

Good Will and the Hermeneutics of Friendship: Gadamer, Derrida, and Madison

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Gary Madison has written thoughtfully and well about the intersection of hermeneutics and postmodernity. While his self-acknowledged mentors have been Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, and Gadamer, he has developed a distinctively North American voice from which we have all greatly profited. His lively polemics, his ear for a philosophical argument that has not been buried by his considerable erudition, has shown us the way to deal with the anxiety of influence that is inevitably bred by reading the great Continental masters. He has sought to go as far as possible in the direction of a postmodern delimitation of metaphysical speculation without driving off the road into the irrationality and anarchy of the most extreme forms such delimitations can assume. His project is conducted in the name of hermeneutic phenomenology, or of a postmodern hermeneutics, but without falling into the excesses of postmodernity's worst side. He has tended to associate the latter with Jacques Derrida, of whom he has been something of a critic, basing these criticisms largely on a certain reading of the texts of the 1960s and 1970s.

In the present study, which I offer to him in gratitude for a long friendship, I will argue that what Derrida has been writing lately about friendship and hospitality brings Derrida's work into a closer proximity with Gadamer, and with Madison's postmodern hermeneutics, than either of us realized, something that for my part I freely confess. I am not conceding Gary Madison's readings of Derrida's earlier writings. On the contrary, I am saying that the genuine import of Derrida's work has become particularly plain in the work of the last ten years or so. The result has been to complicate the relationship of Gadamer and Derrida in a wonderful way, to raise the level of the discussion up a notch, thereby entering two of the most important European philosophers of the past century into a much more interesting exchange than their ill-fated non-exchange in 1981 at the Goethe Institute in Paris would have led any of us to suspect.¹ It is in the interests of the many friendships at play here, Gary Madison's and mine, Gadamer's and Derrida's, and let us not forget the friendship in the things themselves, *die Sache selbst*, of deconstruction and hermeneutics, that I offer these remarks on the hermeneutics of friendship.

Friendship and Good Will

Gary Madison maintains that while he sympathizes wholeheartedly with "Derrida's deconstructive attack on the 'metaphysics of presence,'" he fails to see the point that Derrida (or Rorty) is making with this attack, "the positive, philosophical significance of the critique of metaphysics."² What future is there for us after we have finished making fun of metaphysics? After Derrida, what else is there left to do than make up new and still more amusing word games? Why, Madison asks, has there been a "near total silence on the ethical and political dimensions of the philosophical enterprise," on Derrida's part? With Gadamer, on the other hand, Madison contends, we get everything we would want from a critique of metaphysics, but "without the debilitating relativism, a kind of philosophical relativism," without the mutilated and castrated hermeneutics, divested of "the kind of 'knowledge' which is achieved through genuine intersubjective intercourse." To Derrida's denial of truth in *Spurs* and his denial of the *hors-texte* in *Of Grammatology*, Madison opposes the mobile truth of the tradition explored by Gadamer. Hermeneutic truth is neither timeless and ahistorical nor swallowed up in the relativity of history; it is everywhere itself but everywhere diversified, always the same while always different, able to speak anew in each time, "beyond both objectivism and relativism," as Richard Bernstein wrote in a memorable book, which both Madison and I very much admire.³

Like a good many admirers of Gadamer, Madison takes Derrida to be one of the "French followers of Nietzsche," as Josef Simon puts it,⁴ someone who has let the fox of the will to power into the henhouse of language. However, while Nietzsche's perspectivalism and critique of metaphysical opposites are very important for Derrida, and while Derrida worked out his early writings on language and literature in close consort with Nietzsche, it has become increasingly clear over the years that Derrida is also, perhaps even more so, a French follower of Levinas. Well, not exactly French but Algerian, and not exactly a follower, but a creative and distinctive voice quite his own. It has also become clear that Derrida has broken his silence, if there ever was one, about ethics and politics, having spoken quite openly about Marxism and democracy, about justice, hospitality, and the gift, and even about a certain religion.⁵

One thing that has emerged very clearly from the later writings is that, *pace* Madison, both Gadamer and Derrida share an emphasis on the irreducibly "intersubjective" character of language, although that is not a word they would use in their own name. This is something they share with Levinas and on which all three differ from Heidegger. It has become increasingly clear that, contrary to Madison's portrait, Derrida does not

allow everything to dissolve into a play of traces, but rather, like Levinas, Derrida is interested in my responsibility for and to the other. That is why language is for Derrida, as for Gadamer and Levinas, always a matter of saying something *to* someone, addressing or being addressed by the other, hearing and responding to the other's word. The word of the other takes the form of what Derrida would call the coming or "in-coming" (*l'invention*) of the other, or of what Levinas simply calls "transcendence" or (since nothing is ever simple with Levinas) "transcendence." For Gadamer, the incoming of the other is the fundamental "risk" of hermeneutic understanding: to hear the other is to put oneself at risk. When I try to understand the other, I doubtless bring my own interests to the table, but at the same time I do so in good faith, not as a bastion of self-interest that I will defend to the death, "but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play (*ins Spiel*) and puts at risk (*aufs Spiel*), and helps one truly to make one's own what the text says. I have described this above as a 'fusion of horizons.'"⁶ I expose myself to the other, putting my own interests at risk, in order to let the other be heard and understood (Gadamer), to let the other come (Derrida), to let the other lay claim to me (Levinas). In order to understand each other, we must ask each other to listen and we must try to be understood. Let us say that our exchange requires an air, a horizon, a field of amity or friendship, which is not necessarily a matter of personal good feelings, but rather of a *structural* friendship. It is as if every time we hear something said, or pick up a book, or read a sentence, there is an invisible or inaudible prefatory clause attached to what we read or hear, an implicit vocative or invocation, which takes the form an apostrophe that says, "O my friends." It is as if every sentence comes in the form, "O my friends, listen to what is said, read what is written," as if that is a structural feature of every mark or trace. That, I will shortly demonstrate, is exactly the position Derrida takes.

Every sentence comes to us with a friendly supplication, asking us to "incline our ear," as it is said so beautifully in the Scriptures, to bend down before what we hear or read so as to let it come, let it be heard. Indeed, the language of the Scriptures is very helpful when it comes to understanding this ethics of hearing, this ethics of friendship required for understanding one another. And not only this ethics, but also this politics of friendship, for every polity depends for its very life upon a civility, a civil amity, in order to conduct its business and protect its decision-making process from violence. Every utterance takes the form of a supplication or one might even say a *prayer*. Every time I open my mouth, I pray you hear me; every time you open your mouth, you pray me, listen. We pray each other's patience, hospitality, openness, receptiveness. I pray you, give me your ear. If I give you my word, as I pray I do, you must, I pray you, give me your

ear. Do not “harden” or stop up your ears but open them up, do not hold your head up high in vanity and self-love, but incline your ear to the other. Understanding, then, takes on a slightly miraculous quality, like opening the ears of a deaf man, so that we require a certain Spirit to open closed and hardened ears, a hermeneutic spirit of friendship. Understanding requires a “circumcised” ear, one that is not self-enclosed or closed over but cut open.

These biblical requirements of friendship and hearing correspond quite closely, I think, to Gadamer’s demand for “good will” expressed in the Paris exchange. “Both partners [in an oral or written exchange],” Gadamer writes, “must have the good will to try to understand one another” (*DD*, 33). Again, “Whoever opens his mouth wants to be understood” (*DD*, 55). Even when we disagree, especially when we disagree, we want to be understood. This is the speaker’s desire, his will; otherwise he would say nothing at all. Good will is the air that dialogue and mutual understanding breathe, the element in which this event of understanding takes place.

But these ethical, even biblical, requirements (I am surprised that Gadamer does not want to recognize that this has to do with an ethics of communication) or conditions of understanding—friendship, hospitality and the gift, even prayer and a certain spirit—are all central and dominant themes of Derrida’s work in the 1990s. By reading Derrida as a kind of Franco-neo-Nietzschean, Gadamerian critics of Derrida like Madison have systematically silenced this other, more Levinasian, motif in Derrida, which is the motif of the incoming of the other. Thus, in a recent discussion, Derrida said:

You cannot address the other, speak to the Other, without an act of faith, without testimony. What are you doing when you attest to something? You address the Other and ask, ‘believe me.’ Even if you are lying, even in a perjury, you are addressing the Other and asking the Other to trust you. This ‘trust me, I am speaking to you’ is of the order of faith, a faith that cannot be reduced to a theoretical statement, to a determinative judgment; it is the opening of the address to the other. So this faith is not religious, strictly speaking; at least it cannot be totally determined by a given religion.⁷

As soon as I open my mouth, Derrida is saying, I am asking you to believe that I am speaking the truth and that I want to be understood. As soon as I open my mouth, I assume a bond of common credence, of structural good faith, between us. Even when I am being interrogated by a grand jury and forced to speak *against* my will about some wrongdoing on my part or on the part of my friend, even then, especially then, I want to be believed and

understood, for I want the jury to understand and to believe by my evasive use of words that I did not do it, or that my friend did not do it, and that I am not confessing to anything.

In *Politics of Friendship*,⁸ Derrida offers us an extended commentary on the history of a sentence attributed to Aristotle by Diogenes Laertius, "O my friends, there is no friend," and cited many times thereafter in the history of the discourse on friendship and on the authority of Diogenes. Derrida explores the multiple ways in which this highly ambiguous sentence—the sort of sentence that keeps Derrida in business—might possibly be understood. One way, he suggests, is as follows (*PF*, 217–8). Everything that Aristotle said, from the classification of the three forms of friendship in the *Ethics* to the most abstract, theoretical, constative assertions in the *Physics* or the *Metaphysics*, was addressed to someone, to hearers, to friends or enemies or both, to the friends of the forms and the friends of *hyle* (if there are any), whether they were immediately present (the first hearers of the lectures in the Lyceum who transcribed them) or not (everyone else who reads these transcripts). In this sense, even the most difficult sentences in the *Metaphysics*, Derrida argues, belong to "the dream of an unusable friendship," that is, to the highest form of friendship, the *philia* which we desire not because it is useful or pleasurable, but for itself, not for what it is worth to us, but for its intrinsic worthiness. Everything that Aristotle has spoken or written requires for its element the desire for a friendship beyond friendship, beyond the lower forms of friendship. That is because, by opening his mouth, Aristotle asks the other to hear him out, to understand and believe him, to "be enough of a friend" to listen to him, and to "consider him—Aristotle—as a friend." In this sense, every sentence we speak or write begins "O, my friends." That is true even if it is true that Aristotle said, as he is reputed to have said, "there is no friend." For even, and *especially* if, there is in fact no friend, if no existing individual meets all the expectations we have of a friend, that does not stop up our desire for the friend, for what Derrida calls the friendship "to come" (*à venir*), by which he means the very structure of expectation and desire. Far from stopping it up, the fact that there is no existing friend promotes and fires this desire all the more, just the way the deferral of the coming of the Messiah fires messianic longing.

With every sentence he writes, Aristotle is offering us friendship and asking for our friendship, at least enough friendship, a certain structural friendship, to hear him and be understanding (*entendre*) of him, to find "the time it takes to agree on the meaning of a sentence." The hope and desire of the friendship to come supplies the condition of possibility of understanding. Would not every sentence then include a certain "I love you, listen", "I love you, do you hear me?" and thereby be marked by a certain

hyperbolic *philia*? Would not a politics “grounded in this friendship,” based on such a hyperbole, be something new, a radical departure from the tired and exhausted history of politics? Might not this dream of a hyperbolic friendship also be a dream of a new political space as a field of friendly exchange?

Derrida goes so far as to describe the “O, my friends,” this apostrophe that implicitly precedes every sentence, as a *prayer*. The apostrophe is a call that points toward the future: “O my friends, be my friends, I love you, love me, I will love you, let us exchange this promise” (*PF*, 235). I ask you to “become these friends to whom I aspire,” yield to my desire, to my request, to my promise, which is, “one can also say a prayer.” Aristotle said in the *Ethics* (1159a25–30) that prayer is a discourse that is neither true nor false. It is something we do, a performative, not a report on a state of affairs that we can judge to be true or false. It does not bring itself into harmony with existing things, but it pleads for what does not exist. We know that there are no friends, that the friend is nowhere to be found among the things that exist, “but, I pray you, my friends, act so that henceforth there are. You, my friends, be my friends. You already are, since that is what I am calling you,” precisely in virtue of the friendship to come, the promise of friendship that we all love and desire, that we pray will come about. I am a friend of friendship, in love with love, and I give you my friendship, just because it does not exist, not yet, for it is essentially and always to come, and I install myself in the space of this desire each time I open my mouth and address the other. That is what Derrida likes to call in this essay the structure of “messianic teleiopoiesis” (*PF*, 235), which is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy: you, my friends, be my friends, be the friend to come (messianic), and although you are not yet my friends, you are already my friends for that is what I am calling you; by calling you my friends, I am bringing it about (teleiopoiesis). It is in virtue of the promise, the messianic expectation of a friendship to come, that I can address you as my friends, even though there is no friend, for that is what we desire, even as justice is what we desire for the law, even though, and precisely because, no law may identify itself with the name of justice. O, my friends, that is what I am calling you and what I am calling you *to*. That is our responsibility. Friendship is what we love and desire, that for which we pray and weep. Friendship has the structure of a prayer, not a predication, of an inauguration, not a report on a current state of affairs, of a desire, not of what is present.

The *positive point* of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, which Madison says is hard to discern, is this: We are not satisfied with what is present all around us, but we want to open the present up to the future, to friendship, hospitality, and justice. Friendship: Come, yes, yes.

Viens, oui, oui. That is what deconstruction is all about, which is what I would call the prayers and tears of Jacques Derrida. That is why I think that Gadamer and Derrida are closer to each other than they themselves realized in 1981, or than Madison or I realized. For hermeneutics and deconstruction alike turn on a common faith, that as soon as I open my mouth (or sit down at my computer) I have promised myself and promised the other that I am speaking the truth. That is what Gadamer calls good will and Derrida calls friendship.

Giving the Devil His Due

But, then, are we to think that the reason this is true is that Derrida has simply reversed his course and come around to agreeing with what Gadamer has to say in the famous non-debate about good will and wanting to be understood? Do we not find that Gadamer and Derrida are closer than we thought because Derrida has changed his mind and ended up adopting Gadamer's position? I would not say that, but rather that in *Politics of Friendship* Derrida has now spelled out his position on wanting to be believed and understood more carefully and on his own terms, but in a way that is still importantly different from Gadamer and without, to my knowledge, so much as mentioning Gadamer. That difference is what I want to develop now in terms of three points.

(1) For Derrida, as important as friendship is for ethics and politics, we must resist the temptation to speak of *grounding* politics upon friendship. Nothing that he says of friendship should be taken "for an assurance or a program." We must not embrace too hastily a logic (Gadamer would say a "method") of "agreement," of *entente* and *entendre* that is absolutely insulated from misunderstanding. Even if the speaker does indeed want to address someone and be heard and understood, there is nothing that can guarantee "that this desire, this will, this drive, are *simple*, simply self-identical to their supposed essence." In just the same way that "we" can never say "we," that no community enjoys homogeneity, complete consensus and self-identity, it is also true that I can never say I, that I am never self-identically myself, without any admixture of difference and self-dissent.⁹ For Derrida, I am always at odds with myself in an internal self-diremption and division. We are not trying to throw communication to the devil, Derrida says, not trying to hand understanding over to a diabolical hermeneutical death instinct:

But we cannot, and we *must* not, exclude the fact that when someone is speaking, in private or in public, when one teaches, publishes, preaches, orders, promises, prophesies, informs or

communicates, some force in him or her is also striving *not to be* understood, approved, accepted in consensus (*PF*, 218).

In other words, and this goes to the heart of a more careful differentiation of Gadamer and Derrida, the hermeneutics of friendship and wanting to be understood must not exclude the possibility of miscommunication, the *structural* possibility of misunderstanding, which is built right into it. The very condition of possibility of understanding, of wanting to be understood, is haunted or inhabited from within by the structural possibility of *not wanting* to be understood. For what is to protect this good will that wants to be understood from devilish forces that operate beneath and behind good will and incline it into willing otherwise? Derrida is not referring to the will to deceive the other, which is also a very considerable phenomenon which likewise must be taken into account when giving an account of willing and understanding. For the will to say things in just such a way that the other is bound to misunderstand us is another operation of a will that is fully in command of itself. Derrida is addressing forces that operate beneath the will or behind its back, like the force of the unconscious, or the play of traces, or all the aleatory and occasional circumstances that skew sense, the endless recontextualizability of every text, the structural detachability of every text from its context. The possibility that the letter may be lost, may fail to reach its destination (*destinerrance*), is built right into the possibility of its being delivered. Communication is like a little telegram we send that says "I love you" and ends up being delivered to the wrong person (*PF*, 219), who must be very gratified, but not a little perplexed. We are not making a case for the devil himself, he says, but insisting that "the paradoxical structure of the condition of possibility" of understanding be taken into account—that a friendly wanting to be understood is also inhabited, structurally, by a non-wanting, by an unfriendly force with which it shares its accommodations. If language is the house of Being, as Heidegger liked to put it, Derrida thinks the house is haunted by several alien spirits. If Being which is understood is language, as Gadamer liked to put it, Derrida thinks Being which is misunderstood is also language, that language is not simply and self-identically understanding. Misunderstanding is not a matter of some occasional misfortune that befalls understanding, a piece of bad luck, something external and accidental, but a structural possibility internal to its possibility, which is what Derrida means by "haunting" (*PF*, 219). Indeed, misunderstanding is often creative; as "Joyce" argues against "Husserl" in *Husserl's Origin of Geometry*, perfectly univocal communications would flatten history into a dull repetition of the same.

"Undecidability," the structural instability of meaning, even in the

meaning of friendship, is not all bad news and entirely unfriendly to decision or communication. "The crucial experience of the *perhaps* imposed by the undecidable"—perhaps I should do this, perhaps that, perhaps I should understand *x* to be *y*, perhaps *not-y*—"that is to say, the condition of decision, is not a moment to be exceeded, forgotten or suppressed." Undecidability persists in and throughout every genuine decision and safeguards its decisional virtue; it precedes the decision and follows the decision after it is made, even as it haunts the very deciding itself. The instant or the leap of decision—Derrida is on very friendly terms with this Kierkegaardian discourse—is heterogeneous to all knowledge, even though it is preceded and followed by knowledge, for if knowledge determined it, the decision would not be a decision, but only the application of a program or an algorithm, which would not then be a truly "responsible" decision, "sovereign and free decision" (if there is one). Programmability, determinability, on the other hand, is irresponsible. "I wish I could help you, but it's the rule, I am only following orders," is just a way to shirk responsibility.

There is no way to program understanding, to protect it from misunderstanding, no "method," as Gadamer has taught us all so well, to keep it safe. It always operates in the medium of risk, not an external and accidental risk, but an internal and constitutive one. One can only make a "leap" of "practical performativity, [which] is irreducible to any theorem," which resolves the irresolvable undecidability performatively, by leaping without assurance, "given over in darkness to the exception of a singularity without rule and without concept" (*PF*, 219). The singularity of every act of understanding is not safeguarded by rule. There is no oath that is not haunted by the possibility of perjury, no good will without the possibility of evil, no understanding without the possibility of misunderstanding. Everything in this Heraclitean world of the flux of undecidability can transform into its opposite. That is not an invitation to chaos and disorder, to mayhem and violence, as I think Madison sometimes thinks. It is the irreducible condition of possibility of decision and understanding, the factual condition under which what Gadamer calls "the event of understanding" comes about.

The difference between Gadamer and Derrida is, as I argued somewhat polemically some years ago (*DD*, 258–64), the difference between a certain essentialism in Gadamer and what I would like to call a certain felicitous nominalism in Derrida. The "enduring truth" (beyond method) of the "classic" in Gadamer is, I think, a more historically sensitive version of a fundamentally metaphysical idea—of being's enduring truth—which is, in my view, a deeply Hegelian and metaphysical streak in Gadamer. That makes me wonder whether Madison sympathizes "wholeheartedly" with the

critique of the metaphysics of presence, or only halfheartedly. In Derrida, on the other hand, we have a good deal less assurance about "enduring truth" and "classics," a little more wariness of their prestige, a little more suspicion of what they are leaving out. But that does not lead us into despair and hopelessness, according to Derrida, but fires our hope and desire, our longing and our love, all the more.

(2) There is, moreover, another difference between Gadamer and Derrida that reflects the Levinasian side of Derrida. Derrida says that the act of giving to understand, of wanting to be understood, like "I love you," "must remain unilateral and dissymmetrical":

Whether or not the other answers, in one way or another, no mutuality, no harmony, no agreement can or must reduce the infinite disproportion.... [T]he desire of this disproportion which *gives* without return and without recognition must be able not to count on 'proper agreement,' not to calculate assured, immediate or full comprehension (*PF*, 220).

Perhaps that pushes understanding past friendship, which usually is understood to involve reciprocity, to the madness of love without return, which is what Derrida calls "lovence" (*PF*, 66), and that is true insofar as love and friendship are conventionally understood. I think this means that Derrida would not inscribe understanding within the ideal horizon of a "fusion of horizons," a reciprocal enrichment of the same and the other, in the mutual production of some new third, raised up above both. The fusion of horizons would, once again, be a little too Hegelian for him, too much turned toward consensus, toward the finite and definite form of a limited understanding. Derrida's interests are in keeping things open-ended, in infinite unrest. To the fusion of horizons Derrida prefers a kind of devilishly bad but salutary infinite, producing texts, e-ditions, from *ex-dare*, to give out, to give away (*aus-geben*, *Ausgabe*), texts that keep on giving, twisting free from the temporary agreements, which are the contexts, stations, or receivers by which they are picked up. The gift of what I give you to understand is not to be returned to me (*mors auctoris*), but by that he is not simply taking the side of a hermeneutics of the receiver, of the ear of the other, with whom the gift fuses in a new horizon of mutual understanding. He is more interested in making a gift of horizon-shattering expenditure without reserve, in a disproportionate excess that disturbs all fusion from within. Such a gift is not *simply* possible, not possible in all its *purity*, but that impossibility does not throw us into despair. On the contrary, it is what drives our desire and fires our love for *the impossible*, our prayer for the impossible, our hope against hope, which is never identical with itself.

(3) There is still another refinement to be introduced into this discussion which has to do with the very idea of a good will, which also raises the question of metaphysics. One of the questions Derrida addressed to Gadamer in 1981 had to do with the confinement of the "good will" within the "metaphysics of subjectivity" that Heidegger has criticized (*DD*, 52–3). That, I think, is a fair question and a fair criticism. In his later writings, Derrida has tried to come back to certain basic ethical notions like friendship and hospitality, but precisely in such a way as to avoid making them turn on the initiative of a friendly or hospitable subject, a very good-hearted fellow who would necessarily represent some version of an autonomous subject. Derrida would redescribe such a subject as the subject of responsibility, of responding to the address that overtakes the subject and elicits a response from the subject, on the model of heteronomy rather than autonomy. A "decision," Derrida says, "must surprise both the freedom and the will of every subject—surprise, in a word, the very subjectivity of the subject" (*PF*, 68), with the result that an "autonomous subject" never decides anything (it is too willful, too non- or ir-responsible). Thus, Derrida advocates, to the scandal of philosophy, a passive decision, a decision decided in me by the "absolute other in me, the other as the absolute that decided on me in me" (*PF*, 68), so that the decision is the other's gift to me. To decide is to be "delivered over to the other, suspended by the other's heartbeat," from moment to moment, in a rhythmic pulsation sustained by the other (*PF*, 69), which is what Derrida calls responsibility.

Therefore, it is more the *will* in "good will" that Derrida is criticizing than the *good*. This is because he has adopted a Levinasian model according to which the good is certainly *not* the property of (my) good will (Kantian autonomy), for the Good comes over me, overtakes and surprises me from above. Rather than speaking of my good will to communicate to and with the other and to understand the other, Derrida would speak instead of an accusable, irrecusable responsibility which would be loathe to call itself good. I would say that at this point Derrida, following Levinas, has pushed the notion of the relation with the other beyond the dynamics of a good will, which is still tainted by the metaphysics of the subjectivity of the subject. But in doing so, Derrida has brought the phenomenon of the relation to the other more in line with the analysis of "play" that Gadamer gives us than has Gadamer himself, for the subject, according to Gadamer, is not itself a player playing but a player who is played by the play. Derrida's notion of "responsibility," of being surprised by the other who solicits my friendship, is more faithful to Gadamer's notion of play than is Gadamer's "good will," which requires an autonomous subject. According to the structure of play, what is required by the relation to the other is not so much a good will willing to be understood as a being willed by the Good

to respond to the approach of the Other. This is also another way of saying that for Gadamer dialogue transpires on a level playing field, not in the curved space that Levinas describes, which Derrida takes to define the space of friendship.

Conclusion

At the end of his Gadamerian response to Derrida, Madison says that for Derrida play is "mere play," whereas for Gadamer something is at stake in this play, namely, our very being. He says that while Gadamerian hermeneutics is all about our possibility to be, in Derrida there is only "Nietzschean fatalism," "a kind of nihilism that would have to be masked by a heavy dose (*pharmakon*) of Dionysian gleeful exuberance over the 'innocence of becoming' (*amor fati*)."¹⁰ O my friend Gary Madison, O my friends all (if there are any), that is a bad rap! What is at stake in deconstruction could not be more serious, more "mortally" or more "vitality" serious. For deconstruction is set in motion by the desire for justice, for the gift, for hospitality, for the expenditure without reserve on the other who demands everything of us, even the food out of our mouths. For Derrida, the deconstruction of the presence of whatever is present around us turns on the possibility, or *im*possibility, of the *un*deconstructible to come. Justice is what is undeconstructible and impossible for him, not in the sense of a simple logical impossibility, but in the sense of what Derrida calls *the impossible*, the incoming that shatters our horizon of what presently seems possible. The deconstruction of the expectation and possibility of what we now call "possible" is meant to awaken our longing and our hope for *the impossible*, for something *to come*. Deconstruction is not fatalism but hope, not a simple or self-identical hope, to be sure, not a hope uncomplicated by the threat of something that would dash our hopes, not a guaranteed hope (which would then not be hope but a guarantee), but what we call a hope against hope. For hope is only really hope when it is threatened from within by hopelessness, when it is indeed a hope against hope. Deconstruction is a hope for a justice and a friendship *to come* which the eye of phenomenological intuition has not seen, which the ear of hermeneutic hearing has not heard.¹¹

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Notes

1. See *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer–Derrida Encounter*, eds. Diane Michelfelder and Richard Palmer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

Hereafter cited as *DD*.

2. Gary Madison, "Beyond Seriousness and Frivolity: A Gadamerian Response to Deconstruction," *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

3. Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), to which Madison refers for a model of his strategy in debating Derrida.

4. See the piece by Josef Simon in *DD*, 162 ff., which takes "good will" to be just the thing that separates Gadamer from Derrida.

5. That side of Derrida has also been recently acknowledged by Habermas, with whom another rapprochement, one taking place on another front of Derridean studies, is being carried out. See *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, ed. with commentary by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

6. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 388.

7. *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. with commentary by John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 22. For more on Derrida's distinction between faith and religion, see Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," in *Religion*, eds. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, trans. Samuel Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). For a commentary, see John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

8. Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997). Hereafter *PF*.

9. See *Nutshell*, 13–5.

10. Madison, "Beyond Seriousness and Frivolity," 118.

11. A shorter version of this article appeared as "Good Will and the Hermeneutics of Friendship: Gadamer and Derrida," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 28 (2002).