Hospitality in and beyond Religions and Politics

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Abstract

This paper examines Derrida's treatment of the quasi-transcendental structure of hospitality, particularly as it pertains to religious traditions, conceptions of human rights, and modern secularism. It begins by looking to the account Derrida presents in 'Hostipitality', focusing especially on his treatment of the work of Louis Massignon. It then proceeds to an exploration of Kant's concept of cosmopolitanism and some of its contemporary descendants before returning to Derrida's treatment of hospitality by way of his critique of this Kantian heritage. The paper argues both that religious traditions exhibit (though, perhaps, often not explicitly) the kind of structures of openness to difference to which Derrida's notion of hospitality refers, and that modern Western conceptions of secularism too easily preclude understanding and fostering those aspects of religious traditions which can contribute to more peaceful coexistence in pluralistic environments.

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One can reasonably posit that cultural, political, or religious identities are always produced and maintained both diachronically and synchronically. Yet, there always remains within the structures that constitute such identities an inescapable openness to otherness. This paper intends to examine this openness to others by way of the idea of

hospitality as it appears in the work of Jacques Derrida. As we will see, the concept of hospitality has a complex inheritance that is both religious and political, and in each of these spheres it marks a certain demand or responsibility that is at once conditional and absolute. Precisely these intersections make the consideration of hospitality, in both its religious and political resonances, particularly useful for thinking about the meaning and value of religious pluralism in the contemporary world.

The title of Derrida's essay 'Hostipitality' alludes to two Latin words: *hostis* and *hospes*. *Hostis* designates a stranger or foreigner (and sometimes, though not always, an enemy), while *hospes* signifies both one who extends welcome to a stranger and, by extension, one who receives welcome. Drawing on this etymological history, Derrida invokes an aporia that appears along the way of a certain anticipatory trajectory: for one to be hospitable, it is necessary that one be ready to accommodate a stranger and therefore that one be able to anticipate his or her arrival.[1] The conditions for the possibility of this anticipation stretch out beyond the particular situation of the hospitable welcome, such that it is necessary to have in place structures of meaning according to which a welcome can be sincerely expressed. Indeed, any cultural tradition (especially as it is manifest in what we might call being 'cultured' or 'sociable' or 'polite') will not be rigorously distinguishable from these structures of hospitality set up within it. At the same time, however, the calculated readiness for the guest grounded in these cultural structures precludes the possibility of real hospitality; a welcome given simply according to prescribed customs and in a situation entirely predetermined by plans made in advance remains, no matter how hospitable it seems, *in*hospitable to the visitor in his or her uniqueness. In other words, a welcome given purely according to calculated rules of etiquette – without any risk for insult or embarrassment (as if such an indemnification were possible) – turns a blind eye to the possibility for surprise, for an unforeseen gift from the guest that would disturb the host's *heimlichkeit*. To protect oneself against the surprise event of the guest, against the possibility of being unprepared, is to close off from the beginning any possibility of the arrival of the guest as such and therefore the possibility offering true hospitality. Yet, Derrida's conclusion is not that the customary welcome, which manifests the finite ethical demands of a conditional hospitality, is unnecessary or harmful. On the contrary (and we will explore this point more fully below), it is only in and through the conditional and customary forms of hospitality that the absolute, unconditional hospitality that both motivates and

problematizes these is manifest. For now, let us simply note the aporetic character of the structure of hospitality: what it requires is that one be prepared to be unprepared, that one open up one's home to the extent that it longer feels like home. As Caputo maintains, the question that lies at the core of Derrida's concept of hospitality is: 'How to prepare for one for whom the only adequate preparation is to confess that we cannot be prepared for what is coming? How to be un/prepared?' (Caputo 2000, 59)

This paradoxical demand, Derrida observes, is not simply given as if hospitality were only a concept among other concepts, one that happens to lead us to a certain aporia. On the contrary, we can generalize the impossible possibility of hospitality across all concepts as such, insofar as they are limited by and open onto their opposites, their others. This is, Derrida writes, 'not only because hospitality undoes, should undo, the grip, the seizure (the *Begriff*, the *Begreifen*) ... hospitality is, *must* be, *owes to itself* to be, inconceivable and incomprehensible, but also because in it ... each concept opens itself to its opposite' (Derrida 2002a, 362). It is thus that hospitality, in addition to signifying a particular quasi-transcendental structure, stands as a figure for quasi-transcendentality *as such* (if one can say this). Rather than a dialectical relationship in which each concept is necessarily related precisely to its opposite (and therefore continues to exercise a kind of proprietary hold upon *its* opposite, *its* other), Derrida argues that every concept is held open (at least in principle) to *some* other by way of a radicalized structure of hospitality. The difference between these two figures – the dialectical or oppositional and the hospitable – is that the former can only accommodate the other for whom it is already prepared, according again to a systematic calculation. In order that concepts become open to others that are not determined beforehand as their own others – and furthermore determined as such within a previously constituted conceptual space – they must be thought according to a hospitality that welcomes that for which it is never ready.

Derrida sees this impossible necessity operative in the French word *hôte*, which like the Latin *hospes* carries the double meaning of 'host' and 'guest.' According to the structure of hospitality, there is an inescapable interchange between the place of the host and the place of the guest, such that a given welcome cannot proceed simply from the former to the latter but must move paradoxically in the opposite direction, and in the first place. Hospitality offered to the guest is always a certain retracing of steps back to the unexpected advent of the guest, which both grounds and disturbs the situation of the welcome. There is no hospitality before the arrival of the guest, and the arrival of the guest

will always to some extent be a surprise for the host; a surprise that immediately calls out the demand to be hospitable. The tension between hospitality and invitation to which Derrida alludes becomes clear here: the invited guest remains in a sense conditioned by the invitation, and thus by the host who in this situation retains propriety over the scene of welcome (Ibid., 362). It is only to the uninvited guest, the unexpected stranger that hospitality can truly and unconditionally be extended. The host's propriety is disturbed because of the unexpectedness of the stranger's visitation; this disturbance then forms the condition of possibility for being truly hospitable. The hospitality offered by the host to the unexpected guest is disconnected both from the will of the host and the prescriptions of cultural convention. Yet according to the prescriptions of hospitality, the guest lays claim to the home of the host in such a way that the host is displaced and must, to be hospitable, place himself or herself in the service of the guest. It is as if the unexpected visitor arrived to collect a heretofore unknown debt owed by the host. Or, as Kelly Oliver explains, 'absolute hospitality requires giving up the illusion of being at home or owning a home in which one can play host' (Oliver 2007, 45). Under this irreducible and unconditional demand of hospitality, the domain of the host is not only abdicated; its very existence is threatened, leaving the host with little or nothing to offer the guest.

It is in this implicit aporetic structure of impossible debt that Derrida recognizes the inherent connection between hospitality and forgiveness. However, it would seem at first glance that it is the place of the guest to ask forgiveness of the host – forgiveness for the disturbance the guest has caused, for the demand laid at the feet of the host. 'Whoever asks for hospitality', Derrida writes, 'asks, in a way, for forgiveness and whoever offers hospitality, grants forgiveness' (Derrida 2002a, 380). If we see a connection between hospitality and forgiveness, this seems the rational way to lay it out. Of course, the situation is more complicated, for we must also find in forgiveness a paradoxical, bi-directional movement. Therefore, Derrida goes on to argue that 'the welcoming one must ask for forgiveness from the welcomed one even prior to the former's own having to forgive. For one is always failing, lacking hospitality: one never gives enough' (Ibid., 380). If the guest assumes the figure of a debt collector, then the host will never be able to pay the debt of hospitality in full. This is again due to the structural impossibility of fully anticipating the coming of the guest, for it is precisely the host's unpreparedness for which he or she must ask forgiveness.

Indeed, the structure of forgiveness itself dictates precisely this kind of necessary failure. Forgiveness, in order to appear as such,

must be from the start an infinite and unconditional forgiveness, or else it is merely a calculative exchange. Yet, the one who forgives cannot avoid, in expressing forgiveness, instituting or renewing an obligation on the part of the one who is forgiven; at the same time, if forgiveness is not communicated to the one who is forgiven then no forgiveness can be said to have taken place (Ibid., 398; see also Derrida 2001).Thus, the structure of forgiveness precludes from the beginning its own completion. When Derrida writes, 'I have to ask for forgiveness … for not having known how to give', this is not only a feature of the aporetic scene of hospitality but also a generalizable characteristic of forgiveness as such – generalizable across all instances of responsibility (Ibid., 381). In a sense both coextensive with and distinct from hospitality, the infinite demand for and impossibility of forgiveness operates perhaps most conspicuously in the very displacement of the host by the guest, which demands precisely that the one ostensibly asking for forgiveness forgive the one who forgives for not being able to do so. This impossibility leaves the displaced, homeless host the necessary recourse of substituting himself or herself for the person of the guest, whose impossible forgiveness hospitality will always continue to demand.

The impossible possibility of substitution is therefore also inescapably joined to both hospitality and forgiveness. Normally, substitution occurs between two persons or things that are thought to be similar or to perform a similar function. However, in the case of one substituting oneself, one's very life, for another – as the structure of hospitality calls for the substitution of the host for the guest even to the point of self-sacrifice – an indistinguishability between persons would cancel the effect of the substitutive gesture. If it is strictly a matter of indifference whether I or another person is killed, then the possibility of my giving my life to save that of the other (or *vice versa*) loses its meaning. Instead, what comes to light here is a substitution that takes place only as a sacrifice of that which is irreplaceable. Derrida references the thought of Levinas and of Louis Massignon to point out an understanding of substitution for which there is 'no general equivalence, no common currency, which would ensure this exchange as replacing two comparable values' (Ibid., 419). The substitution of one singularity for another, both absolutely unique, is in one sense the only true case of substitution, because in this case the very distinctness of the substitution from that which is substituted opens the space for the possibility of substitution itself. Yet at the same time, the irreplaceability of each term precludes substitution in the strict sense.

Beyond this aporia, however, Derrida recognizes another problematic facet in the structure of substitution: the distinction between what is equivalent and what is singular, what is replaceable and what is irreplaceable, cannot be rigorously drawn. Even within a string of homogeneous units, each unit (by virtue of its suchness, its being as precisely *this* unit in *this* place and not another – its *haecceitas*) displays a certain singularity. So, where the normal meaning of substitution seems on the surface to be perfectly operable, there too irreplaceability complicates the operation. If we want to be able to distinguish, then, an instance of 'ordinary' substitution from a more radical occurrence of substitution – an 'ethical' substitution, a sacrifice – some other criterion is necessary. As Derrida explains, this criterion is self-awareness of the irreplaceable as such:

> For it does not suffice that the subject of substitution (the term, the *X* subject to substitution) be unique, irreplaceable, elected to come or to offer itself in the place of the other, irreplaceable for being replaced. It is also necessary that this irreplaceable be aware of *itself*, that it be aware and be aware of itself, and therefore that it be a self with a rapport to itself, which is not the case of every unique and irreplaceable being in its existence. This self, this ipseity, is the condition of ethical substitution as compassion, sacrifice, expiation, and so on. (Ibid., 419)

Of course, the question of what exactly constitutes this self-awareness – what precisely counts as a self – is itself perhaps also impossible to answer rigorously and definitively. Nevertheless, the recognition of this other necessity brings into relief the interconnection of ethical substitution and the structures of hospitality and forgiveness we have already examined. When the host cedes the place of his or her home to the guest, this is a kind of substitution whereby the guest assumes the place of the host, insofar as the home is offered to the guest to inhabit as his or her own. However, if we recognize that the performance of hospitality on the part of the host does not (at least not entirely) depend on a freely chosen hospitableness then the criterion of self-awareness that would make the host's substitution ethical seems not to be fulfilled. Yet, it is perhaps exactly at this point that forgiveness, asking for forgiveness, becomes necessary. The host both must and cannot from the beginning volunteer himself or herself, along with the propriety of the home, to the service of the guest; the unexpectedness of the guest's arrival must always limit the hospitality and therefore ethicality of the host, and for this the host will always need to ask for forgiveness.

Substitution and Religious Hospitality

Turning to the example on which Derrida dwells at length in 'Hostipitality', that of the work of Massignon, we find a particularly rich and in some aspects difficult example of the way that hospitality, substitution, and forgiveness come together in religious interrelationships. Massignon established in the Middle East an organization of Christians called the Badaliya (an Arabic word that can be translated as 'substitution'), whose goal it was to intercede for the salvation of Arab Muslims 'by living among them each day, by partaking of their lives', not outwardly proselytizing but simply living as good Christians (qtd in Derrida 2002a, 377). There is one possible interpretation, perhaps the most obvious one that would make of the Badaliya merely an undercover organization for Christian recruitment. In fact, Derrida expresses a suspicion that this in fact was the case, and points out supporting evidence: 'Letter of May 20, 1938: (Badaliya) The "conversion" of these souls, yes, it is the goal, but it is for them to find it themselves, without their suffering our insistence as an external pressure' (Ibid., 376n36). However, Giorgio Agamben offers (after expressing somewhat different suspicions) the following, more positive alternate reading: 'According to Massignon, in fact, substituting oneself for another does not mean compensating for what the other lacks, nor correcting his or her errors, but *exiling oneself to the other as he or she is* in order to offer Christ hospitality in the other's own soul, in the other's own taking-place. ... Badaliya presents an unconditional substitutability' (Agamben 1993, 24). One is left, then to negotiate between two possible meanings of the Christian mission of substitution laid out by Massignon: a method of secret proselytization or a genuine self-sacrifice in voluntary exile. It is precisely in this negotiation that we can see both the possibilities for inter-religious understanding and the obstacles to it.

   On the one hand, there is the attitude – one that certainly is in no way to be dismissed – that sees in proselytization an impulse toward domination that is to be avoided. If I genuinely respect the other *qua* other, then I cannot offer my friendship and allegiance only on the condition that the other abandon the content of her or his very alterity by adopting my perspective as her or his own. This is only stubbornly to insist on an impossible homogeneity of tradition and meaning, and thus in fact to attempt to deny from the beginning not only the possibility of hospitality or substitution (and therefore also the possibility of sacrificial substitution that, in a hospitable reading, is central to Massignon's

interpretation of the practice of Christianity) but also the possibility of tradition, of tradition as inheritance and identity. On the contrary, it seems the only valid position to take in an encounter with a different tradition, if one is to be attentive to the demand of hospitality, is that of the 'unconditional substitutability' that Agamben reads in Massignon's explanation of the Badaliya project. Anything less does not fully enact a substitution and thus also fails to realize true hospitality.

On the other hand, we must admit that the impulse to attempt the conversion of others to one's own beliefs – especially in a situation where one's goals are not (overtly or intentionally) bound up with goals of political or cultural influence – evinces a certain kind of hospitality. Even given Massignon's personal confession that the Badaliya was essentially oriented toward a kind of conversion, its own self-understanding is built around concepts like responsibility, charity, and hope directed toward particular others (in this case, Arab Muslims). These ideals, taken simply in themselves, cannot be passed over as merely disingenuous, no matter how great the misunderstanding or intolerance with which they may be coupled. Even those who proselytize overtly often do so out of what they believe to be utmost care for the others to whom their work is directed. If their motivation was not at least in part informed by some such kind of care, then it seems that their response to an encounter with someone of a different faith could not be anything besides indifference or outright violence.

Of course, recognizing a kernel of hospitality operating within the structure of proselytization does not erase the inadequacy of the proselytizer's attention to the demand that issues from the encounter with the other. At the same time, we must recognize in the demand for an unconditional substitution of one's own place for that of the other's – beyond the possible impossibility of adequately responding to this demand – the insufficiency that Derrida emphasizes in using singularity as a lone criterion in assessing the difference between ordinary and radical, ethical substitution. Even though self-exile to the other, for the sake of offering hospitality to and on behalf of the other, seems to follow a logic of sacrifice, it is precisely the unconditionality of this substitution that precludes its being properly ethical. Derrida's criterion of the self-awareness of the subject of substitution carries with it the requirement that the substitution be conditional; that is, it requires that the hospitable substitution be offered up from within (and perhaps at the expense of) the contingent structure of its subject's identity, of his or her tradition, and that it be offered precisely with respect to the other's identity, not as *an* other or even *this* other but *as* the other

is *for himself or herself*. This is indeed a strong demand for a radical kind of sacrifice with a Kierkegaardian flavour, for it necessarily cannot derive any meaning or value from any universal law. It must, from the beginning, ask forgiveness for its inexplicability.

The three intertwined structures of hospitality, substitution, and forgiveness each call forth and complicate the operation of the other two at the site of my relationship with an other, a stranger. This stranger calls upon me unexpectedly and from a place unknown to me, such that I am both obliged to enter the relationship and structurally forbidden from doing so. It seems that either I must bring the stranger into my own home, in which case I risk annihilating the very otherness of this other, or I must myself be displaced on the stranger's behalf, in which case I disrupt my own propriety, the very condition for the possibility of my being hospitable. Hospitality requires from the start that I ask for forgiveness for my inability to bridge the gap between the stranger's place and mine, for my inability to put myself in the other's place, to substitute myself for her or him. Interrelationships between religious traditions are – in form at least – exemplary of this necessary and impossible relationship. The commitments of religious belief and practice put the religious person or group, from the beginning, into a situation that calls for hospitality, substitution, and forgiveness, perhaps beyond all possibility. In order to explicate fully the demands of hospitality within interreligious relationships, however, we should also pay attention to the way this structure is manifested in politics, and how the latter thus continually overlaps with religious ways of being.

The Idea of Hospitality from a Cosmopolitan Point of View

Derrida is not ultimately interested in treating hospitality as though it were merely an abstract idea to be described; he sees it operating throughout various concrete social and political settings (Derrida 2005a, 66). In 'Hostipitality', the structure of hospitality is approached through the lens of the life and work of Massignon, highlighting the religious heritage of this structure but at the same time bringing political disputes to the fore insofar as the setting of Massignon's work was early twentieth-century Palestine. However, in the second of his two essays in *Of Hospitality*, 'Pas d'hospitalité' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000), Derrida addresses the political aspect of hospitality via references to Kant's use of the concept in his essay on the possibility of 'Perpetual Peace' and cosmopolitan human rights – an essay that Derrida claims contains the 'most radical and probably most formalized definition' of

universal hospitality (Ibid., 141). Following this lead, let us examine Kant's argument with respect to hospitality and cosmopolitan right in order to understand the roles that religion can (and cannot) play in his political system. We will then return to Derrida's own examination of hospitality in order finally to get a sharper sense of how ethical norms governing inter-religious encounter may follow from its aporetic structure.

Kant delimits his idea of cosmopolitan right within the scope of a universal hospitality understood not primarily in a moral or religious sense but more precisely in a political (or at least quasi-political) sense. 'In this context', writes Kant, '*hospitality* (hospitableness) [Hospitalität (*Wirthbarkeit*)] means the right of an alien not to be treated as an enemy upon his arrival in another's country' (Kant 1983, 118). Thus, in conjunction with republicanism at the national level and federalism at the international level, 'cosmopolitanism' is determined as a principle governing the relation between any individual *qua* individual and a country to which he or she does not formally belong. It is, therefore, the basic principle according to which hospitality as such becomes manifest in concrete political situations. According to Kant, the mandate for cosmopolitan right is at least partly based on the concrete circumstances of the human world: we live on a globe, so individuals or groups cannot comfortably stay out of one another's way *ad infinitum*. Hospitality is thus as much a practical necessity as it is a purely moral imperative. The naturally forced proximity of human beings, combined with Kant's belief that 'originally no one had a greater right to any region of the earth than anyone else', leads Kant to the conclusion that no individual can be denied a right to *temporary visitation* in any particular country. He adds the provisions that a person may be turned away peacefully, if this would not result in his or her being harmed, and that any arrangements for permanent residence or commerce would require a 'special, charitable agreement' (Ibid.). Thus, it seems that the Kantian notion of cosmopolitan right, the right to hospitality, is at one and the same time foundational for any conventional rights of visitation and interrelation between members of different nations and limited in its applicability to a fairly narrow set of temporary circumstances.

Jeremy Waldron sees Kant's conception of cosmopolitan right as primarily a practically-oriented framework for negotiating worldwide social interaction, much like a legal system within a given country. He explains, 'Cosmopolitan right, for Kant, is the department of jurisprudence concerned with people and peoples' sharing the world

with others, given the circumstance that this sharing is more or less inevitable, and likely to go drastically wrong, if not governed by juridical principles' (Waldron 2000, 230). Of course, these cosmopolitan juridical principles are not concretely dictated by the Kantian definition of cosmopolitan right; their manifestation is dependent on the (at least hypothetical) creation of a worldwide cosmopolitan community that has agreed to abide by them. Nevertheless, the acceptance of the validity of cosmopolitan right as unalienable remains the *sine qua non* of any more conventional arrangements concerning travel, communication, or commerce. Since the situations in which cosmopolitan right becomes an issue are precisely those dealing with the boundaries of nations and with the responsibilities of nations toward members of other nations, the question of the cosmopolitan can thus be cast as a question of jurisdiction: the jurisdiction of the state over non-member residents, for example, and the limitations upon such jurisdiction by rational norms of hospitableness.

Seyla Benhabib approaches cosmopolitanism as an issue of the tensions between universal human rights on the one hand and continued commitments to national sovereignty on the other. Insofar as Kant frames his idea of cosmopolitan right as primarily a political (rather than legal) issue – and insofar as the cosmopolitan right afforded to the individual is understood not to be a *purely* civil right[2] – Benhabib is on this point adopting a more or less strictly Kantian position. Yet, she points out a more subtle aspect of cosmopolitan right when she recognizes the marginality of the space in which it is activated: 'this 'right' regulates the interactions of individuals who belong to different civic entities yet who encounter one another at the margins of bounded communities. The right of hospitality is situated at the boundaries of the polity; it delimits civic space by regulating relations among members and strangers' (Benhabib 2004, 27). The delimitation of civic space is ultimately constitutive of democracy in the modern sense. Yet, as Benhabib also recognizes, the construction of a democratic civic space cannot be a purely democratic exercise. The inclusion and exclusion of individuals or groups within a body that accords its members equal citizenship can no more be determined democratically by all those individuals affected (that is, those included *and* those excluded) than it can be determined naturally (Ibid., 35). Thus, Benhabib ultimately sees cosmopolitan politics as 'a philosophical project of mediations' that is oriented toward achieving greater and greater recognition of universal human rights and democratic equality, while respecting and protecting cultural difference and uniqueness (Ibid., 20).

One of the philosophical mediations that she maintains is a crucial part of the cosmopolitan project is that between universalism with regard to ethical norms and particularism with regard to cultural mores. The process of balancing inclusion and universalism with respect for and preservation of difference reflects the basic quasi-transcendental structure of hospitality as Derrida describes it; the radical openness to the stranger and the substitution involved in hospitality is rendered on the political scene as the idea of universal human rights and democratic equality, just as the inevitable failure to be purely hospitable is mirrored in the structural limits of democracy. Derrida identifies this tension as a question of 'perfectibility' – in that what always remains perfectible is that which is never perfected (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 149). Perfectibility as such is aporetic in that it is the drive toward perfection that at the same time prevents its own satisfaction. Cosmopolitanism, as an ideal and as a practical project, follows just such a trajectory in that it strives toward a point of completion that it will always bar itself from achieving.

Waldron's assessment of cosmopolitanism vis-à-vis cultural difference differs somewhat from Benhabib's, though. His account of the cosmopolitan is one that puts it in opposition to what he sees as fairly stubborn identity politics. In his reading of Kant, he sees the notion of cosmopolitan right and the corresponding regulative idea of a future cosmopolitan community as being 'quite incompatible with either the purity or the integrity that is sometimes associated with cultural identity politics' (Waldron 2006, 91). If Kantian cosmopolitanism were to take as a central concern the preservation of culturally specific norms and values, then, Waldron argues, this concern would already be much more visible in Kant's presentation of cosmopolitan right. As it stands, however, Kant's main concern does not seem to be to articulate a basis on which to build regulative apparatuses for cultural interchange. Waldron does not see this interchange as posing a dilemma for cosmopolitanism, nor does he see one arising out of possible conflicts between the 'local' and the 'global' (Ibid., 98).

Despite some disagreement about the essence of cosmopolitanism, Benhabib and Waldron seem to agree that it is primarily concerned with norms governing relations of right, whether in a strictly legal-political sense or in a broader sense that includes what Waldron calls the 'mundane density of ordinary life': commercial agreements, telecommunications, and so on (Waldron 2006, 97). What this conception of cosmopolitanism tacitly carries with it, however, are ideas about public and private space that were already present in Kant's work

and continue powerfully to influence contemporary thought. As a way of questioning these ideas, and in order to return to the issue of hospitality as it operates within and across political and religious spheres, we should now ask about the place of religious traditions within this conception of cosmopolitanism.

The tradition of associating freedom of religious belief and practice with freedom of individual conscience reaches back beyond Kant, and according religious freedom a place among the basic human rights of individuals seems to make this freedom a constituent element of cosmopolitanism. If one looks, for instance, toward United Nations declarations for concrete examples of the ways religious freedom is articulated and defended on a contemporary cosmopolitan stage, the conception of religious belief and practice as matters of individual conscience is clearly present.[3] Yet, this approach treats religion largely as a political or moral matter and often does not take it into account on the terms of its own traditions. The complexities of actual religious practice are not necessarily incorporated into cosmopolitan treatments of religion as a matter of individual rights, with the result that many religious traditions face being forcefully transformed or eradicated under the pressures of universalism. Benhabib, examining the French '*affaire du foulard*', comes closer to illuminating the complexities of religious difference within contemporary conceptions of cosmopolitanism (Benhabib 2006, 51–61), but since she sets the issue in a primarily political light much of the particularly religious character of the example is lost. Understanding the difficulties particular to the religious aspects of such conflicts can thus be undermined. If we pay attention to the religious character of such a conflict, however, it becomes clear that what we might understand as a dilemma about individual rights occurring between the horns of cosmopolitan norms and cultural identity, we should also understand as a dilemma about individual and communal practice occurring between the horns of secularist norms and religious ethics.

Talal Asad recognizes in contemporary secularism a tension – similar to the one Benhabib sees in cosmopolitanism – between 'human rights' that accrue to all human persons universally and the necessary recognition and guarantee of those rights by civil authorities. Secularism is one way of addressing the problem of how a sovereign state should manage and protect the individual sovereignty of its citizens (Asad 2003, 134). Kant's three definitive articles for perpetual peace can be understood as ways of dealing with this same problem as it pertains

to different possible relations between individuals and states. However, as we have seen, Kant's own perspective on this problem is largely a political and commercial one and does not directly address issues relating to cultural or religious identity. This mode of negotiating the relationship between individual rights and state sovereignty is carried into the present at least partly via the Western commitment to secularized political and economic discourse that Asad articulates and critiques. Again, this secularist commitment reconstitutes the religious according to modern political categories, barring it from the public sphere and consigning it to the realm of the private. Yet, it is not immediately evident that, where there is resistance to secularism, it is on the basis simply of a desire to involve religious belief in public reason and governmental authority. Any conception of public reason, discourse, or institutions that would allow them to be either strictly separated from or closely associated with religious belief and its own discourse or institutions is already a product of modern secularism. Such is the case with the human rights discourse of the twentieth century. As Asad points out, the subject of human rights in the most prevalent and influential discussions of such rights tends not be any particular human – enmeshed as she is in all her political, commercial, and religious as well as local, national, and indeed global practices – but an idea of 'the human' or 'humanity' generally. The particular human being remains caught in the tension between individual freedom and the force exercised by the sovereign nation in which she resides (Ibid., 143). Secularism is one way of dealing with this tension – a way that involves relegating much of the individual subject's concrete practices to private space and thus indemnifying public discourse against encroachments from that which is not deemed universal. This non-universal may ideally refer to any traditions or practices not rationally defensible (according to norms of *public* reason), but the perhaps unavoidable fact is that this approach already promotes a certain European privilege, tacitly relying on the history that produced secularism as a positive doctrine. Examining the relationship between Europe (with its particularly Christian heritage) and Islam, Asad thus characterizes the secularist attitude:

> The idea that people's historical experience is inessential to them, that it can be shed at will, makes it possible to argue more strongly for the Enlightenment's claim to universality: Muslims, as members of the abstract category 'humans', can be assimilated or 'translated' into global ('European') civilization once they have divested themselves of what many of them regard (mistakenly) as essential to themselves. (Ibid., 169)

The secularist project thus moves religious history and identity not only to the private realm but also thereby to the realm of the inessential – and, in some cases, to the realm of that which is potentially dangerous to the well-being and progress of secular civil society.

However, this relegation cannot ultimately be successful. While the public and the private can be conceptually delimited in the way that secularism prescribes, the very conceptuality of this distinction ignores the thickness of the 'mundane density of ordinary life': precisely that which, Waldron argues, Kantian cosmopolitanism aims to address. The secularist conception of public discourse does not adequately incorporate the temporal and spatial aspects of individual humans' practices of speaking and listening, practices that at least partly make up the public sphere (Ibid., 184ff.). Moreover, the line between the 'private' beliefs of any individual and her 'public' actions is much harder to distinguish in concrete practice than it is conceptually. This is the case whether an individual holds religious commitments or not, but it is particularly relevant to the problem of the place of religion in the contemporary world since a key aspect of secularism is to disallow the efficacy of religious commitments beyond the boundaries of private reason. We might venture to say at this point that modern secularism is *inhospitable* to the religious, or that it draws a boundary between religious and political commitments the crossing of which is proscribed absolutely, beyond the reach of any conventional or universal law of hospitality.

The difficulty of upholding such a strict distinction between public and private reason extends beyond questions concerning secularism *per se* to those about cosmopolitanism. This is not only the case because the universalizing force behind cosmopolitanism is also at the basis of the European secularist project, but also because the construction of a rational public space that is not limited by national or cultural boundaries is a central aim of Kantian cosmopolitanism. This international public space rests conceptually on universal rationality and individual rights, and particularly on the cosmopolitan right that provides the foundation for international law. Yet, neither cosmopolitanism nor secularism can arise out of a purely rational, universal public space, since they each contribute to constructing this space in the first place. Rather, each are problematically tied to the specific historical and cultural locations whence they arose, with their own religious histories and ideas that are not easily grafted upon other peoples and places.

Along these lines, Derrida recognizes a certain Eurocentrism at work in Kant's cosmopolitan thought. In his UNESCO address published as 'The Right to Philosophy from a Cosmopolitan Point of View',

he points out the inescapable connection between Kant's idea of a cosmopolitan community and of a universal history of humanity. Both would be necessarily understood philosophically, and the concept of philosophy operative here is not only joined to the commitment to secularism as we have already outlined it but also allied specifically to its European history. Referring to Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent', Derrida writes: '[Kant] must take as his surest guiding thread ... the history of European nations, first in its Greek, then its Roman beginnings, as opposed to the so-called barbarian nations. Which makes this text whose spirit is cosmopolitan ... the most Eurocentric text there is, not only in its philosophical axiomatic, certainly, but in its retrospective reference to Greco-Roman history as well as in its prospective reference to the future hegemony of Europe, which, as Kant says, "will probably legislate eventually to all other continents" (Derrida 2002b, 333).

The probability of Europe's future dominance over the rest of the globe seems to be a function, for Kant, of Europe's special status as the birthplace of modern rationality; that rationality which, properly understood and delimited, is capable of acceding to the level of the universal. This level, however, would lie beyond the possibility of any hospitality; insofar as its hegemony is complete, it would preclude the possibility of any unexpected guest to whom to be hospitable. Hospitality, however, is never only a limited or conditional demand posited against an appeal to universal rationality – or, for that matter, a universal ethics arising from reason – that has the power to overrule it. Derrida argues, 'to be what it "must" be, hospitality must not pay a debt, or be governed by a duty'; that is, as Derrida explicitly states, hospitality operates neither in conformity with Kantian duty nor even *from* duty in the strict moral sense (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 83). Hospitality itself is indeed split or plural: it is manifest in all the conventional rules, norms, and practices of being 'hospitable' (*wirthbar*), but it also transcends all of these laws, which themselves preclude the possibility of being truly, radically hospitable in that they impose the practice of hospitality onto the host (Ibid., 77).[4]

Martin Hägglund argues that Derrida, by pointing out this aporia, implies that unconditional hospitality cannot be the source for any ethical demand. He writes:

> As distinct from the ethics of unconditional hospitality he deconstructs,
> Derrida's notion of unconditional hospitality designates the exposure to the
> unpredictable, which can always be violent and to which one cannot know in

advance how one should relate. The 'hospitality' to otherness is unconditional *not* because it is ideal or ethical as such, but because one is necessarily susceptible to violent visitations. Even the most conditional hospitality is unconditionally hospitable to that which may ruin it. (Hägglund 2008, 103f)

It is certainly correct to point out that Derrida's treatment of unconditional hospitality does not treat it as an ethical ideal (understood in the Kantian sense). Yet, this does not preclude *any* ethical interpretation of the Derridean treatment of hospitality. For instance, Caputo also acknowledges that Derrida's notion of the unconditional cannot be equated with a Kantian regulative ideal, yet he argues that it is precisely the inescapable unpredictability at the core of structures like hospitality, democracy, and justice that continually disturbs the complacency into which conventional morality is liable to fall precisely by issuing a call that demands a response (Caputo 1997, 129; 2011, 66).[5] Similarly, Matthias Fritsch concedes that unconditional hospitality 'cannot be stipulated as a normative, regulative idea with universal reach' (Fritsch 2002, 588). Nevertheless, he goes on to argue that there is a certain ethical value in recognizing the aporia contained therein. The demand to be *more* hospitable, *more* open to the other, is not given lest one totally close oneself off from otherness (which would be impossible); it is, perhaps more humbly, simply a call to acknowledge this impossibility and to allow for it as best one can (Ibid., 589). Hospitality does not demand openness simply for the sake of openness. Rather, the structural impossibility of escaping openness makes hospitality ethically favorable.

Unconditional hospitality is, in Derrida's words, 'a law without imperative, without order and without duty' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 83). Thus, hospitality (as unconditional) exceeds the reach of Kantian ethics; yet, at the same time (as conditioned) it falls under its purview as the (necessarily plural and contingent) demands of hospitable practice. The transcendence of unconditional hospitality – never completely dissociated from all its conditioned and conditional forms, the sign of every quasi-transcendental structure – is what gives particular laws of hospitality their force. As Derrida explains in *Rogues*, '[o]nly an unconditional hospitality can give meaning and practical rationality to a [particular] concept of hospitality' (Derrida 2005b, 149). Hospitality itself, beyond the power of universal rationality, is what *hospitably* grants to the laws of hospitality their power to make ethical demands. Again, this does not make of unconditional hospitality a regulative ideal; it is precisely in its inability

to serve as a regulative ideal that it continues to open the space for instances of conditional hospitality.

Regarding both the narrower issue of modern secularism and the more general point concerning the hegemonic universality of the Kantian vision of rationality, any ostensible proscription of hospitality at the conceptual level cannot amount to a real limitation on the latter, but instead signifies a weakness in the totalizing discourses of modern secularism. An account, either of secularist public reason or of the Eurocentric concept of universal rationality that Derrida finds in Kant's essay, that seems to close off the possibility of welcoming that which precisely is unaccounted for (that is, that which lies outside of rational calculation) only ignores the unconditional hospitality from which it arises in the first place. In both 'The Right to Philosophy' and in *Rogues*, Derrida instead posits a certain universalizable or unconditional rationality that would both acknowledge its historical or conditional roots and disjoin itself from them. Such a recognition *cum* disjunction would not work against or ignore the demand of unconditional hospitality; instead, it would follow its trajectory, allowing a reconceptualization of contemporary cosmopolitanism that can admit what Derrida, in 'Faith and Knowledge', recognizes as '*an unreserved taste, if not an unconditional preference, for what, in politics, is called republican democracy as a universalizable model*' (Derrida 2002a, 47). At the same time, this model would not be committed (as secularism is) to relegating *a priori* whatever we may call religion to a pre-delimited private space and thus indemnifying the secular public from its influence. A cosmopolitanism hospitable to the inclusion of the religious more adequately reflects the porosity of any boundary between public and private reason as well as the diversity of the concrete practices of hospitality in which the individual subjects of human rights and universalizable reason engage.

Toward More Hospitable Encounters in Pluralistic Environments

In *Of Hospitality*, the history of rights accorded to Muslims in Derrida's native Algeria provides him with a case in point. As he explains: 'At the beginning of colonization and until the end of World War II, Algerian Muslims were what was called '"French nationals" but not "French citizens", a subtle but decisive distinction. Basically, they did not have citizenship in the strict sense, without being absolute foreigners' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 143). After France's conquest of Algeria in

the nineteenth century, Muslims' – and Jews' – quasi-outsider status with regard to the law was characterized not only by their lack of access to full citizenship but also by their being subject to 'religious law' (that is, Islamic or Jewish legal authorities who were allowed control over certain areas of civil litigation).[6] Later, provisions were made that allowed Algerian Muslims and Jews access to full French citizenship, but only at the price of completely abdicating their status as a subject of the religious legal structure; an act that, for many, amounted to apostasy. Thus, the situation in Algeria more or less until its independence in 1962 (and with repercussions that persist even today) is one that brings together the connection between citizenship and (conditional) hospitality with the secularist tensions we have already noted. For the historically native non-Christian Algerians who had been relegated to second-class status by their colonizers, the choice had become either to accept the 'hospitality' of full citizenship along with a full Western-style privatization of their religious life or to remain disenfranchised in order to be able to continue to participate in religious-legal institutions that themselves had already had their authority significantly undercut by French rule. As Derrida recounts, the initial citizenship provisions for Muslims were largely unsuccessful, as were other subsequent ones that continued to distinguish between European and African, Christian and non-Christian Algerians (Ibid., 145).

In this case and many others like it around the world and throughout recent history, the distinction that remains either explicitly or implicitly primary is a religious one. Thus, any act of hospitality demanded by or granted in such a situation – one which, like any concrete act of hospitality, would necessarily be conditional – is offered by one religious group toward another. Religious difference is upheld *qua* difference, but perhaps in the least constructive way – That is, as a contingent point of disagreement or irresolvable conflict *in spite of which* two parties must come together. In the case of the recent history of Algeria, it is fairly clear that religious differences have for the most part been formally articulated by only one party, the European-Christian French; the lack of success in managing these differences may easily be attributed to the limitation of the conditions of such hospitality as it has arisen.

A somewhat different example is the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, during which multi-religious organizations like the World Conference of Religion and Peace worked to dismantle the unjust political and legal structures mandated by the South African government and either directly supported or not actively opposed by, for example, the Dutch Reformed Church. Laws segregating white

and non-white South Africans established legal classes and identities that intersected race, ethnicity, and religion in ways both similar to and markedly different from the example of Algeria. An adequate exploration of the history and details of this example is outside the scope of this essay, but what makes the anti-apartheid struggle illustrative for the present purpose are the ways in which religious groups publicly challenged the political institutions that excluded them, at the same time on their own (religious) terms and in solidarity with religious others. Farid Esack, exploring this idea from a Muslim perspective both historically and conceptually, notes on the one hand that the encounter with religious others in the anti-apartheid struggle led to divisions between conservative and progressive Muslim groups within South Africa. On the other hand, it was precisely within the context of this struggle that members of diverse religious communities –including Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and others – found it necessary to articulate positions hospitable to religious others and to welcome their unique contributions (Esack 1997). In this case, religious communities were able to enter effectively into the space of political discourse, and to broaden that space to include both themselves and religious others, not by setting aside their religious commitments but by embracing them while acknowledging the inherent demand for hospitality.

   In analyses of such oppressive political situations, the unconditional sense of hospitality operative across religious differences often remains largely unacknowledged. Understood simply as openness to otherness, hospitality is structurally inescapable. Therefore, while the content of particular conflicts is certainly contingent, the difference in the midst of which these conflicts arise is irreducible. To imagine that religious conflict can be resolved for good by erasing religious difference from the public sphere, as the secularist project we examined above attempts to do, is in fact to attempt to avoid the unavoidable by delimiting hospitality within a narrow set of conditions. This approach also ignores the degree to which religious difference intersects with and is indeed woven into other forms of difference – as the example of apartheid and the struggle against it shows in particularly stark detail.

   How in such a situation, we may then ask, might a hospitality emerge that does not only operate according to conditional norms, but also remains responsible to inescapable openness, taking account of the structures of substitution and forgiveness we examined above? Put otherwise, how could hospitality operate unconditionally, beyond or against the conditional hospitality of the necessary provisions made to manage concrete religious differences? In order to address these

concerns, we need to keep in mind the extent to which the demand of a general or unconditional hospitality will always exceed the reach of concrete, conditioned acts or laws of hospitality. Thus, even though hospitality in general opens up the possibility for any particular instance of hospitality, it also exposes the limits and failures of such a particular instance. As with other quasi-transcendental structures, unconditional hospitality is both the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of the ethical and political laws – ranging from the etiquette of a host to the international recognition of cosmopolitan rights – through which its demand is manifested. If we recognize the way in which the unconditional makes possible the conditional demand, then we must at the same time recognize the way in which the unconditional undercuts the authority of the conditional demand. No set of concrete provisions designed to enact even the broadest and most inclusive hospitality can ever completely meet the demand to which it responds, both because it will always be grounded within a finite, conditional horizon and because the unconditional demand that underlies it pushes it toward the risk of including that which will destroy it. The idea of cosmopolitan right that structures Kant's notion of universal hospitality, for instance, is based on the political idea of national citizenship: one is accorded hospitality in a foreign nation precisely because one is recognized as a citizen of one's homeland. Thus, the person 'without a country' – she who is displaced or *sans papiers* – cannot necessarily claim the same 'universal' cosmopolitan right to hospitality as the (documented) foreign citizen. If she could, unconditionally (and this may be recognized implicitly in Kant's text), then the structures of national citizenship and international law would themselves be threatened.

Religious difference makes this question of the grounding of the right to hospitality all the more urgent insofar as in religious discourse the unconditional demand issues from a source that, while taken to be absolute by members of one tradition, is at the same time not necessarily acknowledged at all by members of another tradition. Thus, approaching hospitality through the lens of religious diversity, we see the unconditional held in a necessary tension with the conditioned: the demand of hospitality is exercised absolutely on the members of a religious tradition only insofar as that demand is given as particular (for example, Massignon's formation of the Badaliya community as a specifically Christian mission). The particularity of this demand can only remain in the foreground as long as it is placed in the context of other particular, conditioned demands that also carry the weight of absolute responsibility. On the one hand, it is the recognition of the

absolute nature of the claim of the other, the stranger, that energizes the impetus toward more hospitable interrelationships especially between religious traditions. On the other hand, it is the ever-present possibility of imposing one's own conditional ethics on others – resting on the assurance of an internal grounding in a no-less-absolute demand – that leads all too often to conflict and violence. However, it is the exposure to being imposed on by others that unconditional hospitality signifies. Ultimately, the risk of violence cannot be wholly avoided, no matter how well violence is mitigated (Derrida 1978, 313). Yet, recognizing the inescapability of this risk also opens us to opportunities for better understanding and more peaceful coexistence inherent in concrete religious life. A peace without at least the possibility of some violence is impossible, but a recognition of the unconditional demand for hospitality is part and parcel of the responsibility for coexistence to which religious traditions (among others) are always called.

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Notes

1. Notice that the grammar of this sentence already contains within itself an element of the unanticipatable: the 'his or her;' the requirements of hospitality demand (at the structural level) that I not be able to determine beforehand even the gender of the guest who is now only a vague figure.

2. That is, cosmopolitan right does not accrue to an individual by virtue of his or her citizenship within a particular state, the laws of which bestow (and thus could potentially remove) such a right. However, Kant's commitment to the principle of international federalism implies that the individual claiming cosmopolitan right always does so as a member of some or another state (cf. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles 1 and 15 < http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm >).

3. Issues concerning religious freedom repeatedly come before the U.N. General Assembly for resolution, in the form of committing to combating religious intolerance (see Resolution 63/181) or in the more recent and more controversial form of attempting to curtail 'defamation of religions' (see Resolution 63/171). (In turning to U.N. declarations for concrete examples of cosmopolitan principles, we are following Benhabib's example; see Benhabib 2004, 11.)

4. In Kantian fashion, Derrida calls this an 'insoluble antinomy', the tension between 'on the one hand, *The* law of unlimited hospitality . . . and on the other hand, the law*s* (in the plural) . . .'

5. Hägglund criticizes Caputo on just this point (among others) in Chapter Four of *Radical Atheism*. Yet, I would argue that Hägglund significantly mischaracterizes Caputo's position, interpreting it as simply a version of the more or less Kantian perspective that Derrida deconstructs (cf. Hägglund 2008, 120f.). See Caputo 2011 and Hägglund 2011 for accounts of their positions vis-à-vis each other's reading of Derrida.

6. For a more detailed account of these legal arrangements and the history of their implementation, see Brett 1988.

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