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RICHARD KEARNEY'S  
ANATHEISTIC WAGER  
*Philosophy, Theology, Poetics*

Edited by Chris Doude van Troostwijk and  
Matthew Clemente

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*For Emma and Nathan  
and  
for Dominic and Jonathan*

# 11 Recognition and Hospitality: Coming Back to Odysseus's Coming Home

Pierre Drouot

Translated by Sarah Horton

FROM THE BEGINNING of the Prelude of *Anatheism* (A, 13), Richard Kearney endeavors to identify in the texts of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions decisive experiences that allow us to infer a consistency in the Abrahamic religions: the existence of fundamental moments of hospitality, of “wagers” that consist in welcoming a stranger even before recognizing his “wholly other” nature—his divinity. The annunciation (like the reception of the word) and before it the identification of the divine are said to take place against the background of an availability to the stranger, of a hospitality that, moreover, threatens to reverse into hostility and thereby to prevent all recognition.

This connection between a primitive welcome and recognition (even if this latter does not have the same object) seems to me also to inhabit the Homeric texts, especially the *Odyssey*.<sup>1</sup> What I propose in this study is to examine how these concepts are there arranged and how the final ordeals of Odysseus help us think this sometimes-thwarted interdependence between the concepts of hospitality and recognition.

I

The notions of recognition and hospitality could initially seem quite foreign [*étrangère*] to each other. One is more theoretical and refers us to the establishment of knowledge or of identity; the other is of a practical order, defining a duty, a demand, and an action of a moral nature. The first evokes a movement of assimilation, of integration by identification (or distinction) of the unknown to the known, and the second, an attitude of openness to the stranger [*étranger*]. From this point of view, they can even appear contradictory, the one consisting in absorbing the stranger whereas the other commands one to make oneself available to him. What motivates this short “course” is, however, the hypothesis that these two notions are intimately linked: less removed from each other than they may appear, they seem to me interdependent, and thinking of them together can permit me to establish,

if not to clarify, problems that they raise conjointly.<sup>2</sup> Their first commonality is of a formal nature: the very concepts of recognition and hospitality do indeed have a profound relation, which makes them what I will call “mirror concepts.” Both indeed bear within themselves an ambivalence that is of the order of symmetry.

Beginning in the preface to the collection of studies he devotes to it, Paul Ricœur brings out the polysemy of the term *reconnaissance*.<sup>3</sup> Identification by oneself of something other than oneself, it can also apply to oneself, be “mutual,” and moreover designate—in French at least—gratitude toward some other. Following him, I retain from these different meanings contained in a same word the “reversal, on the very level of the grammar, of the verb *to recognize* from its use in the active voice to its use in the passive voice: ‘I actively recognize things, persons, myself; I ask to be recognized by others.’”<sup>4</sup> Mirror and symmetry: recognition as identification is an act of which I am the subject; social recognition is recognition by the other—received—of which I am the object. In the same notion, two inverse positions are expressed.

In the same way, there is in recognition a symmetry in the relation of oneself to the other. Recognition as identification, as I insisted above, implies a centripetal movement of appropriation, of incorporation, of integration to oneself of a foreign [*étranger*] object that one identifies with the known: I recognize an individual, a thing, a form, a style by relating them to knowledge that permits me to *identify* them, to *assimilate* them (to grasp them as the same or to distinguish them as other). By contrast, recognition as gratitude is, conversely, a centrifugal movement from oneself toward the other by which one assumes a debt with regard to another [*autrui*]: showing recognition is no longer bringing the other back to oneself but offering oneself to another [*autre*]. On the one hand, I incorporate an object by assimilating it; on the other, I offer myself to another subject. Philosophers such as Hegel or Sartre, not to mention Levinas, have, moreover, observed that in recognition by the other and even more in social recognition or mutual recognition, there takes place still more intimately a mirror relationship from oneself to the other, by which each one, recognizing the other, recognizes himself via the other—these two positions, a priori opposed, of identification of oneself and of impetus toward the other are here profoundly intermingled.

An analogous principle of symmetry, if not of confusion of inverses, inhabits the concept of hospitality. This is first due to the oft-noted fact that the term *hôte*<sup>5</sup> that is linked to it designates the welcomed subject as well as the welcoming subject. I could make the same remarks here that I made regarding recognition: the word has the same value in the active voice as in the passive voice—the one who accomplishes the welcome is an *hôte* at the same time as the one who benefits from it. In mirror image, it designates the movement of welcome of the other (from the other to oneself) and the movement toward the other (from oneself to

the other). This homonymy cannot be considered as only accidental, as Ricœur still seems able to imagine concerning recognition. This latter indeed does not designate exactly the same action and does not nominalize the same verb when it changes voice: recognizing an object can be similar to but is not the same as recognizing the worth of a man, and still less is it the same as feeling gratitude [*reconnaissance*] for the same or another. As for the symmetry of the word *hôte*, it concerns the same relation (hospitality). It designates the active subject and the passive subject of the same action, of the same verb (to welcome) by which, at the same time and symmetrically, each is the *hôte* of the other.

The other mirror effect that is lodged in hospitality is due to its etymology, masterfully commented on by Benveniste and taken up again by Richard Kearney: its etymology bears within itself the risk of its reversal into hostility. Via their common Latin source (from *hostire*, to compensate, to equalize), hospitality is indeed intimately linked to it. In their common genealogy that the *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* [Historical Dictionary of the French Language] proposes,<sup>6</sup> we thus find as many terms referring to welcome and to treatment as equals (*hostis*, host/guest [*hôte*];<sup>7</sup> hotel; hospital; hospitality) as we do words suggesting enmity, opposition or violence (*hostia*, victim; *hostes*, enemy; *hostis*, army (enemy); hostage; hostile). In the everyday practice of the language, this relation (or this threat) remains alive: the French *hôte* (or even more the English *host*) is very close to the words *hostile* (*hostile*) or *hostilité* (*hostility*). Hospitality, which rests on a form of recognition of the other as an equal, is thus an uneasy term that leads to the possibility of its perversion, if not its inversion, into its symmetric (or negative) counterpart that is hostility—which is anchored on the contrary in a denial of recognition that it maintains.

## II

These successive remarks on the concepts of recognition and hospitality persuade me of their formal commonality: both are inhabited by an analogous principle of symmetry. But it appears that they are also mirrors of each other, insofar as it is the same relation that they allow one to conceive: that between oneself and the stranger, the same and the other. More profoundly, it seems that they are more intimately linked insofar as hospitality rests on a form of minimal recognition: that of a community, if not of an equality, between the host [*hôte*] and his guest [*hôte*],<sup>8</sup> and leads to other forms of recognition (mutual recognition, gratitude, and so on). Conversely, hostility and the denial of hospitality that finds its hinge symmetrically on a crisis of recognition. This is what reading the *Odyssey*, notably the central and ambivalent passage of the visit to “Alkinoös the generous,” confirms for us.

The question of the welcome of the other runs through the *Odyssey*, which presents Odysseus disarmed and abandoned by the gods to chance and to the

good will of his fellows. Marcel Conche, in one of his *Essais sur Homère [Essays on Homer]*,<sup>9</sup> takes up several passages in which he benefits from this hospitality without condition of chance hosts. Nausikaa: "Stranger, since you seem not like a thoughtless man, nor a mean one . . . now, since it is our land and our city that you have come to, you shall not lack for clothing nor anything else, of those gifts which should befall the unhappy suppliant upon his arrival" (VI, 186, 191–193).<sup>10</sup> Her father, Alkinoös, exhorted by the "aged hero Echeneos": "Alkinoös, this is not the better way, nor is it fitting that the guest [*hôte*] should sit on the ground beside the hearth, in the ashes. . . . But come, raise the stranger up and seat him on a silver-studded chair, and tell your heralds to mix in more wine for us, so we can pour a libation to Zeus who delights in the thunder, and he goes together with suppliants, whose rights are sacred. And let the housekeeper from her stores give the guest [*hôte*] a supper" (VII, 159–166, quotation modified in accordance with the French). Eumaios (Book XIV, 48), or Penelope. Telemachos himself is welcomed as a stranger by Menelaos, and Odysseus, at the very moment in which he does not benefit from it, remembers having frequently submitted himself to this duty of hospitality: "For I, I too have lived happily among men in a rich house, and I often gave thus to vagabonds, without asking either their name or their needs" (XVII, 419–421 and XIX, 75–78).<sup>11</sup> This obligation to welcome from which the man of a thousand ruses profits is perhaps not entirely unconditioned: it is most often justified in religious terms. By Eumaios, for example: "Stranger, I have no right to deny the guest [*hôte*], not even if one came to me who was meaner than you," (XIV, 56–57, quotation modified in accordance with the French). And when he is justifying himself, like Nausikaa before him: "since all strangers and wanderers are sacred in the sight of Zeus, and the gift is a light and a dear one" (VI, 207–208). It nevertheless implies what Conche calls a "sense of humanity": this duty toward the stranger or the beggar, as wretched as he may be, manifests a spontaneous recognition of a common humanity.

If hospitality thus induces a form of recognition, it is that, very general, of the humanity of the other. All other recognition is secondary: one can even say that in this welcome of the suffering, the other is found a form of abstraction from the habitual mechanisms of judgment linked to "recognition as identification." To welcome thus is to refuse to identify the other with his appearance, mistrusting it in order to actively recognize a man in him, whatever his outfit may be. Nausikaa scolds her servants for having fled before the terrifying appearance of Odysseus: "Do you think this is some enemy coming against us?" (VI, 200). His "nobility" and beauty appear to her only once she has welcomed him as a man—and he has washed ("A while ago he seemed an unpromising man to me. Now he even resembles one of the gods, who hold high heaven" VI, 242–243). Alkinoös in his turn wonders about Odysseus's appearance (as soon as he commits himself to welcoming him), imagining that he could be "one of the

immortals come down from heaven" (VII, 199). And when he arrives in Ithaka, this latter is unrecognizable: Eumaios before Penelope offers him lodging without recognizing him.

In these experiences of the gift of hospitality a dimension of *occultation of identity* thus shows through: Odysseus, formerly master of dissimulation, is himself dirty, in rags, or disguised—unrecognizable, *inassimilable*. Welcome is given without knowing—or without knowing anything other than the humanity of the received stranger—and in the active refusal of a judgment of appearances. The revelation of the identity of the "stranger," carefully staged, is second in relation to the welcome. First one bathes, one lodges, one feeds Odysseus, and only then does one ask him to introduce himself: "When they had made libation and drunk," the invited ones having returned to their homes, Arete, by the side of "Alkinoös the generous," could finally (and only) address to him "winged words: 'Stranger and friend, I myself first have a question to ask you. What man are you, and whence?'" (VII, 227, 236–238) Recognition, against the probably common intuition (and temptation), is thus second with relation to hospitality. Perhaps one can even say that the condition of hospitality *stricto sensu* finds itself in the nonrecognition of the guest [*hôte*], whose foreignness [*étrangereté*] (he is first called "the stranger [*l'étranger*]" before being "the beggar," "the suppliant") is carefully preserved until the welcome is consummated.

This observation of a primacy of hospitality over recognition is verified in the account of the inverse experience that Odysseus gives to Alkinoös. It is all the more striking (and justly famous) because it immediately follows the moment of hospitality commented on above and is even contemporary with it: it is in Book IX, in recognition of the welcome he has received, that Odysseus, reveals his name. "Now first I will tell you my name, so that all of you may know me, and I hereafter, escaping the day without pity, be your friend and guest [*hôte*], though the home where I live is far away from you. I am Odysseus son of Laertes" (IX, 16–19). Then he narrates his inhospitable adventure. In this very instant of virtuous hospitality that leads to recognition as identification, as mutual, and as gratitude, Odysseus recounts, after the brief account of an unfortunate hostility (pillage, feast, and vengeance), a negative experience of a refusal of hospitality that only draws greater force therefrom: the visit to the Cyclops Polyphemos.

The stake, which concerns the tension between hospitality and hostility, is set from the start of the adventure: Odysseus and his companions, wondering about the Cyclopes, want to verify "whether they are savage and violent, and without justice, or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly" (IX, 175–176). The confirmation of the intuition of Odysseus's "proud heart" (IX, 213–215) comes quickly: Polyphemos, whose profusion of riches is meticulously described<sup>12</sup> (his scorn of duties owes nothing to a possible poverty that

could explain it, if not excuse it), mocks the request for welcome made “at [his] knees” and “in accordance with the custom of guests [*hôtes*]” that is made by the suppliant: “Stranger, you are a simple fool, or come from far off, when you tell me to avoid the wrath of the gods or fear them” (IX, 267, 268, 273–274).<sup>13</sup> The Cyclops is first a single-eyed monster in the manner by which he excludes himself from the life of humans—the “civilized” life, consisting in respect for the law, for justice, and for the gods: in his *inhospitality*. The presentation of the Cyclopes begins with a long list of their breaches of human rules (IX, 105–115). The eye trained on his force, his interest, and his riches, the monocular monster has no other eye for the gods<sup>14</sup> and duties, and he does exactly the opposite of what everyone owes (and what Odysseus’s listener Alkinoös does) to others—instead of sheltering them, he imprisons them; instead of caring for them, he dismembers them; instead of feeding them, he devours them. “[H]e . . . sprang up and reached for my companions, caught up two together and slapped them, like killing puppies, against the ground, and the brains ran all over the floor, soaking the ground. Then he cut them up limb by limb and got supper ready, and like a lion reared in the hills, without leaving anything, ate them, entrails, flesh and the marrowy bones alike” (IX, 287–293).

This transgressive account, by its uncommon violence, thus seems to me to stage cathartically the monstrosity of a denial of hospitality at the very moment in which it is generously accorded. It also hinges perversely on the question of recognition. Polyphemos’s first reflex is to seek information about the voyagers, concerned perhaps to know who they are (or, more certainly, to know their number and the promises of meat that they represent). That of Odysseus, as a result, is to resort to ruse—and dissimulation—that aims to prevent recognition by cultivating illusion: first by lying about their docking conditions with “crafty words” (IX, 282, quotation modified), then by elaborating a strategy for flight based on the blinding of Polyphemos. He will proceed by that, consisting in putting out his single eye, but he will rely above all on the fact of keeping silent, and even denying his true identity. If the neighbors of the Cyclops consequently renounce assisting him, it is because they do not understand him when he answers that his aggressor is “nobody”: the ruse works because Odysseus gives himself over to nonrecognition and even to annihilation in saying that this is his name when the Cyclops, reserving for him the perverse “gift” of eating him last, asks him his name before making him his guest [*hôte*]. It is to this ruse concerning recognition as much as to the use of the olive-wood pike—the violence of which answers that of the monster—that Odysseus and his companions owe their liberation. And it is to Odysseus’s “proud” will to finally reveal his true identity that he owes the curse that will condemn him to return home, many years later, “in bad case, with the loss of all his companions, in someone else’s ship, and find troubles in his household” (IX, 534–535).

## III

This Cyclopean episode, presented as the inauguration of his curse and his quest, is thus situated by Odysseus himself (before he has even lived it) in relation to another passage of the *Odyssey* that constitutes its temporary outcome and that immediately follows this account told to Alkinoös (it is in one of his vessels, soon cursed in its turn, that he reaches his shore); the return to Ithaka. And now the final books that develop it present precisely these “other pains,” promised by Polyphemos, as linked to another denial of hospitality: the wandering of Odysseus, marked by experiences of hospitality, is thus framed by two spectacular ordeals linked to an extreme inhospitality.

The theme of hospitality is not most evident in the passage concerning the return to Ithaka. As Odysseus is indeed arriving *at his home*, it is apparently not so much a question of hospitality as of *property* or *legitimacy*—but that is to forget that he disembarks there disguised as a “beggar,” and that it is his experience as a stranger (and a guest [*hôte*]) that is here related. More profoundly, the reader of this passage is first gripped by an account of vengeance in which the dramatic stake concerns more directly the problem of fidelity (and treason), be it that of servants, friends, wife, or son. The question of recognition and of its tests [*épreuves*], which has so greatly interested the commentators, thus can itself seem second: Paul Ricoeur, who analyzes it from this point of view, observes that this “history of recognition finds itself inextricably intertwined with one of vengeance. The rhythm of this second story governs that of recognition itself, to the point that the degrees of recognition are stages along the path of vengeance that ends with a massacre of pitiless cruelty.”<sup>15</sup> However, if the questions of the recognition of one’s own, of its denial, of its successive tests and proofs [*(é)preuves*],<sup>16</sup> and of its final violent establishment are truly those around which the narrative is organized, it seems to me all the same that this quest is triggered by a failure of hospitality, and that this latter is therefore an equally fundamental stake.

Even though it has very often attracted the attention of the commentators, the question of recognition can indeed here seem secondary. Skillfully and constantly delayed, it appears more to constitute a strategy than to represent a difficulty. Thus Odysseus lies first to Eumaios, despite the proofs [*gages*] he could have given: he questions him after welcoming him, but also after confirming to him his fears concerning the suitors. Then he lies to Telemachos, and finally to Penelope, before whom Odysseus at first refuses to appear. When she finally meets him, in Book XVII, she welcomes him in the guise of a stranger before even having glimpsed (and much less, therefore, recognized) him. Their first discussion, placed anew under the ambiguous sign of a thwarted hospitality, could be the moment of the greatly desired recognition: Odysseus, who does not doubt Penelope’s fidelity, answers

her identifying questions only with a new dissimulation. "Stranger, I myself first have a question to ask you. What man are you and whence? Where is your city? Your parents?" (XIX, 104–105). This is because in this inhospitable experience that is his own, recognition would for the moment be a threat and must be deferred. This dimension of risk—and hostility—is perceived in the following passage itself, when for the first time a human being recognizes Odysseus in spite of him: his nurse, Eurykleia, who, while washing his feet, remembers his scar. Far from joining in the emotion of his faithful servant, Odysseus threatens her with great violence, promising her death if she reveals his identity. "Nurse of mine though you are, I will not spare you, when I kill the rest of the serving maids in my palace" (XIX, 489–490). If there is thus a problem linked to recognition, which will manifest itself at the end of the course with Penelope and Laertes, to whom it will be necessary to give signs of it, it is deliberately created and maintained by Odysseus himself to serve his hostile intentions and confound his enemies, or more exactly to put their sense of hospitality to the test.

Thus, even though it is indeed a question in the end for Odysseus of separating the faithful and the traitors, what first characterizes them is rather the respect or disrespect that they manifest for the duty of hospitality toward the one who wishes to present himself in the guise of a beggar. The friends of Odysseus, to whom he finally reveals himself, indeed first shine by the welcome they grant to the stranger, independently of the recognition of his identity, their fidelity to the vanished king only appearing in a second moment. He is thus first welcomed by Eumaios, the "noble swineherd," who, an attentive livestock farmer like the Cyclops, is a sort of anti-Polyphemos, who saves him from the aggression of the dogs and feeds him. Hospitality is given before all recognition and before all request for identification: "Come, old sir, along to my shelter, so that you also first may be filled to contentment with food and wine, then tell me where you come from" (XIV, 45–47). In the following passage, the swineherd delivers an assured speech in praise of hospitality (referred to his vanished master, who, he confirms, was a great practitioner of it), on the occasion of which he manifests his friendship for the regretted master. After him, the servant Eurykleia, his "nurse," will manifest a hospitable attention before recognizing him. Penelope, for her part, calls to Telemachos (who will himself have the occasion to make himself the spokesperson for the principle of welcome) before the suitors in these terms: "[S]uch a thing has been done now, here in our palace, and you permitted our stranger guest [*hôte*] to be so outrageously handled. How must it be now, if the guest [*hôte*] who sits in our household is made to suffer so from bitter brutality? That must be your outrage and shame as people see it" (XVIII, 221–225, translation modified).<sup>17</sup> Without even having yet seen (and much less, therefore, recognized) him, she grants the "stranger" lodging, care, and food—before manifesting her fidelity, and then, much later, identifying him.

In this virtuous course, hospitality will thus be first, fidelity second, identification third. It definitely seems, therefore, that the absence of recognition does not in itself pose a problem as long as hospitality, before fidelity, is gained: it does not prevent Odysseus from manifesting his satisfaction with regard to Eumaios as with regard to Penelope, and that he "was happy that his livelihood was so well cared for while he was absent" (XIV, 526–527). The effect of a calculated dissimulation, it is, like in the Cyclops's cave, more a strategy than an obstacle,<sup>18</sup> which has as its goal to confound enemies first characterized precisely by their failures of hospitality. What it is a question of recognizing here, as the considered choice of the wretched suppliant's costume testifies, is thus, before the wanderer's identity or legitimacy, the inhabitants' capacity for welcome.

This dissimulation under the guise of an unrecognizable stranger thus permits Odysseus to convince himself of the nobility and fidelity of his household. It also permits him to identify a blatant failure of hospitality on the part of those who thus become his adversaries. This latter first manifests itself by an "impudence" consisting in imposing on the hospitality of Odysseus's family (and especially of Penelope). The last books of the *Odyssey* thus describe a perversion of hospitality by which "suppliants," presented as parasites, resort to "fables" to move the masters of the house. Profiting from their weaknesses, they neither receive nor are received but impose themselves by lies and ruse, rendering impossible all reciprocity and all recognition. Besides these profiteers, the text also denounces the excess of the "suitors, who have no regard for anyone in their minds, nor pity" (XIV, 81–95). Presented as impious ones worse than pirates, they call Polyphemos to mind by their *hubris* as by their scorn of the gods. Deviant guests [*hôtes*], they reveal by menacing it the confidence that is the foundation of hospitality—which is expressed, in a gripping turn of events, by the fact that they are precisely the first to suspect the motives of the true-false suppliant Odysseus, accusing him of putative abuses (which are only their own) and suspecting him of preferring alms to work.<sup>19</sup>

This *impudence* of the welcomed one that threatens hospitality is found equally in the manner that suitors and servants treat the anonymous suppliant under the guise of which Odysseus chooses to continue dissimulating himself. Among them, the goatherd, Melanthios, is the first to reveal his "impertinence" in Book XVII: attacking the "bothersome beggar who spoils the fun of feasting" (XVII, 220), he strikes him with his staff. He repeats these insults and threats in Book XX: "Stranger, are you still to be here in the house, to pester the gentlemen with your begging? Will you not take yourself outside and elsewhere? I think that now you and I can no longer part, until we have tried our fists. There is nothing orderly about your begging" (XX, 178–182). His sister, the servant, Melanthe, also lashes out at him twice: in Book XVIII, she calls him a "[w]retched stranger . . . whose wits are distracted" (XVIII, 327) and wants to frighten him in Book XIX: "you may be

forced to get out, with a torch thrown at you" (XIX, 69). It is faced with another suppliant, the "public beggar," Iros, "known to fame for his ravenous belly," that Odysseus finds himself condemned to impose himself as a guest [*hôte*].<sup>20</sup> Among the suitors, Antinoös, like Eurymachos after him, manifests a sometimes violent aversion to the suppliant (he threatens him with a "stool") in several places and, above all, a marked denial of hospitality. Seeing in him a "bum [*gueux*]" (or simply "that"), he questions Eumaios: "Do we not already have enough other vagabonds, and bothersome beggars to ruin our feasting?" (XVII, 376–377).

Such reactions can serve as foils giving to Odysseus. "Give, dear friend. You seem to me, of all the Achaians, not the worst, but the best. You look like a king. Therefore, you ought to give me a better present of your food than the others have done" (XVII, 415–418). To Eumaios, Telemachos, and Penelope they are the occasion to remember anew the terms of this duty. Equally, they permit the denouncing of a profound human fault, which rests on a vicious hospitality. It is from this, as before, in the *Iliad*, where Menelaos justifies war by the abuse of hospitality that Paris supposedly committed, that ensues hostility and the desire for vengeance, if not for recognition. Odysseus, faced with the impudence of the suitors, from then on feels warranted in the violence he exercises precisely against the least hospitable of them, aiming first at Antinoös (his first arrow being for his "tender neck"), Eurymachos, the servants guilty of having taken pleasure with them (including, therefore, Melantho), and finally Melanthios, whose cruel punishment is commensurate with his moral failure. "They cut off, with the pitiless bronze, his nose and his ears, tore off his private parts and gave them to the dogs to feed on raw, and lopped off his hands and feet, in fury of anger" (XXII, 474–476). This end of wandering, which one is accustomed to presenting as happy, reveals, however, a paradoxical Odysseus who, in the name of the duty of hospitality (and of the failures thereof which he was able to judge), authorizes himself to furiously massacre the suitors, sparing only those close to him. Ultimately concentrated on the desire to find again his goods and his household, he is deaf to the pleas of the suppliants and finishes them off with the greatest violence, which only the intervention *ex machina* of Zeus and Athena will prevent from degenerating into a full-scale war.

This ambivalent ending warns us anew of the necessity of hospitality, the beauty and fragility of which the *Odyssey* has for several millennia ceaselessly painted for us. A fundamental demand taking precedence over the search for recognition, it is nevertheless the condition of all recognition and ultimately concerns nothing less than social peace.

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## Notes

1. Unless otherwise specified, all citations from the *Odyssey* refer to Richmond Lattimore's translation. Further, all spellings of names from the *Odyssey* follow Lattimore. Page references are indicated between brackets in the text.
2. According to the introductory expression of Paul Ricoeur in his *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, the title of which he justifies by opposing it to the pretention of a "theory." Ricoeur, *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, 14. [*The Course of Recognition*, xi.]
3. The French *reconnaissance*, as Drouot will explain, means both "recognition" and "gratitude." Except for one instance in which I rendered it as "gratitude" (followed by *reconnaissance* in brackets), I have translated it as "recognition" throughout, but the reader should bear the other meaning in mind. [Translator's note.]
4. Ricoeur, *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, 13. [*The Course of Recognition*, x. Translation modified.]
5. The French *hôte* means both "host" and "guest." When I have translated it as "guest," I have included the French word in brackets to remind the reader of its linguistic connection to the term "hospitality." [Translator's note.]
6. I am referring especially to the illuminating and stimulating table that he proposes in complement of the article "Hôte." *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, dir. Alain Rey, Le Robert, Paris, 1992.
7. As Kearney explains in the passage Drouot references above, the Latin *hostis*, like the French *hôte*, means both "host" and "guest." [Translator's note.]
8. Note that this phrase could also have been translated as "the guest and his host." [Translator's note.]
9. Conche, "L'humanité d'Homère," ["Homer's Humanity"] in *Essais sur Homère*, 113–138.
10. Translation slightly modified, following Drouot's quotation of Philippe Jaccottet's French translation. [Translator's note.]
11. Here Lattimore's translation differs significantly enough from Jaccottet's that I have simply translated Jaccottet's French. [Translator's note.]
12. The recurring expression "fat flocks" that designates Polyphemos' beasts is all the less gratuitous because it is thanks to their fleshy paunches that Odysseus and his companions will be able to escape from him (and steal them from him).
13. Translation from Jaccottet's French. [Translator's note.]
14. He is capable of this because he is not properly human and benefits from the divine protection of his father Poseidon.
15. Ricoeur, *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, 125–126. [*The Course of Recognition*, 72–73. Translation modified.]
16. Here *épreuves* means "tests," and *preuves* means "proofs"; the play on words cannot be translated into English. [Translator's note.]



17. Compare the reproach to Melanthis at the beginning of Book XIX.

18. He will reveal his true identity to Telemachos in a beautiful scene of recognition close to, though reversed from, that of *Temps retrouvé* [*Time Regained*] (commented on in Ricœur, *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, 105–116 [61–68]) only when this is necessary to organize the combat (Book XVI, 188: “I am your father . . .”).

19. Notably in the mouths of Iros and Eurymachos in Book XVIII.

20. Book XVIII, 1–2. One should note that Odysseus, for his part, says that he is ready to share the hospitality of the masters of the house (“This doorsill is big enough for both of us,” 17) and that the conflict which follows, to the great entertainment of the suitors who rejoice in the wretchedness in which they maintain the suppliants, is the doing of this beggar who desires exclusivity, finally condemned by Odysseus: “But you must no longer try to be the king of guests [*hôtes*] and beggars,” 106. [Quotation modified in accordance with the French.]

## 12 The Twofold Face of God: An Anatheistic Reading of the Sacrifice of Abraham

Jacob Rogozinski

### I

Anatheism: “faith beyond faith in a God beyond God” (A, 3). How are we to think of this twofold “beyond”? *Who* is this God beyond God? How does he reveal himself, and in what sense can he still be called “God”? *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* by Richard Kearney raises these questions, among others. According to Kearney, the conversion, the *metanoia*—or, to say it in Hebrew, the *teshuva*—which leads to anatheism, implies the crossing of an “atheistic moment,” the experience of distress at the “death of God,” the opening of a new, unique, heretofore unheard-of experience of the divine. But this ordeal through which the human subject passes coincides with a strange *metanoia* of God himself—“*anatheos*, the return of God after the disappearance of God” (A, 5)—as if God needed to fade away, to be lost before returning, transfigured. Kearney does not hesitate to describe this double movement as a *kenosis*, a self-emptying and a death of the sovereign God, the almighty Lord, a “kenotic emptying out of transcendence into the heart of the world’s body, becoming a God beneath us rather than a God beyond us” (A, 91).

Does this new face of God only arise out of a religious crisis? Does it only approach us *after* a moment of doubt and despair? Or has it been present from the beginning, hidden behind the glorious mask of the “omni-God”? Is anatheism only posttheism, the possibility of a sobered faith, more humble and more ecumenical, in times of triumphant secularism? Does it allow us, too, to come back to the secret truth of faith, a truth “hidden since the foundation of the world” (Matthew 13:35)?

It is the latter of these options that Kearney chooses. The anatheistic *metanoia* is rooted indeed in a singular experience, a “moment of epiphany,” that he detects in the inaugural scenes, the founding moments of the three monotheistic religions. From Abraham’s welcome of the three unknown men, to the visitation of Mary, to Muhammad’s ecstasy in the Mount Hira cave, each case deals with the meeting of an