

Derrida and **Religion**

OTHER TESTAMENTS

EDITED BY

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for Jacques Derrida

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CHAPTER 18

Deconstruction, God, and the Possible

RICHARD KEARNEY

You, God, cannot help us but we must help you and defend your dwelling place inside us to the last.

—Etty Hillesum¹

In a conversation held at New York University in 2001, Derrida responded to my question about the relationship between deconstruction and resurrection as follows:

I am not against resurrection. I would share your hope for resurrection, reconciliation and redemption. But I think I have a responsibility as someone who thinks deconstructively to obey the necessity—the necessity of the possibility—that there is *khôra* rather than a relationship with the anthro-po-theological God of Revelation. At some point, you Richard translate your faith into something determinable and then you have to keep the “name” of the resurrection. My own understanding of faith is that there is faith whenever one gives up not only any certainty but also any determined hope. If one says that resurrection is the horizon of one’s hope then—since one knows what one names when one says “resurrection”—faith is not pure faith. It is already knowledge ... That is why you have to be an atheist of this sort (someone who “rightly passes for an atheist”) in order to be true to faith.²

Later on the exchange, Derrida compares my eschatological notion of the God-who-may-be with his own deconstructive notion of the Perhaps, touching on what I believe to be a common theme in both our thinking:

The “perhaps” (*peut-etre*) refers to the unconditional beyond sovereignty. It is an unconditional which is the desire of powerlessness rather than power. I think you are absolutely right to attempt to name God not as sovereign, as almighty, but as precisely the most powerless. Justice and love are precisely oriented to this powerlessness. But *khôra* is powerless too. Not powerlessness in the sense of poor or vulnerable. Powerlessness as simply no-power. No power at all.³

What particularly interests me here is the difference between God as powerless and *khôra* as powerless, given that for both Derrida and me the highest form of possibility—which stands higher than actuality—is the possible as more-than-impossible and less-than-power. All this requires a thorough rethinking of the traditional categories of possibility as found in modal logic, the ontology of potency/act and the rationalist epistemology of representational *possibilitas* (as in Leibniz’s theodicy of possible worlds). It requires a move beyond metaphysical tendencies to consider the possible as a lack striving toward actualization in the real, reconceiving it instead as an alterity beyond being, and by implication beyond the accomplished order of things: an otherness that comes toward us as unpredictable event or surprise. I think that Derrida’s recent reflections on this subject are immensely helpful for a new way of thinking the divine in terms of *posse* rather than *esse*. And while Derrida himself does not embrace a religious affirmation of the God of the Possible—preferring the cooler climes of indeterminate *khôra*—he certainly seems open to dialogue with those who do.

In an essay titled “As If It Were Possible, ‘Within Such Limits ...’” (1998), Derrida reinterprets the notion of possibility in terms of what he calls the “irreducible modality of ‘Perhaps’ (*peut-être*).”⁴ Cautioning against all talk of “last words,” in philosophy no less than in history, Derrida declares this “perhaps” to be the necessary condition of possibility of every experience—to the extent that every experience is an event which registers that which comes from the unpredictable otherness of the future. Such an experience of the “perhaps” is at once that of the possible and the impossible. Or as Derrida puts it, the possible as impossible. If what happens is only that which is possible in the sense of what is anticipated and expected, then it is not an event in the true sense. For an event is only possible in so far as it comes from the impossible. An event (*événement*) can only happen, in other words, when and where the “perhaps” lifts all presumptions and assurances

about what might be and lets the future come as future (*laisse l’avenir à l’avenir*), that is, as the arrival of the impossible. The “perhaps” thus solicits a “yes” to what is still to come, beyond all plans, programs, and predictions. It keeps the ontological question of “to be or not to be” constantly in question, on its toes, deferring any last word on the matter. But if deconstruction suspends the security of ontological answers, it also, Derrida insists, eschews the levity of a purely rhetorical “perhaps” (*peut-être/vielleicht*). The “perhaps” sustains the survival of the question. But what might such a possible-impossible actually mean?

In *The Politics of Friendship* (1994), Derrida had already ventured some kind of response to this question. Picking up on Nietzsche’s talk of a “dangerous perhaps” as the thought of the future, Derrida argues that such a thought is indispensable to friendship precisely as a category of futurity. Distinguishing between the bad possible (of predictability) and the good possible (of impossibility), Derrida affirms that it is only the latter that can safeguard true friendship as a commitment to what is to come. It is also only the good possible (that is, the impossible possible) that can respect the dual fidelity of friendship to undecidability and decision.⁵ Without the openness of a radically indeterminate “possible”—which like the phenomenological reduction brackets our prejudices about the future—there could be no genuine decision. But, equally, no decision could be made without somehow also lifting the “perhaps,” while retaining its “living” possibility in a kind of living memory. Consequently, if no real decision—ethical, political, juridical—is feasible without conjuring the “perhaps” that keeps the present open to the coming event, there could be no decision either—no committing of oneself to one possible rather than others—if there were not some *limiting* of this opening “perhaps,” which serves as condition of the possibility of decision!⁶

This circle is what Derrida calls the “lucky aporia of the possible impossible.”⁷ In “As If ...,” he expands on this aporia, as first outlined in the *Politics of Friendship*. In the event of decision, he writes here, “only the im-possible takes place; and the unfolding of a potentiality of possibility already there would never constitute an event or invention.”⁸ Why? Because, explains Derrida, “a decision that I *can* take, the decision *in my power* and which merely manifests the acting out (*passage à l’acte*) or unfolding of what is *already possible* for me, the actualization of my possibility, decision which only derives from me, would it still be a decision?”⁹ The answer is no, because genuine decision—like genuine responsibility—is not just about *my* possibles but is also about *others’* possibles intervening, which may well represent the impossibility of my own possible. Whence Derrida’s preference for a paradoxically *receptive*

decision, recalling Lévinas's notion of a "*difficile liberté*" which allows for the irruption of the other in the self. He notes: "the responsible decision must be this im-possible possibility of a "passive" decision, a decision of the other in me which removes none of my liberty or responsibility."¹⁰ Moreover, Derrida insists that every responsibility must traverse this aporia of the impossible-possible which, far from paralyzing us, mobilizes a "new thinking of the possible."¹¹

Later in "As If ..." Derrida gives further examples of this aporetic logic. He cites, for instance, the fact that an *interpretation* is only possible if it remains to some extent inadequate (that is, if an adequate interpretation is impossible). For an interpretation without any default—closed therefore to the possibility of misinterpretation—would represent not only the end of interpretation, as an on-going process of exploring meaning, but also the end of a historical future in any sense whatsoever. Closing off the future, it would make everything impossible.

Derrida notes a similar interplay of possibility and impossibility in the instance of *invention*. Invention is always possible in so far as it is the invention of the possible; but invention is really only possible when it does not invent something new out of itself—in which case it would not be new—but rather allows something *other* to come, occur, happen. Now, given the fact that this otherness that comes to it is not part or parcel of invention's own resources of possibles, it means that the "only possible invention would be the invention of the impossible."¹² Of course, we may object that the invention of the impossible is impossible; but in fact, insists Derrida, it is the only kind possible. "An invention must pronounce itself as invention of what does not appear possible," short of which it would be little more than an explicitation of a "program of possibles in the economy of the same."¹³

A similar logic of impossible-possibility applies to Derrida's analysis of "pardon." Here we cross the threshold from epistemological aporias to ethics. Pardon, Derrida claims, is only possible, as such, when faced with the unpardonable, that is, where *impossible*. For pardon—like hospitality, gift, justice, etc.—is an unconditional that has to deal with conditions as soon as it becomes an act or decision. In such instances, the possible "is" impossible. Or to put it in more formal, quasi-transcendental terms, the condition of possibility of pardon or hospitality is also and at the same time the condition of its impossibility.¹⁴ The possibility of pardon or hospitality, therefore, requires us to *do the impossible*, to make the impossible possible. But this must occur, says Derrida, without resorting to some sort of morality of rules and prescriptions, of oughts or obligations.

Pardon and hospitality must, by their very unconditional nature, remain unpredictable and gratuitous (*gratuit et imprévisible*).

In all of these examples, Derrida argues that im-possibility is not the mere contrary of possibility but rather its mark of renewal and arrival as event. No event worthy of its name is simply an actualization of some precontained potential program. For an event to be possible, it must be both possible (of course) but also impossible (in the sense of an interruption by something singular and exceptional into the regime of preexisting possibles understood as immanent powers and potencies). The event happens not just because it is possible, qua ontological acting-out of some inherent *dunamis* or *potentia*, but also because something impossible—hitherto unanticipated—comes to pass. It is precisely the impossibility of formerly predictable possibilities which makes new ones announce themselves beyond this very impossibility. The impossible reminds us, therefore, that *beyond our powers* the impossible is still possible. There are impossible possibles *beyond* us, never dreamt of in our philosophies. Or as Derrida puts it in *Politics of Friendship*: "Perhaps the impossible is the only possible chance of something new, of some new philosophy of the new. Perhaps; perhaps in truth the *perhaps* still names this chance."¹⁵

So how might we relate all this to the religious question of God? Derrida does not directly engage, it has to be said, with the eschatological or theological implications of this issue. But he does leave us one or two tantalizing hints. In a note that refers to my own notion of the "may-be" in *Poétique du Possible* (1984), and to our discussion of Heidegger's "loving possible" (*des mögende Vermögens*), Derrida makes mention of the possible as that which is "more than impossible" (*plus qu'impossible* or *plus impossible*). And he refers us here, tellingly if only in passing, to the mystical maxim of Angelus Silesius: "*das uberunmöglichschste ist möglich*" (God as the more than impossible is possible). The deeply theological connotations of this claim are not addressed by Derrida here alas! But he does allude to his discussion of the "name of God" in "Sauf le Nom." And he does add this sentence—recalling the opening claims about the "desire of God" in that essay—"All the aporias of the possible-impossible or of the more-than-impossible would thus be 'lodged' but also dislodging 'within' (*au-dedans*) what one might calmly call the desire, love or movement towards the Good etc."¹⁶

The "etc." resists any temptation to pronounce a "last word" and leaves open, in our view, the option of adding a "possible God"—a God whom we might now be inclined to refer to, along with Silesius, as a *more than impossible God*. Indeed, it might be noted that Derrida himself does allude here to a certain connection between the possible-impossible aporia and the

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undecidable aporia of who/what which he relates to the question of *khôra* (which precedes the distinction who/what). This question of *khôra*, as we have had occasion to remark elsewhere, is deeply linked in Derrida's work, as in Caputo's, to the question of God.¹⁷ But such an eschatological possibility is not, it must be said, explored or extrapolated by Derrida himself.

What Derrida is trying to do, it seems to me, is to think a postmeta-physical category of the possible by rethinking the category of the impossible in a way that is not negative or disabling. The impossible needs to be affirmed because, as we have noted above, it is precisely im-possibility which opens up possibility and makes it possible. Strangely, however, this can only occur when my power of possibility undergoes its own death as "my" possibility—acknowledging in mourning, passion, suffering, and anxiety that it is this very impossibility which allows a new possible, another possible, another's possible, an im-possible possible, to come, or to come back. This "other" possible returns, says Derrida, as a specter. It assumes the guise of a *revenant*, rising up from the grave of my own possible in the form of an in-coming other. And we experience this as surprise, gift, openness, hospitality.¹⁸

In one especially charged passage, Derrida offers a more phenomenological take on this moment. Here he endeavors to describe the more affective dimension of the impossible-possible aporia:

It names a suffering or passion, an affect at once sad and joyous, the instability of disquietude (*inquiétude*) proper to every possibilisation. This latter would allow itself to be haunted by the specter of its impossibility, by its mourning for itself: the mourning of the self carried in itself, but which also gives it its life or survival, its very possibility. For this *im*-possibility opens its possibility, it leaves a trace, at once an opportunity and a threat, in what it renders possible. The torment would signal this scar, the trace of this trace ... All this recurs with respect to Freud's concept of *Bemächtigung*, of the limit or the paradoxes of the possible as power.¹⁹

Derrida even goes so far as to identify this paradox of the impossible-possible with the experience of *faith* itself. For how is it, he asks, that that which makes possible makes impossible the very thing it makes possible? How is it that promise is so related to ruin, affirmation to death, renewal to deprivation? "The *in* of the im-possible is no doubt radical, implacable, undeniable," he replies. "But it is not simply negative or dialectical; it *introduces* to the possible ... it makes it come, it makes it revolve according to an anachronistic temporality or incredible filiality—a filiality which is also, he avows, the *origin of faith*" (my italics).²⁰

But why, we may ask, should Derrida introduce the question of faith at this juncture? Because, he explains, such incredible filiality both "exceeds knowledge and conditions the address to the other, inscribing every theorem in the time and space of a testimony ('I talk to you, believe me')." But, we may further ask, why *testimony*? Why *attestation*? Because we can only possess and practice faith in a possibility never adequately or fully *present*, but always already anachronistic (remembered) or still to come (promised). In this sense, Derrida's relating of "virtuality" to "the origin of faith" alludes, one suspects, to a general "spectral" structure of all human experience rather than to any *specifically religious* experience of a loving God.²² As such, it may have as much to teach us about the post-modern phenomenon of virtual reality—simulations, simulacra, and cyborgs etc.—as about the revealed reality of Yahweh or Jesus. In short, deconstruction may have as much to say about phantoms and phantasms as about prophecies and prayers.

I have argued somewhat differently in *Poétique du possible* (1984) and more recently in *The God Who May Be* (2001), that the impossible-made-possible signals the promise of new thinking about the "possible God." Resurrection rather than deconstruction—or at least resurrection in addition to deconstruction, for we would not deny that the former traverses the latter and has constant need of its purging powers. There is not opposition here, in our view, but difference. And the difference is one of emphasis as much as of substance. Derrida sees in the play of impossible-possible a structure of "experience in general." (Indeed at one point Derrida admits that his entire reflection on the impossible-possible may be little more than a gloss on his early exegesis of Husserl's phenomenology of the possible as a never-adequate intuition; see his *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry*).²³ We, by contrast, would want to claim it marks a specifically *religious* experience of God. And we would want to suggest that this is a difference not only of *rhetoric* (language games) but also of "reference"—that is a difference not just of names and signs but of certain truth claims (however provisional and tentative). *Différance* and God, as Derrida is the first to remind us, are *not* the same thing.

While Derrida's reflections on this subject do open up new ways of thinking about faith and eschatology, it does not particularly interest Derrida—a self-avowed atheist—to pursue these issues in a specifically theological or theistic manner. It would appear that Derrida admires and applauds thinkers like Caputo, Hart, Olthuis, and others who do this, but it is not *his* thing. Yes, he will go so far as to declare the impossible-possible paradox of pardon/gift/justice/hospitality as a general "messianic" structure of all experience; but he will not see it as his business to

pronounce on the authentically theistic or atheistic import of any given *messianism*. The closest Derrida's reflection comes to religion is in the guise of his "messianicity without messianism," a form of vigilant openness to the incoming events of *all our experiences*—sacred or profane; good or evil; loving or violent. Derrida, in short, is more concerned with the everyday (every moment) incoming of events than in the truth or otherwise of some divine advent. The other that leaps towards you from this in-coming moment may be a "monster slouching towards Bethlehem to be born" (Yeats) or a God of peace who lays down his life for love of mankind. There is no real way of judging.

It is for this reason that Derrida refrains from responding one way or another to any particular God-claim. He speaks of the "spectral" rather than specifically "revealed" structure of such incoming. But what his deconstructive reading of the impossible-possible certainly does help us to perform is a thoroughgoing purge of all "purist" or "dogmatic" notions of possibility as an immanently unfolding power blind to the invention of otherness which alone makes events happen. And this deconstructive critique of inherited ontotheological notions of both potentiality and presence marks, we believe, an invaluable opening to a new eschatological understanding of God as *posse*. Derrida points to such possible paths but he does not choose to walk them. In the heel of the hunt, he prefers ghosts to gods. He prefers, as is his wont and right, to leave matters open. He reserves judgment.

This is where we part company. But I would insist that, on this matter, anyone concerned with tolerance—religious or otherwise—would do well to take Derrida very seriously indeed. The indispensable lessons to be learned from deconstruction here are vigilance, patience, and humility.

Conclusion

Derrida's reading of the possible gestures in interesting ways, I believe, toward a new *eschatological* understanding of "the possible God." Derrida exposes the intriguing enigma of the impossible-possible—and even links this to the "origin of faith"; but the faith in question is a deconstructive belief in the undecidable and unpredictable character of incoming everyday events (what he calls "experience in general") rather than in some special advent of the divine as such.

Despite his reservations on the religious front, however, and his preference for *khôra* over God, I believe that Derrida's approach offers crucial signposts for a new eschatology of the divine—what I term "the God who May-Be." For Derrida provides a powerful reminder that the conventional metaphysical concepts of the possible—as *dumanis*, *potentia*,

or *possibilitas*—fail to appreciate its force as something higher rather than lower than the actual. We may read him accordingly as suggesting, even if he does not pursue this suggestion, that since onto-theology defined God as the absolute priority of actuality over possibility, it may now be timely to reverse or deconstruct that priority. The consequences are far-reaching and we have attempted to explore some of them elsewhere in some detail.²⁴ Suffice it to note here, in summary, the following salient implications of such a "possible God," understood—after deconstruction—as eschatological May-be:

1. The God-Who-May-Be (*posse* or *possest* in Cusanus's famous formulation) is radically transcendent—guaranteed by the mark of its "impossible-possibility."
2. The May-Be remains historically "possible"—in spite of its impossibility—only if we have *faith* in the promise of advent (the scandal of "impossible" incarnations and resurrections!); indeed, the divine May-Be reveals itself as what "possibilizes" such messianic events in the first place; it is the more-than-impossible possible. But God cannot be God if we are not God's witnesses.
3. The divine May-Be calls us—Where are you? Who are you? Who do you say that I am? Why did you not give me to drink or eat?—in the form of an on-going personal vocation; it solicits us to be made flesh, so that its kingdom may come; it summons us to be hospitable to its divine arriving. That is why we should heed Walter Benjamin's counsel to treat each moment as a portal through which the messiah may enter. God (unlike *khôra*) is constantly knocking but cannot cross the threshold into the flesh of action and passion unless we open the door.²⁵
4. Finally, the eschatological May-Be unfolds less as a can-be (*Kann-sein*) than as a should-be (*Sollen-sein*)—in short, less as an ontological power of immanent potency laboring toward fulfillment than as an ethical power of the powerless that bids us remain absolutely hospitable, that is, open to the possible Divinity whose gratuitous coming—already, now and not yet—is always a surprise and never without grace.

Our most immediate task then would be to practice and promote an ethic of hospitality—for the least we might do, as Rilke reminds us, is "to make coming into existence no more difficult for God than the earth does for spring when it wants to come."²⁶

References

1. Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life* (New York: Owl Books, 1996), p. 176.
2. Jacques Derrida in conversation with Richard Kearney, "Terror, God and the New Politics," in *Traversing the Imaginary: An Encounter with the Thought of Richard Kearney*, eds. John Manoussakis and Peter Gratton (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).
3. Derrida, "Terror, God and the New Politics."
4. Jacques Derrida, "Comme si c'était possible, 'Within Such Limits ...'" *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. 3, 1998, no. 205, pp. 497–529 (henceforth referred to as "Comme si").
5. *Ibid.* p. 498. See also *Politique de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée), 1994 (*Politics of Friendship*, [London/New York: Verso, 1997]), p. 46: "Or la pensée du 'peut-être' engage peut-être la seule pensée possible de l'événement. De l'amitié à venir et de l'amitié pour l'avenir. Car pour aimer l'amitié, il ne suffit pas de savoir porter l'autre dans le deuil, il faut aimer l'avenir. Et il n'est pas de catégorie plus juste pour l'avenir que celle du 'peut-être'. Telle pensée conjoint l'amitié, l'avenir et le peut-être pour s'ouvrir à la venue de ce qui vient, c'est-à-dire nécessairement sous le régime d'un possible dont la possible doit gagner sur l'impossible. Car un possible qui serait seulement possible (non impossible), un possible sûr et certainement possible, d'avance accessible, ce serait un mauvais possible, un possible sans avenir, un possible déjà mis de côté, si on peut dire, assure sur la vie. Ce serait un programme ou une causalité, un développement, un déroulement sans événement. La possible de ce possible impossible doit rester à la fois aussi indécidable et donc aussi décisive que l'avenir même."
6. Derrida, *Politique de l'amitié*, p. 86.
7. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 498.
8. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 515.
9. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 498.
10. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 498.
11. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 519.
12. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 516 (citing "Invention de l'autre" in *Psyché, Invention de l'autre* [Paris: Galilée 1987], p. 59). It is useful to compare and contrast Derrida's position here with that of Whitehead; see W. Dean, "Deconstruction and Process Theology," in *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 64, 1984, pp. 1–19, and D. Griffin, "Postmodern Theology," in *Varieties of Postmodern Theology*, eds. J. Holland, W. Beardslee, and D. Griffin (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 29–61.
13. Derrida, "Comme si," pp. 504–05.
14. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 520.
15. Derrida, *Politique de l'amitié*, p. 36.
16. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 505. See also John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, "Apology for the Impossible: Religion and Postmodernism," and John D. Caputo, "Apostles of the Impossible: On God and the Gift in Marion and Derrida," in *God, The Gift and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 1–19 and 185–222. "For Derrida, the experience of the impossible represents the least bad definition of deconstruction ... everything interesting for Derrida is impossible, not simply, logically or absolutely, impossible, but what he calls the impossible ... That is why Derrida can say he has spent his whole life "inviting calling promising, hoping sighing dreaming. Of the gift, of justice, of hospitality, of the incoming of the wholly other, of the impossible" (pp. 3–4). This leads Caputo to contrast "the impossible" with the "possible" in the form of a polar opposition or exclusion, e.g., "experience is really experience when it is an experience of the impossible, not when it experiences the possible" (p. 191). But while there are indeed passages in Derrida which can suggest such a move, the more nuanced position outlined in "Comme si" shies away from such a polar alternativism and speaks instead in terms of a chiasm of "impossible possibility." Of course, if one intends the "possible" in the traditional metaphysical and logical senses of *potentia* and *possibilitas*, then Caputo is correct to oppose it to "the impossible"; but as will be clear from the above, we are speaking in this essay—as is Derrida when he speaks of the "perhaps" in "Comme si"—of a radically postmetaphysical notion of possibility as *posse*: at once the possibility and impossibility of God/alterity/transcendence/infinity/incoming event. That is why, eschatologically understood, the divine *posse* or "may-be" is both already here and always still to come (again), both incarnation and in-coming. In short, the God of eschatological possibility is simultaneously given and not given, possible and impossible—or to put it in denominational terms, Christian and Jewish. For Caputo's characteristically feisty, intriguing and challenging discussion of Derrida's notion of the impossible, in comparison with Marion's concept of "saturation," see "Apostles of the Impossible," pp. 199–206.
17. See our essay, "Khôra or God?" in *Questioning God*, John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon (eds.) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 2001.
18. Derrida, "Comme si," pp. 516–517.
19. Derrida, "Comme si," pp. 516–17. The aporia of the impossible-possible may be said to be another name for deconstruction: "the beating pulse of the possible im-possible, of the impossible as condition of the possible." From within the very heartbeat of the impossible, writes Derrida, "one could thus hear the pulse or pulsion of deconstruction" ("Comme si," p. 519).
20. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 519, my italics.
21. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 519. This crucial passage reads in full as follows: "Mais comment est-il possible, demandera-t-on, que ce qui rend possible rende impossible cela même qu'il rend possible, donc, et introduise, mais comme sa chance, une chance non négative, un principe de ruine dans cela même qu'il promet ou promeut? Le in- de l'im-possible est sans doute radical, implacable, indéniabile. Mais il n'est pas simplement négatif ou dialectique, il introduit au possible, il en est aujourd'hui l'huissier; il le fait venir, il le fait tourner selon une temporalité anachronique ou selon une filiation incroyable—qui est d'ailleurs, aussi bien, l'origine de la foi. Car il excède le savoir et conditionne l'adresse à l'autre, inscrit tout théorème dans l'espace et le temps d'un témoignage ('je te parle, crois moi'). Autrement dit, et c'est l'introduction à une aporie sans exemple, une aporie de la logique plutôt qu'une aporie sans exemple, une aporie de la logique plutôt qu'une aporie logique, voilà une impasse de l'indécidable par laquelle une décision ne peut pas ne pas passer. Toute responsabilité doit passer par cette aporie qui, loin de la paralyser, met en mouvement une nouvelle pensée du possible" ("Comme si," p. 519). At a practical level we might draw a parallel here with Leonardo da Vinci's "impossible machines"—from flying and diving apparatuses to a system of shafts and cogwheels for generating enormous heat to rival the sun—which were sketched in his unpublished notebooks but whose "possibility" remained a perpetual promise and spur to further creativity and inventiveness (see Owen Gingerich, "Leonardo da Vinci: Codex Leicester," *Museum of Science* magazine [Boston], Winter 1997).
22. Derrida, "Comme si," pp. 518–519.
23. Derrida, "Comme si," p. 517: "possibilité de l'impossible, impossibilité du possible, l'expérience en générale etc." See Derrida's admission of his debt to Husserl's notions of possibility/impossibility on p. 521, note 27: "J'avais d'ailleurs, il y a bien longtemps, dans l'espace de la phénoménologie husserlienne, analysé de façon analogue une possibilité de forme apparemment négative, une im-possibilité, l'impossibilité de l'intuition pleine et immédiate, la 'possibilité essentielle de la non-intuition', la 'possibilité de la crise' comme 'crise du logos'. Or cette possibilité de l'impossibilité, disais-je alors, n'est pas simplement négative: le piège devient aussi une chance: ... cette possibilité (de la crise) reste liée pour Husserl au mouvement même de la vérité et à la production de l'objectivité idéale: celle-ci a en effet un besoin essentiel de l'écriture" (*De la grammatologie* [Paris: Minuit, 1967], p. 60; *Introduction à l'Origine de la géométrie de Husserl* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962], p. 162 *passim*).
24. See my *Poétique du Possible* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984) and *The God Who May Be*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
25. Derrida himself does not entertain or embrace, to my knowledge, such a personalized relationship between the Perhaps and human selves. The deconstructive structure of messianicity remains removed from such messianist commitments, preferring *khôra* to God. And as he puts it, "you cannot address a prayer to *Khôra*, only to someone or something" ("Terror, God and the New Politics").
26. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), p. 63.