

Farewell

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Given–without Giving (Anything)

Who [Christ] in the days of his flesh , when he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. (Hebrews 5:7)

What does it mean to say “farewell”? And in what language, in what words, with what breathe, with what sigh and with what tears?

What does it mean to give farewell? How does one *give* farewell? Have we ever learnt, or do we ever learn enough how to give a farewell?

Among all occasions, it is farewell that always appears to bear a unique and singular sense for us: it is a time for recollection and gratitude to be expressed at the last moment of the other person's life. The other is *just* left, *just a little while* ago; or, she is *just* taking her leave, *just a little while* soon. In this *just a little while*—a strange time is this “just a little while”, a time tempered by an irreducible and irremissible void—that I offer up my ‘prayers and supplications with strange crying and tears’: I thus give farewell to the one who is left, *just a little while ago*, or *just* leaving, *just a little while soon*. She *takes* (her leave) and we *give* (farewell): she is the *taker* and I am the *giver*. What do I *offer* her and *give* her as she *takes* her leave?: No possession in the world that I have accumulated with the labor of my hands, no object that this subject *I* has appropriated through the mastery of knowledge, no thing that is “mine”, my very *own* something, something that is *properly* my *property*—that I am giving her,

offering up to her. She does not take what properly I *can* give her: she does not take my possession, my property, my object and my things. In other words, she does not take what is *mine*, what is my *own*, what *belongs* to me (a possession, an object, a thing); instead what she takes, and she so entirely takes away, and so utterly does she take away, is her *leave*: a non-object, a non-thing, a non-possession. It is, as if as it were, only what is *not* mine may be offered to her as she takes her leave; what may be offered to her, as she takes her leave, has thus never been mine, has never been my property and my object and my possession. This is why such offering and such giving appears so strange, as the citation from St. Paul above illustrates: it is strange because such offering is radically foreign to the logic of the worldly economy that thrives on possessions and property and objects. 'Prayers and supplications' are *strange* because they are *not* what I *can* give: even before giving them out of my treasury, they are *always already* given and offered, even before my knowledge and consciousness, even before my intention to give: a givenness and an offering that is always too early or too late, and is never contemporaneous with my knowledge, with my intentionality, with my eidetic consciousness. It is "something" given without profit and without return and without certitude that she will ever take what is given herewith, my tears and my supplications; and it is without the certitude whether she will ever return my 'prayers and supplications' with her own 'tears and supplications': this non-certitude tears and shatters asunder the economic logic of mutuality and exchange, of return and profit, for here is no possession, no object and no-thing to be given and to be returned. Nothing is given, and nothing taken. Yet, it is not mere "nothing": "something" is indeed given (through me, something that passes and pierces through me like a sword) and "something" is indeed taken (up in her) which does not belong to the order of "things", "something" that does not belong to the order of the world: a radical invisibility that makes a hole, just a little hole, at that little instance when the circle of the world is about to complete itself as total and absolute circle. When she takes her leave, it is this little offering that is offered through me, passing and piercing through me, wounding me and shattering me: it is just a little hole into the whole, this little hole that makes everything impossible to be total, this little hole that makes the world non-coincident with itself, it is just this little hole that is being offered and given at the extremity of time and place, at the beginning and at the end of the world, a profitless and useless "something". In thus given – 'prayers and supplications' – it is nothing other than the self itself is given and given up, abandoned and let go: in thus giving, the self is nothing other than this "letting go" and being abandoned, for the self has never been my possession, my object, and my property. In 'prayers and supplications', the self itself is left off and is taken leave of itself, when she takes her leave: here is indeed a likeness between the two leave-

takings, each one on its own, and is thus without the mutuality of exchange, without any fusion of horizons, without the fusion of the two souls into some orgiastic identification. "Something" is offered up to—the 'prayers and supplications'—and they are offered up to without return, for they cannot be returned, for there is nothing (a possession, a thing, an object) to return and nothing (a possession, a thing, an object) to give, and precisely thereby it may be called as pure gift, the gift par excellence, the gift that is being given without economy and without exchange. It is a strange and impossible thought!

The Abandoned Being

Just a little while ago, or just a little while soon she is leaving us behind. She is gone *before*, I am left *behind*. Where she is going, so I am going too; I am just a little while late. Who is this "I" who is bit late, who has *always already* been a bit late, even though it is just a little while? Who is this "I" who has *always already* been unable to *catch up* with the other, and has never been contemporaneous with her in a fusion of our horizons? Who is this "I"?

They say I am the "survivor". Having left behind, I have survived. We cannot hope to miss here the radical passivity of this event or of this word. One does not choose to survive; it is not the freedom of a sovereign subject who can radically pose to herself this immense question: 'to be or not to be'. Being *abandoned*, I am *survived*. This survived "I" is *the abandoned being*. This being who is abandoned offers up, having survived, 'prayers and supplications' for the well-being of the other: "farewell"!

To survive, as its etymological meaning implies, is to continue living—now with an absence, after the event of a departure; it is to make alive, in my life, someone who has become an absence, just a little while ago, even if it has been a decade or a century long (still, it is just a little while for me)—in my remembrance and tasks, in my responsibilities and duties. To survive, then, is to be responsible, in my very fragility and out of my fragile being, to the other, that is to say: to *respond* (from which the meaning of *responsibility* derives) and continue to respond to the other who does not respond back in turn, who has ceased responding back, or rather, who now responds in another tongue and in another trembling voice that is inaudible to my fleshly ear but sings to the invisible ear of my soul. Responsibility to the other is, then, not just a prayerful act; even more so, prayer is responsibility par excellence: it is this linking prayer with responsibility to the other that *remains* to be done as an infinite act: it is this that is left to the survivor, a *remainder* that is left for me, an irreducible remnant beyond all the measures of worldly values. When all is gone - the other

herself in her flesh and blood, a life itself - still a "something" beyond this "all" survives: an irreducible remnant of responsibility for the abandoned being. Just a little while ago she is gone—even if it is a decade ago—yet responsibility of the survived, abandoned being for the other remains something *infinite* that does not exhaust itself in a little while: still it remains as remainder, something always still *to* be done, in the verbal sense of the infinite *to* of "to be done".

So, today is this occasion, for the survivor to give farewell to the other who is just gone a little while ago, or is going away just a little while soon. What does this "today" mean here? It is the today when the other is going away, I say: "farewell"! As if I am standing today—this very "today"—at the end of time and at the end of a world: today the world, *a* world, appears to be *ending* or has ended. Why does it have to always so soon? This "today" always comes too soon (the today of the ending of a world), as if it does not come in its own time: that is possibly what a today is—that it is the "time" that does not come in its own time, it is a "today" that come today. That is why death—the death of the other and also my death—is always timely and untimely at the same time: it is timely because it is untimely, too early or too late to come. Today is such a "today" that fails to present itself in any mode of self-presence while coming *to* itself: while coming *to* itself, it arrives either too early or too late, even though it is a matter of just a little while.

In such a today—only this "today"—a world is disappearing and ending. So soon and so early?: I cannot believe this! How incredible and incomprehensible this coming *of* today! I am not yet ready for this today. I am not having time for any preparation for the coming of this today, for I always thought it will take a little while for this today to come, at least for me to prepare for her departure, but it has come too soon. And I am late to arrive at the scene! Today *always already* a world has ended. It is towards this end, towards this *eschaton*, that I am transported each time when it is the time for me to say "farewell" (what an untimely time!). I am *now* placed today at the end of a world; I am *now* placed at the end of a specific, concrete world that the other is for me, she who is leaving me behind, as if *abandoning* me to myself without myself, leaving me to an absence to which I am now exposed and abandoned without the possibility of my appeal to revoke this abandonment. Henceforth, from this eschatological *now* on, all my experience of presence will also be—by the same measure – an experience of an irreducible absence, of a desert of solitude, denuded of a "world". It is a world that we loved once and cherished, and enjoyed together; it is the world where once beauty flourished and fruits of laughter daily grew, while the pains of earthly sufferings daily taught us the patience of time, teaching us to endure each time the end of time. In this world, along with her, I bore witness how time weaves its own work of mortality on the very skins of our body, in

the slow trembling of our hands, in the imperceptible graying of our hair till the moment, suddenly - behold! – we see our hair gone all grey, and that we are now all trembling, and our skin all wrinkled! In the visible marks of her body, I now see the mysterious work of the most invisible of all phenomena—mortality itself! How enigmatic! How mysterious! How enigmatically the invisible makes its presence felt in the most visible of all phenomena on earth: on our very skin, in its folding and unfolding, on the pleasure and pain it yields, and onto the nameless that opens us each time, the skin on which the earth presents itself each time as “a here and a now”.

Now, today, and here this world is disappearing, or is to be no more. Henceforth, all my experience of the “now” and “today” and “here” is an experience of a “no-more”, or “soon- to-be-no-more”. Has it not *always already* been so? Has it not *always already* been such that our being here is to be no-more here, sooner or later, that our being is a continual being-towards a “being-no-more” which constitutes and deconstitutes at the same time this being that we are. Henceforth, with the departure of the other, with the parting of the other from me, with this partitioning between us—by this invisible and imperceptible veil of mortality—with this event, all experience of the world has now become an experience of being apart. With her departure, I have somehow become myself being who is the-apart, from her and from myself too. With her leaving, I have come *to be apart* from myself. Can there be any responsibility, in the infinite sense of the term—my infinite responsibility to her—without this irreducible solitude of being rent oneself *apart*? It is as if with her *departure*—and myself being rent *apart*—a new relation with her (without mutuality, without exchange, without economy, without debit and credit) is blossoming like a dark flower whose root lies in the nocturnal depth of existence called “death”.

With the departure of the person I love, with the event of her return from her exodus here on this earth, there is also a departure that takes place “within” me from myself, as if as it were with her death I too have died in a certain sense, while still continuing here being alive. That this is so is implied in the very saying that I am “survived”. With her, this “I” too has died somehow while not yet dead. From this, that is, from the death of the other—and only from the death of the other—that I come to know that I too will die one day, just a little while soon, that this event is not just something that happens to her alone, but also happens to “me” and in “me” and has *always already* been happening in me, without my knowledge and without my intentionality in such a way that it never becomes reduced to an eidetic consciousness (see Levinas 2000). “My” death, then, never belongs to me as an essence or a property. Having being dispossessed of “me” from myself, I somehow “know”—without knowledge—that mortality “exists”, and that its existence is unlike any

other modes of existence in the world. An "existence" without any existent, the knowledge of mortality is a kind of unknowing knowledge: it never appears as a "thing" in the world, and it has never become an object of my consciousness; it is not something that my concept (*Begriff*) grasps (*greifen*)—and yet, somehow I know that I will die, most surely, more surely than any other things in the world that are visible and audible, and that are manifest in the light of the world. From where do I derive this knowledge - the most enigmatic knowledge that I may have—the knowledge of something (this no-thing!) called mortality which takes away from "me" all that I have, including even this "I" itself?

Today is this time to say to her, finally: "farewell". Today, while bidding her farewell, I have come to know even more acutely than ever before what I have *always already* known, this most ordinary and the most extraordinary knowledge that has ever been known to the human being: that I too must depart, only just a little while later but not too far away. Thus, in bidding "farewell" to her, I am also giving farewell to myself, indirectly though. By saying "farewell" to her, in a way, I also to say myself, invoking her very proper name and my name too, along with it: "Farwell!" And not only that alone; by me saying "farewell" to her, I also open for the possibility (at the same time, by the very same measure) of someone else (the third) to say "farewell" to me (on another time, on another occasion, when there will be another event of the end of the world): a "farewell" begetting another "farewell" in turn that constitutes the very history of the human world that we perhaps would call it "culture". Giving farewell (which also implies the whole nexus of rituals that has grown around it over millennia long history) lies, then, at the very foundation of the human world and of human speech as address. As such, it is not only the metaphysical expression of the individual human existence on this earth. Having been exposed to the abandonment of the other by her departure, I am also exposed to my mortality at the same time. This exposure is more intimate to me than the presence of the world in my thought; it is more intimate than my conscious intentionality that is directed to the "things" of the world; it is even more intimate than my cognitive power to grasp the objects in the world in my knowledge that enables me to appropriate them, to possess them and to *have* them. This exposure that indicates me toward her naked being and toward my own naked being to myself: this originary passivity, before all knowledge, is a nocturnal darkness that is more originary than all the lights that illumine the things for me as objects of my knowledge in which I generally find myself as myself and where I discover myself as one thing among other things in the world. It is this nocturnal darkness that suddenly darkens (and also lightens) every time I address her, and also to myself indirectly, invoking her proper name: "farewell". By saying "farewell" I salvage her (and also

myself), I redeem her, and I absolve her from being one thing among other things in the world, from being one object among other objects of knowledge, from being mere an item or entity belonging to a genus or species. To redeem her in this way is to survive; and it is the responsibility of the survivor that I am to the extent it constitutes the very meaning of "survival" as such. Being abandoned by her departure does not take away my responsibility; rather, it is precisely the opposite: my *responsibility* to her increases ever more, and infinitely so abounds my *response* to her, which is the responsibility to redeem her from being one thing among other things in the world, to salvage her from the order of totality that is the "world", to free her from the being one object among other objects of appropriation. And this I do, today, when I give her farewell.

Today, at this instance, and here, I say: "farewell"! Today, now, here, a world is ending. Henceforth, all experience of the world would be bound up with the experience of the absence of a world, of worldlessness beyond all measures of time and all measures of speech. Having been deprived of a world—this singular world marked by her absolutely singular signature and her idiomatic presence—I am now exposed to a new world of experience: that of worldlessness. This new world (the worldless world it is!) is bereft of time, an eternity of a sort. In this worldless world there is no more graying of hair, no more trembling of hands, no more wrinkles on the face, and no more melancholy of time. Having been bereft of her time we are now face to face (for the first time, and also for the last time, for every first time here is the last time) with something like eternity that erupts, will henceforth continue to erupt, in the very midst of the daily life of this very earthly existence: whenever her face will flash before my mind's eye—like a lightning—in moments of my recollection and in my gratitude, her face would appear renewed and bathed in the light of eternity, as it were transfixed by eternity. Her new face does no longer judge me with the violence of its presence; rather, it transforms me into love in ways that daily redeem me in turn, early in the morning or late at night when the din of the world dies away in distance, and I am then left alone to myself, now alone with her, face to face with a face made eternal by an absence of time. Henceforth she will speak to me, and I will speak to her whenever the din of the world dies away in distance, and then we will enter into the solitary depth of the night where time stands still, transfixed.

Today, here, now I say "farewell" to her in the face of this possibility that erupts at the edge of the world and at the extremity of time. It is this eschatological possibility (the end of time, but also a new inauguration of a new life of being-with) which we experience each time I say to her: "farewell". To say "farewell" is to say a final "good bye", but also, even more primordially and in an originary manner, it is to

say, literally: "may you fare well!" This is to say: "since the time of your life is now at an end, may you fare well in eternity; since your life of time is at an end now, may you fare well in your new life of eternity!" Now this "now"—the *now* of the ending, now when I say "farewell"—separates not only me *from* her but also conjoins me *with* her in an entirely new manner of being-with that I could never imagine before. This now of the *eschaton* not only separates time *from* eternity but also conjoins *with* eternity: it appears as if that each time we experience a "with", a "from" *always already* writes its signature, the invisible-inaudible signature of mortality. The reverse statement makes even more sense: every experience of "from" *always already* is signed by a "with" which must be absolutely new, irreducible to knowledge, but only accessible to faith, to the prayer of the heart, to the love of the soul that knows how to listen to the inaudible and how to see the invisible, out of the very depth of the visible, out of the trembling flesh of the universe, out of the quivering skin of the earth.

How to see the invisible?

How to listen to the inaudible?

The Amen to Eternity

How to see the invisible?

Even to pose this question is *always already* to know somehow (without knowledge; or, even better, knowing ignorantly) that the invisible is the origin of the visible, and the inaudible must be the origin of all that is audible to our ears.

"With" and "from" are conjoined—and also separated—at this "now". The "now" (the now of saying "farewell") makes possible the impossible: the invisible is seen, the inaudible is heard, and eternity presents itself, momentarily, in the lightning flash of an instant, *hic et nunc*. This *nunc* is no more and no mere passing of time but the passing of eternity itself that arrests time, for the first time, and also, each time as the last time. With her now, when she is departing from me and thereby abandoning me (to myself without her) we have a glimpse of an arrival of eternity. Now, soon now, in just a little while from now, which is just about *to* come, she will have a different and a new face, no longer the earthly face of a worldly presence but the new face of eternity that arrests time, and makes time of the world stand still. This is why, each time whenever we remember the other person when she is no more with us, her face always appears to be the same image: our inner gaze of remembrance gets transfixed to one and the same image of the other's face that, as if, would forever stand still for us like Mona Lisa's smile and yet remains animate (just like Mona Lisa), just like the living person she was before, just a little bit more beautiful and radiant. It is as if the other, while being dead, refuses simply to disappear into mere nothing; or,

that, somehow she is reborn, resurrected, with the same face while becoming different and new: the same one becoming different, and while becoming different remaining the very same person, the person with whom I shared my earthly sufferings, my festivities and my joy. By departing from me, by now no more sharing with me this flesh of the earth (oh, this depth of the skin of life! this trembling of time! this impatience of our earthly speech!), she opens for me now a new possibility of a new sharing. She has not simply vanished in the vast abyss of nothing. It is as if death is no longer the very final judgment on us; as if time is not the final statement of truth for us; as if mortality is not the ultimate destination of our existence on earth. As it were we are called for a destination that simply does not end with our death, and that there must be a time—rather eternity itself—beyond this event of the last judgment called “death” and that there must be a life whose meaning is not exhausted and drained out in our sojourn on this earth (which ends in death). By her very un-sharing of this earth, a new sharing is now made possible: a glorified being-with a new face (which bears the same old face of the person we know) is now possible which was impossible otherwise; now it is made possible by her departure, and by my learning to say, for the first time, and each time as the last time: “farewell!”

“Farewell”: “May you fare well!” It is, while being indeed a word of good-bye, is—even more profoundly and in even more ordinary manner, is an Amen to life, to a new life that will henceforth be hers. Only to the living, in this new sense, can I say in proper way: “farewell”. Only the living can fare well! This is why a “good-bye” is also a welcome, or better, a “see you again!” The German word *Auf Wiedersehen* is profoundly telling: to say “bye” is actually to say, literally, “see you again”. With this death loses its ultimate meaning for me; and the last judgment loses its poisonous sting. Each time I say “farewell” to someone, I announce the infinite postponement of the last judgment once more and ad-infinitum (‘I will see you again and again’); and each time I announce eternity with the renewed force of love. Love here triumphs over death, or at least proves to be as strong as death, as one verse from *Song of Solomon* says:

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave. (Song of Solomon 8:6)

Love (love of her whom I love with the force of eternity) infinitely *defers* and *differs* death: once more, each time newly, I affirm the *Amen* to eternity in the face of the last moment, to open up another possibility of being-with the other. Each time I say

such an *Amen* another moment still erupts after each last moment. This “after” of *Amen* never ceases recurring with the renewed force of love, ever after and forever. Without this eternal affirmation (this affirmation of eternity!) death would be the ultimate destination of human existence on earth, and life would lose all its affirmative foundation, and nihilism would then be only basis of life, a paltry nothing, a muffled cry of speechless despair.

“Farewell”: “May you fare well!” When I say “farewell”, I affirm life; or, better, in this “farewell” life affirms itself through me: it transforms me into a passage of language through which love triumphs over death. To say “farewell” is to pray that the other may fare well in her new life! This is because it is only for the sake of life the flowers of prayer are being offered. The whole linguistic gesture of prayer is, then, bound up with this possibility of life as such, not a particular aspect or meaning of life, but life as a whole and *as such* and in its utter purity. Purer the life for the sake of which prayer is offered, purer becomes the prayer; and also, inversely, purer the prayer, purer becomes the life of the one who prays, and purer becomes the life of the other of whom one prays. ² To pray for the other is to pray that the other may *come alive* purely as the one who lives a pure life, not just as a mere being alive. Prayer (“May you fare well!”) then invokes life *for the sake* of life, not just for the sake of mere being alive which is under the grip of death. This life which is lived for the sake of life itself is *the pure life*, life that is purely alive, alive for the sake of itself, enjoying itself and feasting upon itself and enjoying its own glory. Such blessed life – the life beatific – is the redeemed life. It is this life of redemption that I pray for her, with all my ‘tears and supplications’: ‘May you fare well!’

The word “farewell”, then, should not be seen as mere wish for the other person. It is to be understood in the purely vocative sense that is unique to the word of prayer. In this vocative lies not just the tear of the one who is praying, but also the possibility of wiping out these tears by the promise of redemption, given in the arrival of a new life, made now purer by the work of death. With the death of the other whom I love, I realize not just the nothing that the other is *as* earthly being but also the nothing that I am too, and the nothing of all creaturely beings: ‘Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD’ (Job 1:21). This fundamental experience of transiency as the truth of creaturely existence, however, is not the ultimate thing: a passage needs to be opened up to re-discover the other—and also myself to be with her— in God where all groaning of the earthly existence is redeemed into a new form of life. It is to God, then, my prayer for the other is offered with my ‘tears and supplications’: it is this living God who is life Himself (John 14:6) and the way and the truth, stands himself between us, linking her to me, and me to

her in a nexus of eternity that triumphs over death. Prayer, then, is the passage of transformation unto God; it is the passage of *metamorphosis* of death unto new life; it is the threshold through which the *law* of earthly existence is passed over unto *love* through the cross of *death*. The death of the other, then, no longer retains its nihilistic trait: it is transformed into a passage through which the pure affirmation of life itself occurs when we learn to pray with the purity of the heart: "may you fare well"!

This is why when we pray, it is necessary to purify our heart, as the Apostle James reminds us (James 4:8) and which in turn is insisted by Søren Kierkegaard (2009, 7-154). In between the wounded words of prayer must come alive the purity of the heart, offered with the purity of all intentions, to hasten this event of new re-discovery of finding life beyond, through a radical dispossession of all mastery and powers that constitute our worldly existence on earth. The work of fire that death is purifies the mere-being-alive into the pure life of the other with whom a new being-with has become possible. With this all earthly sufferings are absorbed in that vast ocean of life that is grace. Now it is time for a new conversation with the other who has departed, who having departed has once again returned to converse with me. This new infinite conversation stripped bare of all finitude, is a glorified conversation: here language is silence, being-with is an ever renewed solitude, and all invocation is immediately an arrival, unmediated by human knowledge. Here prayer offered is immediately fulfilled!

Such is the power of prayer whose power lies in *impotentia*, whose force is a fragile wound, whose violence (that the kingdom of eternity may hasten now, today, and here) is violence without violence. Purer the prayer, more devoid it becomes of the things in the world to be asked for. With the event of such pure prayer, the whole of human language and language as such becomes one universal vocative voice, a hymn, a glorified song of praise and adoration. In other words, with such prayer, which is not prayer for "anything", any "this" or "that" thing, the human language and language as such enters truly to its own *vocation*, that is to say: to be essentially *vocative*. "To *invoke*": this is, etymologically, the meaning of the word "God". This name is a human word, uttered in the *invocative* songs of prayer that stands for what is essentially above word and above all names. To *invoke* God is basically not to name "something" *in* God, less even it is to name the nameless: God is neither nameable nor is God nameless. God is above all names. Meister Eckhart thus calls God *omninameable* (Eckhart 1986, 54). This is why in certain European languages, the word "farewell" has its cognate term "adieu": "to God"³. To farewell a person is to dedicate her, in the *vocative* address of prayer, to the One who is neither nameable nor unnamable but *omninameable*.

The linguistic registrar of prayer is, then, not one use of language among others. As pure *vocative* address, prayer is the very truth or essence of human language and of language *as such*. Prayer is the pure language of truth that adheres in the vocative voice of *adieu*. Stripped bare of the “means and end” structure of our ordinary use of language, the *vocative* voice of address in prayer redeems us from the violence of the law that constitutes any “means and end” structure of linguistic communication. When we pray (“may you fare well”), not only the other is redeemed from our violence on her, but also our violence on ourselves. This is why a new, now glorified, an infinitely beatific conversation becomes possible with the other who is nevertheless departed. As such, the prayer for the other (“may you fare well”), which is not a prayer for the material, worldly well-being for her on earth, is each time an eschatological event that announces a new, beatific life. The concept “beatitude” or “blessing” is to be understood in this eschatological light of life itself which is not a life as mere-being-alive (under the grip of the law) but the pure life whose liveliness can only be intimated in the pure language of the *vocative*: “farewell”!

The prayer offered in true spirit and with the purity of the heart for the other who has become distant from me (by the measure of earthly time and earthly space) truly brings the other to the utmost proximity possible between human beings (by the spiritual measure of eternity), for there is nothing any more left of worldly negotiations (of forces, of powers, of the law) to intervene between “me” with “her”. Nothing is left of credit and debit to be negotiated between us; no territory, no material wealth, no land is left to be partitioned between us. Thus unmediated by anything that belongs to the conditioned order of worldly negotiations, but having only God between us who alone knows how to bring an infinite distance closer to the nearest nearness in a flash of lightning, the other is closer to my spirit than was possible by any other measure of worldly temporality. Here eternity alone is near, while all time is far. This is the paradox difficult to grasp in human knowledge. Only by a radical renunciation of self-will and by an abandonment of all conditioned claims of the worldly order, the pure prayer is possible that makes eternity nearer to us than all the times taken together. What cannot be achieved by a collection of all times together, were it possible, can be attained in a *Now* of pure prayer: here the spirit world where the other lives comes to me to begin a new, now infinite, conversation. Thus the philosopher Schelling says in his beautiful novella *Clara*:

The opposite is itself precisely what is nearest. Deserts, mountains, distant lands, and seas can separate us from a friend in this life; the distance between this life and the other is no greater than that between night and day or vice versa. A heartfelt thought, together with our complete withdrawal from

anything external, transfers us into that other world, and perhaps this other world becomes all the more hidden from us, the nearer to us it is. (Schelling 2002, 13).

This is to learn to say truly: "farewell!"

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¹ In the sense Jacques Derrida's thought of *différance* (Derrida 1985, 1-28).

² Thus in "The Purity of the Heart is to Will One Thing" – which is one of his *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* - Søren Kierkegaard writes: 'the prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays' (2009, 22).

³ Jacques Derrida examines this question in great detail (Derrida 1999).