hand, a community that would be unconditionally hospitable would not be a community since its radical openness would destroy any borders as lines of separation, division and identification, but also as places of passage, hospitality, welcome. Hence, when Derrida says that what he is looking for is an 'open "quasi"-community'. 26 he must mean neither a conditionally opened community (since all communities are always conditionally opened) nor an unconditionally opened one (since this would be no community at all). Rather, what the 'open' and the 'quasi' point towards is another way in which borders are always already breachable.²⁷ If we think of border as membrane, then we can see how, no matter how porous. borders always operate within a logic of oppositionality: a membrane 'only lets in what is homogeneous or homogenizable, what is assimilable or at the very most what is heterogeneous but presumed "favorable": the appropriable immigrant, the proper immigrant'. 28 Thanks to homogeneity, there is no contradiction here between openness and the desire for mastery. But a membrane does not only open the organism to what is homogeneous or favourable. Something unforeseeable might pass through, something that will unsettle, alter, or even kill the organism.

The best terms to think through the difference between conditional and unconditional hospitality are, therefore, not openness and closedness but homogeneity and heterogeneity. Unconditional hospitality, then, is not a matter of advocating more open border, that is, a more flexible criterion for passage, since such an imperative does not destabilize our thinking of community as homogeneous. Rather it is a matter of understanding porous borders as always also radically open to an excess over what is favourable and hence allowed passage.

At this point we must be careful not to overhastily identify ethics with radical openness to the heterogeneous. Ethics consists in neither conditional nor unconditional hospitality as such, but rather in the paradoxical relation between these two forms of hospitality. This relation is paradoxical because the two imperatives cannot be sublated into a single, stable imperative. They push us in two opposite directions. When looked at from the side of our desire for conditions, limitations, control, sovereignty, ethics appears as pure openness: the Other is what comes unexpectedly, in excess over any rules or conditions, and defeats my attempts at control. The ethical gesture here consists in welcoming, giving place, letting come absolutely. But when looked at from the side of our desire for openness, our desire to equate the unconditional welcome with the good, ethics demands more than merely letting oneself be overtaken, taken by surprise by whatever happens. It requires that I let the Other arrive, and this arrival is only possible by means of names, categories, institutions, and rules. The ethical gesture here consists in identifying, delimiting, choosing, and sometimes also rejecting. As a result, neither form of hospitality can be understood as 'good' or 'ethical' as such. It is no more accurate to think of the unconditional as the good and of the conditional as the perversion of that good or its fall into the finite, than it is to think of the conditional as the good and the unconditional as the dissolution of rules into an 'anything goes'. Both these interpretations simplify the paradoxical relation between the two forms of hospitality.²⁹ Rather than trying to identify which side is the good one, we should rather understand the movement of ethics as follows: the 'good' is always on the other side. When I obey the imperative to choose and control, the good is on the side of the unconditional, but when I obey the imperative to welcome absolutely, the good is on the side of conditions. I can never stand firm on the side of the good; rather, finding myself on one side, ethics is what pushes me to the other side, indefinitely. Furthermore, for Derrida, this impossibility of being hospitable, of being good, is not merely a function of our finitude ('if only I had a bigger home, more resources, etc., I could be open to everyone who comes...'; 'if only I could know everything about the other I am welcoming, then I could control everything that happens...), but is inscribed in the concept of hospitality itself.

In light of what has just been said, we can see how Derrida's ethics, unlike Levinas's, does not ask that we relinquish all conditions and all categories in order to enter into a purely peaceful relation with the absolutely singular Other. ³⁰ In a sense, there is no absolutely singular Other with whom I could enter into a peaceful ethical relation if only I were able to abandon my attachment to calculation, power, mastery. Derrida's Other *is* nothing; it comes in the instant of blindness or in the blind spot of the instant. It is therefore never 'here'; when it is here, when it is seen as having arrived, it is no longer 'the Other to-come' but has been transformed into some determinate figure. ³¹ This is why the other must remain always to-come, always in excess over what is present. At the same time, without the becoming-present of the Other, without its phenomenalization, the excess that the Other 'is' would be abandoned to the pure night of nothingness.

We can illustrate the latter point with what Derrida says about the name in *Of Hospitality*. Hospitality as right presupposes, Derrida writes, 'the social and familial status of the contracting parties, that it is possible for them to be called by their names, to have names, to be subjects in law, to be questioned and liable, to have crimes imputed to them, to be held responsible, to be equipped with nameable identities, and proper names.'³² The proper name (here exemplarily the family name, which, Derrida also insists, is not proper in the sense of purely individual and singular) is the mark of the foreigner's status. It assigns him a place in the world and certain rights and responsibilities that come with this appurtenance (for example, the right to visit some foreign country or not). The absolute Other, on the other hand, cannot have a name. The demand of absolute hospitality is linked to this absolute other without name, without status, and hence without proper place in the world. Derrida continues:

To put it in different terms absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names.³³

So the first requirement of hospitality seems to be to welcome the Other without asking for their name, without inquiring in advance whether they have the right name (the one that grants them the right of visitation but also guarantees that they will remain in the place offer them, and for the time I grant them). The absence of name ensures that I do not impose my language and its categories on the other, thereby reducing them to what is already known. But the absence of name is also a risk, namely that the other does not succeed in arriving, in coming to presence, and thus the relation between the name and anonymity is, exactly as that between conditions and the unconditional, undecidable. Indeed, Derrida does not say that hospitality consists *exclusively* in leaving the Other to their anonymity. Rather he wonders:

Does hospitality consist in interrogating the new arrival? Does it begin with the question addressed to the newcomer [...]: what is your name? tell me your name, what should I call you, I who am calling on you, I who want to call you by your name? What am I going to call you? [...] Or else does hospitality begin with the unquestioning welcome, in a double effacement, the effacement of the question and the name? Is it more just and more loving to question or not to question? to call by the name or without the name? to give or to learn a name already given?³⁴

There is no 'right' answer to this question, and ethics is not exclusively on the side of anonymity.³⁵

If we understand not only the necessity but also the danger of anonymity, then we can understand why phenomenalization is not merely an evil befalling an Other that ought to have remained pure and ab-solute. The Other must also be allowed to arrive and to appear. But how does one allow the unexpected, unforseeable to appear? At first glance it seems as if an unexpected surprise is exactly that which does not need to be *allowed* to appear. Yet Derrida did

write, in the quote above, that for the event of the arrival of the Other to take place, I must give place to the other, 'let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them'. This phrasing is puzzling. It seems to presuppose a place, delimited by me and hence still under my power, that circumscribes the possible coming of the other and mitigates the risk of visitation: 'Come here. This is your place, the place I have set up for you'. Even if we interpret this gift of place to mean that I must first open a space, unsettle limitations, destabilize borders, before the other can come, such an interpretation puts the arrival of the Other under the power of the master of the house. Derrida is clear, however, that the Other comes *unexpectedly*: 'you will have seen nothing coming [...] the other [...] will never have waited for your invention. '36 This unexpected coming will always overflow the place I have prepared (or not) for the arrival of the Other. But the danger of overemphasizing the unexpectedness of the arrival is that by putting it completely outside of my power, it gives rise to passivity. Yet lack of control, and the inability to anticipate or prefigure what comes, is not equivalent to indifference. As Derrida writes: 'Yet it is necessary to prepare for it; to allow the coming of the entirely other, passivity, a certain kind of resigned passivity for which everything comes down to the same, is not suitable. Letting the other come is not inertia ready for anything whatever.'37

Letting come, allowing to arrive, is not inertia; it imposes a demand upon me: 'Prepare for the unexpected, but without anticipating, without trying to see what is coming'. Such preparation, not unlike hospitality itself, pushes us in two opposite directions: It requires that we set up structures of hospitality, structures that will always condition the appearance of the Other but without which this appearance could not take place, could not be registered. It also requires that we destabilize these structures, prevent them from ossifying or prevent ourselves from thinking of them as accounting for everything and everyone. In this double gesture of preparation — destabilizing with one hand what we are constructing with the other — we learn to say 'Come!' in a way that is 'without horizon of expectation and without prophetic prefiguration'. ³⁸ Again, what I am preparing is not exactly the unexpected coming of the Other, which as unexpected can happen any time and is not under my control. But I am preparing myself to register this unexpected coming as rift or crack, as a shift or a slippage within the structures of hospitality. Perhaps it is only by gazing into the blind spot in this way, where I do not see anything coming, that I might experience something other than the application of rules, something that, be it only for a moment, destabilizes our welcoming apparatuses.

3. Hospitality in Latour's Collective

I began with Latour's appeal to taking world and cohabitation seriously in an overturning of the primacy of Time in favour of Space and then asked whether Derrida could be an ally in this overturning. In order to show how Derrida's ethics is not future-oriented but takes the problem of 'cohabitation' seriously, I first proposed an interpretation of the to-come in terms of the 'spacing' at the heart of our homogeneous understanding of both space (the home) and time (the present) and then related this understanding of the to-come to Derrida's discussion of hospitality. Ultimately, we saw how ethics demands a specific way of attending to the space we inhabit, namely, as a space that can always be unsettled by what is radically exterior or heterogeneous to it, that is, by what does not have a place and is not accounted for by the names, rules and categories that decide over inclusion *and* exclusion in our world.

We are at a point now where we can turn the tables on Latour and ask whether his own understanding of cohabitation lives up to the challenge of Derridean hospitality. Without going into the details of Latour's own understanding of cohabitation, we need to recall that Latour is seeking to dismantle our 'modern' worldview, where there is the one Nature on the one side, and the many, conflicting social and political representations of this one Nature on the other. In such a worldview, conflicts are always about representations and they can in principle be settled by appealing to the one Nature. In Nature (in the objective world), we find the arbiter of all our human conflicts. But if we reject this mononaturalism, if we assert that conflicts are not merely about what we think but about what exists, but also about what exists, then our conflicts cannot be settled objectively. Instead of having a stable objective world that underlies all of our subjective claims, the 'objective' world is one that has to be assembled. As Latour writes: 'We perhaps never differ about opinions, but rather always about things—about what world we inhabit [...] A common world is not something we come to recognize, as though it had always been here (and we had not until now noticed it). A common world, if there is going to be one, is something we will have to build, tooth and nail, together'. The common world is not something we will have to build, tooth and nail, together'.

The modern way of gathering what exists not only limits what can be assembled together but it also delimits in advance what can be taken into account on each side. Latour wants to reestablish the symmetry between nature and society, between things and human beings, and between the two branches of 'government' that deals with them: science and technology on the one hand, sociology and the human sciences on the other. But such symmetry does not amount to erasing all differences between human and non-humans actors. Rather it lets differences proliferate without prematurely identifying what exists as belonging to one or the other camp: real thing, social representation. Non-modern politics takes into account what has been left out by the modern constitution (the one that separated nature from society, objects from subjects). These Latour calls quasi-objects or quasi-subjects. ⁴⁰ There are not unlike Derrida's ghosts, these middle-things that do not find any place in our current world because they evade our way of categorizing what exists. ⁴¹ Quasi-entities are both real and social, material and discursive.

Our task, then, is that of assembling the collective, ⁴² of composing the common world, and it happens in two steps. The first step consists in taking stock of the entities, human and non-human, that are to be assembled. It answers the question: 'How many are we?' Once we have extended the range of entities to be collected, this multiplicity does not yet necessarily form a viable assemblage. Hence the second step, which is the political task per se, and which consists in figuring out whether we can cohabit together or not. Since there is no pre-given, objective basis that can serve to settle the question, 'Can we live together?,' the question can only be answered through experimentation. At the end of the process of experimentation, some will be excluded from cohabitation in the common world, but what is excluded by the power of ordering (what cannot be assembled) does not disappear; rather it becomes (or remains) externalized. Latour writes:

When a member of the old Constitution looked outside, she was looking upon a nature made up of objects indifferent to her passions, to which she had to submit or from which she had to tear herself away. When we look outside, we see a whole still to be composed, made up of excluded entities (humans and nonhumans) in whom we have explicitly decided not to be interested, and of

appellants (humans and nonhumans) who demand more or less noisily to be part of our Republic. 43

The collective remains fragile, always in the process of exploration and experimentation. Its borders are constantly shifting, constantly put into question by the appellants who knock on its doors and demand entry.

From the perspective of our previous discussion of Derrida, what is striking about Latour's proposal is that, despite the fact that it relinquishes all a priori criteria on the basis of which entities would be assembled, that is, despite the fact that it claims to be in principle open to anything that might come, the openness of the collective is only thought in terms of the policing of borders. What comes first knocks on the door and shows its paper so that those who already belong to the collective can decide whether it will be admitted into the collective, after they deliberate on whether or not they can live with it. In The Politics of Nature, Latour spends a considerable amount of time discussing the due process of composition, which requires that we let all entities speak for themselves, rather than speak for them, that we find ways of letting them demonstrate who or what they are, rather than impose a name upon them. A priori categorizations cannot be applied onto what shows up at the door of the collective. At the same time, something of the disruptive power of what comes is missing from Latour's proposal. Indeed, Latour's question, 'Can we live together?' is ambiguous. It seems to involve all of us in deliberation, for which no objective or transcendent criteria are given in advance, but where we fight 'tooth and nail' about the collective. Yet the question can also be taken to mean: 'Can we, who already belong to the collective, live with you, who do not (yet) belong?' And indeed it also sometimes phrased in this way. 44 In the latter case, power over the border is in the hand of those who belong and the appellants are expected to wait at the border for permission to enter.

Despite Latour's radical 'deconstruction' of the border between Nature and Society, his reconstruction of a politics of/for the world appears conservative. It is still predicated on the power of the master of the house to police a border. What would happen to Latour's proposal if it were complemented with a Derridean understanding of unconditional hospitality? Then the task of composing a world together, the task of cohabitation, would be even more dauntingly complex than what Latour envisages. Indeed, if Latour accuses the eschatological narrative of history of interpreting the present only in light of the future, his shortcoming is that he himself interprets the world only as what is presently given on each side of the collective's border. Latour fears that eschatological time sacrifices the complexity of the present world, but his emphasis on the present world remains closed to that which remains other in all that is present. If there is a just world, therefore, it must be one that remains radically open not to a better world in the future, but to the unforeseeable event of a coming here and now that can radically destabilize (for better or for worse) the common world we inhabit. While attending to the task of composing a world together, the question cannot not only be 'Can we cohabitate together?' We must also ask: 'In what way does our assemblage remain open to an unforeseeable coming, to a surplus or excess beyond what can be accounted for?' The second question increases the fragility of the collective beyond what Latour can see: the collective lives on only in being exposed to what can always come to destroy it.⁴⁵ It is such a question, and the double gesture of preparation it includes, that a Latourian framework, which reduces space to simultaneity and hence presence, renders incomprehensible, and that a Derridean thinking of the spacing of time allows us to understand.

¹ Latour, 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik,' 29-30. About modern time, see also Latour, We Have Never Been. section 3.7: 'The End of the Passing Past'.

² Just a note on the terms ethics and politics, which I have been using loosely so far. If we understand ethics as having to do with the singular Other and with unconditional demands, and politics as having to do with a plurality of others and hence with general rules, conditional duties and the necessity of institutions, part of the point of Derrida's 'ethics' is to show the impossibility of such a distinction. There is no 'pure' ethics. At the same time, and to anticipate on my conclusion, Derrida will show how there is also no 'pure' politics, no concern for cohabitation, community and institutions, that is not always already exposed to an excess or surplus that is the Other.

³ Although à-venir is often translated as future-to-come. I prefer, for reasons that will become clear in what follows. to use the expression to-come.

⁴ Derrida, 'Not Utopia, the Im-possible,' 131. This is true also of Derrida messianicity, which is not a utopianism, but names 'an eminently real, concrete event.' Derrida, 'Marx & Sons,' 248-9.

⁵ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 105. See also *Rogues*, 85 and 90.

⁶ Derrida, *Rogues*, 29.

⁷ There is a tendency in the secondary literature to emphasize the futural (albeit absolute) aspect of the to-come and downplay its 'presence'. In her book Derrida on Time, Joanna Hodge identifies the to-come as Derrida's distinctive mode of thinking futurity (37) and links it to the emancipation promised to the nameless, who are not yet born (135). See also chapter 4.1. Neal Deroo emphasizes the link between the to-come and the futurity of the promise, but this is not surprising given the specific project undertaken in his book, namely to analyze the role of futurity – protentional and eschatological – in phenomenology. See Neal Deroo, Futurity in Phenomenology, Part III, especially chapter 9. In his book Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy, Samir Haddad also argues against 'the dominant tendency to privilege the future' in Derrida scholarship which reduces democracy-to-come 'very quickly [...] to a simple passivity or utopianism in the face of what happens' (4). To remedy this tendency, Haddad emphasizes the 'injunction to inherit from the past' (3) that is involved in democracy-to-come. Inheritance intertwines the past and the future: insofar as inheritance is a task, it is always behind and before us at once, but never fully either. Hence inheritance cannot be accounted for if we stick to a linear understanding of time. While I agree in principle with Haddad's emphasis on inheritance, I still think it is necessary in the context of a discussion of the to-come, and given the privilege of the future in Derrida scholarship, to explain what kind of 'here and now' is associated with the

⁸ See Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon*, 56.

⁹ Derrida, 'Différance,' 10. See also *ibid.*, 13: differance '(is) (simultaneously) spacing (and) temporization.' Of course, Derrida puts 'simultaneously' in parentheses since simultaneity, as what happens within one time, is only possible on the basis of difference.

10 See, 'Différence,' 13.

¹¹ 'Ousia and Gramme,' 42-3 (original emphasis).

¹² See *ibid*., 55.

¹³ Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon*, 73.

¹⁴ See Derrida, Edmund Husserl's Origin, 86 and 'Ousia and Gramme,' 55.

¹⁵ It is because of this inscription that time is finite, that the trace is always subject to erasure, loss, death. In his explanation of the becoming-space of time, Hägglund emphasizes space as the persistence of time, as the necessary inscription of any mark that entrusts it to the outside. See *Radical Atheism*, 27. As a result, he reads the to-come as the unpredictable future that forms both the chance of survival and the possibility of erasure and death. See among others, 132-7. While I do not want to deny this unpredictability, or the fact that the to-come always remains to-come, I want to emphasize the relation of the to-come to the spacing or blind spot that is a function of the splitting (or spacing) of any now.

Derrida, Specters of Marx, 37 (original emphasis).

^{17 &#}x27;[N]on-presence and non-evidentness [are admitted] into the blink of an eye of the instant. There is a duration to the blink of an eye, and this duration closes the eye' (Derrida, Voice and Phenomenon, 56).

¹⁸ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 45 (original emphases, translation modified).

¹⁹ The same relation obtains between the gift and economy. If the gift has to remain heterogeneous to economy, to exchange, to the circulation of goods, then it can only happen in an "instant" that remains heterogeneous to time,

that 'tears time apart'. See Derrida, *Given Time*, 9. At the same time, it is the heterogeneity of the gift that provides the circle of economy with its respiration and prevents its paralysis. See *ibid*., 30.

²⁰ See, 'Violence and Metaphysics,' 117.

²¹ See 'Force of Law,' 256-7.

²² Derrida, 'On Cosmopolitanism,' 16-7.

²³ Derrida, 'Politics and Friendship,'182. The elided sentence reads in English: "To come" means "future", not the present future, which would be present and presentable tomorrow'. The French version, however, says the opposite: "À venir does not mean future, the future present, etc. [« À venir », cela ne veut pas dire « futur », le présent futur, etc.]'. The interview with Michael Sprinker was conducted in 1989 and first published in *The Althusserian Legacy*. The French version appeared as *Politique et Amitié* in 2011. As Pierre Alféri mentions at the end of his introduction, for the French edition, Derrida's manuscripts were collated, his English expressions as well as Sprinker's questions translated into French, and a few typos corrected (11). This means that Derrida wrote his answers in French, using English expressions from time to time.

²⁴ See Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 61.

²⁵ Derrida, 'Hostipitality,' 361-2 (translation modified).

²⁶ Derrida, 'A "Madness" Must Watch,' 351.

²⁷ Hence I would disagree with Caputo's explanation of Derrida's phrase 'open "quasi"-community' as championing a more porous kind of border. See Caputo, 'Who is Derrida's Zarathustra?' 187 and *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, chapter 4, especially 121-4.

²⁸ See the discussion of immigration, asylum and xenophobia in 'The Deconstruction of Actuality,' 102.

²⁹ The second interpretation is more common in the literature, but many interpreters have also insisted on the fact that the unconditional does not function as a moral ideal in Derrida. See Haddad, *Derrida and the Inheritance*, chapter 1. See also Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 103-6. The relation between unconditional hospitality and the rules of hospitality is at the centre of the discussion between Derek Attridge and Martin Hägglund. While Hägglund insists that openness to the other is the 'nonethical opening of ethics' so that any unconditional affirmation is always the affirmation of temporal finitude, and hence of the inseparability of good *and* evil, Attridge thinks that by evacuating all normative power from the unconditional, Hägglund betrays the 'ethical tone' of Derrida's writings, simplifies the relation between the unconditional and the conditional, and ends up advocating a distinctly conditional hospitality ('be circumspect'). See Attridge's Review of Hägglund's *Radical Atheism* in *Derrida Today*, which is reprinted in *Reading and Responsibility*, Chapter 10, and Martin Hägglund, 'The Non-Ethical Opening of Ethics.' ³⁰ See the discussion of Levinas's Other and the impossibility of pure peace in 'Violence and Metaphysics,'

especially 145-6 and 162-3.

31 In her book, *Derrida and Ethics Under Erasure*, Nicole Anderson speaks of 'our response to the other "to-come" as 'a response to the unknown that may or may not "appear" or happen', hence linking the to-come to the possibility of appearance. For her, the to-come seems to be the past or the future beyond present life and ethics requires that we respond beyond what is present in present life to the past and the future that haunts the present. While she emphasizes the spectral nature of the to-come, and the surprising and unanticipated nature of its coming, she still thinks of it exclusively under the form of appearing.

³² Derrida, Of Hospitality, 23.

³³ *Ibid.*, 25 (original emphasis).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 27-8.

Heidrun Friese, in 'Spaces of Hospitality', criticizes this anonymity because it 'determines the stranger even more', namely 'by rendering him an anonymous, nameless subject of an "absolute hospitality", in which the host unilaterally gives (though without giving)' (72). Anonymity, it seems, strips the stranger of any agency. But for Derrida, anonymity is first a means to prevent the imposition of foreign categories and names onto the foreigner so that they can be the agent of their own naming and appearing.

³⁶ Derrida, 'Psyche,' 46-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁸ Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge,' 56. On awaiting beyond what is possible, see Derrida, *Aporia*, 62-81. On this waiting without expectation or waiting without awaiting, see 'Marx and Sons,' 248-51.

³⁹ Latour, 'Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics?,' 455.

⁴⁰ See *What Have Never Been*, section 3.2, 'What is a Quasi-Object?'

⁴¹ Despite this obvious similarity, Latour is critical of deconstruction, which he sees as engaged with meanings, discourses, language game, i.e. with an inability to take things seriously. While Latour agrees with the deconstruction of the naturalization of the nature, he disagrees with what he takes to be the result of such a

deconstruction, namely the focus on the social, constructed, linguistic nature of this pseudo-nature. See Latour, We

Have Never Been, especially section 1.3, 'The Crisis of the Critical Stance'.

42 See Latour, *Politics of Nature*, Glossary, 239: 'the term [collective] refers not to an already-established unit but to a procedure for *collecting* associations of humans and nonhumans'.

Latour, Politics of Nature, 126-7.

Republic', but might insist on *not* being included, or that they might even have as their goal to destroy the collective. Shouldn't a politics worthy of the name also be concerned with those?

⁴⁴ See not only the quotation from 'How to Make Things Public' at the beginning of this paper, but also *Politics of Nature*, 113. Latour speaks exclusively from the position of the one who is already part of the common world (which he calls 'our Republic'), and deserves to take part into the process of assembling and in the policing the collective's borders. Even though he does not assume that there is one world, but rather insists on the fact that the one world must be composed, it never occurs to him that he might be on the outside of it.

45 Latour never considers that some excluded entities might in fact not be appellants knocking on the door of 'our

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