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On Being Host and Guest: Questions Posed by Migrants

Migration has become a hot-button issue. Mention immigration and one gets particularly strong reactions; the term "immigrant" has become synonymous with a situation deemed especially problematic. Nevertheless, migration has always existed and there are - even today - many different kinds of migrants. For instance, it is clear that asylum has been granted to persons fleeing persecution since time immemorial; we can already find references in texts written 3,500 years ago by the Hittites, the Babylonians, the Assyrians and the ancient Egyptians. This notwithstanding, it appears that, nowadays, "migration" has become synonymous with political, legal, and moral complexity. Indeed, there are moves to replace "migrant" with "refugee." The move is commendable in terms of its being an attempt to clarify our language, but is deeply problematic in that dropping the term covers up for the fact that the human rights of so many are indeed forgotten or hidden behind a façade of legal constructs.

In our contemporary scenario, we do need to ask why "migrant" is such a difficult word. And here one could readily respond that the questions raised are knotty because migration evokes vast practical challenges in terms of numbers and quotas. In addition, however, migration crucially raises important emotional questions which have to do with national, regional and even personal identity. These are crucial precisely because such questions concern our sense of dwelling, our social imaginary with regards to our homeland, and our background awareness of the (perhaps threatening) presence of strangers at our doorsteps.

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In the light of such observations, in this paper, I would like to examine what to be at home, and what to show hospitality, could mean, and to articulate the ties between the two. The aim will be to offer some reflections, inspired mostly by Emmanuel Levinas, in the hope that they may provoke some thought about these axial facets of our self-consiousness as we are faced in our days with the issue of migration.

Perhaps we could begin by noting that the very term 'migrant' is contested and continuously evolving. At the international level, no universally accepted definition for "migrant" exists. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines a migrant as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is. IOM concerns itself with migrants and migration-related issues and, in agreement with relevant States, with migrants who are in need of international migration services."[2] But then we can speak of economic migrants, documented migrants, irregular migrants, skilled migrants, worker migrants, and so forth. Indeed, definitions of "migrant" vary greatly among different statistical sources, and even between such sources and different bodies of law. For instance, "migrants" may be defined as foreign-born, or foreign nationals, or people who have moved to a country for a substantial period of time whether that is envisaged to be temporary or whether the individual intends to settle there for the rest of his or her life.[3] Then one can define migrant in terms of someone who is subject to immigration control at a nation-state's borders, or as one who does not have the "right of abode." Even here, these are not equivalent; indeed, there are many who are not "subject to immigration control" but do not have the "right of abode," most notably third-country nationals entering a Schengen-zone country from another such country. Indeed, none of these definitions are equivalent.[4] To add to the complexity, people who are internally displaced or who choose to move internally within national boundaries are often called migrants.

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[2] https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms, accessed November 15, 2016.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Moreover, "immigrant" and "migrant" (as well as "foreigner") are commonly used interchangeably even among specialists, even though dictionary definitions do tend to distinguish between "immigrants" - people who are or intend to be settled in their new country - and "migrants" who are only temporarily resident. Incidentally, however, the word "immigrant" was not used in most media reports following the 19th April 2015 tragedy. That is a sad date and points to a tragic reason. To immigrate is to "come into a new country, region or environment ... esp. in order to settle there" (Webster). Tragically, the hundreds who drowned in the Mediterranean on that date did not reach their destinations.

Definitions aside, what we certainly do have is an enormous number of "people on the move." As we can all still vividly remember, in 2015, more than one million persons attempted the dangerous journey to Europe.[5] The majority of them attempted to cross the straits between Turkey and Greece. The immense flow of people carrying their belongings in plastic bags and bearing children on weary shoulders was poignantly visible.

Some of these persons on the move are asylum seekers in that they seek safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own, and await a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.[6] A small minority of these achieve refugee status where a refugee is one who, "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."[7] Although they are not necessarily persecuted, a vast majority of persons on the move do appear to be suffering some degree of coercion - some form of threat to life and livelihood - which led them to migrate. One can speak of different degrees of coercion in terms of *push factors* such as violence, injustice and war, weak states,

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[5] See the International Migration Report 2015, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf. See also http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics; http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/international-migration-statistics, accessed November 15, 2016. Up to the end of May 2016 there have been 204,311 Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals. Unfortunately there have also been 2,443 deaths (see https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-2016-204311-deaths-2443, accessed November 15, 2016).
In Malta we have a diverse migrant population; those granted "refugee" status are a very small minority; other "migrants" include EU citizens (the largest group), and Third Country Nationals (TCN) (for example US, Canadian, Filipino and Serbian citizens). Among the TCN population, you may have those who are residing in Malta in an irregular manner (the actual numbers will be unknown for obvious reasons).

[6] The definition of correlative terms is by the International Organisation of Migration. See http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms.

[7] Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, Art. 1A(2), as modified by the 1967 Protocol. In addition to the refugee definition in the 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 1(2), of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention 1969 defines a refugee as any person compelled to leave his or her country "owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country or origin or nationality." Similarly, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration states that refugees also include persons who flee their country "because their lives, security or freedom have been threatened by generalised violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order."

big tensions particularly within the Islamic world, demographic imbalances, external political interference which creates social discomfort, poverty and corruption, landgrabs, lack of employment opportunities, and even ecological factors such as drought. Then there are others who more freely decide to emigrate for reasons of "personal convenience." Here, one could perhaps speak more of *pull factors* such as better living and working conditions with respect to social and economic opportunities, and greater freedoms. There could also be subjective motives such as the desire for novelty or a sense of adventure. Of course, there could also be national policies that overtly or covertly encourage emigration. And one must note that migration is facilitated by technology such as the internet, mobile phones and the sense that language and cultural barriers are seen as very surmountable.

As can be seen, reasons for migration are manifold and not easy to discern. Indeed, the forced-voluntary, or refugee-economic, dichotomies used so often in the literature as well as in common parlance are not so clear-cut in real life. Such distinctions fail to articulate the diverse aspects and nuances of contemporary forced migration. For example, individuals may be coerced to move repeatedly, even crossing international borders back and forth, in their unending quest for some degree of security within an ever-increasingly unfriendly space. In the light of such ambiguities, we can perhaps better speak of "people on the move" where, it must be added, this incoming movement is somehow perceived, by the population of the polity hosting them, to constitute a threat.

The tragedy is that the migrant person is often akin to Giorgio Agamben's *Muselmann* in that he or she lives at the zone of indistinction between the human and the inhuman.[8] Here, we can see the effects of a so-called realpolitik of administrative migrant management that thinks in terms of camps, borders, and governance. Such an approach tends to see politics more as a planning process and to conceive of migrants more as anonymous figures. Conversely, we could consider Hannah Arendt's calling for a politic of subjects who, through their actions, could make possible an opening in the political space. It is often such subjects, rather than those who live and work embedded in the political system, who bring about new and much-needed initiatives. However, as Hannah Arendt herself notes, "charity could only come after justice is done. This is as old as the hills. To throw them into the lap of charity organizations meant practically [that] they are completely rightless, [with] no right to live in the sense [of] no business to be on the earth."[9]

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[8] See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 88.

[9] Hannah Arendt, *Statelessness* (entry on the 22nd April 1955), available at http://www.

The mass phenomenon of those who are often called "irregular migrants" is so terribly taxing because, "in the nation-state system, the so-called sacred and inalienable rights of man prove to be completely unprotected at the very moment it is no longer possible to characterize them as rights of the citizens of a state."[10] This means that many of these so-called irregular migrants become "de facto stateless."[11] They are deprived of the public or political visibility of recognition and participation and become publically invisible even if they are naturally visible. Ironically, this happens at the same time when they are very visible in the sense that they would have had their fingerprints printed, their photos taken and stored, their irises scanned, and so forth. The tragedy is that, as non-citizens, they are "only human"! Perhaps Heidegger is right to suggest that the contemporary practice of politics is infected by attitudes of social standardization and technological calculation.

Here, it is useful to remember, with Emmanuel Levinas, that "there are cruelties which are terrible because they proceed from the necessity of the reasonable Order. There are, if you like, the tears that a civil servant cannot see, the tears of the Other [*Autrui*]."[12] The even greater tragedy is that, perhaps, Agamben's *Muselmann* is really the migrant who ended up having drowned during his or her journey ... he or she who cannot speak is the true witness of the tragedy.[13] And of these, we have sadly had so many and, regrettably, this has been going on, practically unabated, for far too long.

Migrants' stories speak of both despair and hope. Their experience is effectively liminal. When faced with the phenomenon of mass migration, our very reactions are ambiguous. They too are liminal in some ways for they appear to speak both of helplessness - which begets fear and even xenophobia - and hospitality. However, at present, our feelings appear to lean more towards fear and anger; at this very moment, almost as in war, many migrants are forced to retreat before the trenches of a European stronghold. Perhaps, this is due to a homelessness we all feel. And perhaps this is why migration is such a difficult word to use. In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, an oration delivered by Jacques

hannaharendt.net/index.php/han/article/view/155/276, accessed November 15, 2016).

[10] Giorgio Agamben, *We Refugees*, http://www.egs.edu/faculty/agamben/agamben-we-refugees.html. Agamben is commenting on Hannah Arendt's famous essay.

[11] See also Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), 279.

[12] Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height," in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 23.

[13] See Agamben, *Homo Sacer,* 88.

Derrida on the occasion of the death of Emmanuel Levinas, Derrida avers that Levinas, especially in *Totality and Infinity*, has bequeathed to us an "immense treatise of hospitality."[14] And I intend to appeal to this "treatise" in the hope that it could shed some light about us who are asking questions in the face of mass migration.

In his phenomenology of home, Emmanuel Levinas reflects that "man abides in the world as having come to it from a private domain, from being at home with himself, to which at each moment he can retire ... . Concretely speaking, ... the objective world is situated by relation to the dwelling."[15] This means that being-at-home [*chez-soi*] is prior to a Heideggerian being-in-the-world. Levinas goes on to say that "the home, as a building, belongs to a world of objects. But this belongingness does not nullify the bearing of the fact that every consideration of objects, and of buildings too, is produced out of a dwelling."[16] Hence, being human *is* dwelling.[17] Being-at-home is a core aspect of our human life. Here "home" is a *topos* from which the subject's activities issue and towards which they return. In this sense, the home is not a possession, nor is it ever a mere place. It is a refuge of withdrawal or recollection [*recueillance*].[18] Contemporaneously, the human person is continually on a journey. He or she is always both taking refuge and being an itinerant. In this light, being-at-home is always both a place and a peripatetic mode of being. One can never really settle down. To be human is to be concomitantly at home and restless. While on life's journey, one's recollecting oneself is a "coming to oneself, a retreat home with oneself as in a land of refuge, which answers to a hospitality, an expectancy, a human welcome."[19] Being at home is the point of departure and, also, the goal of our being in the world. A human subject continually "goes forth outside from an inwardness [*intimité*]."[20] This means that self-possession is made possible by the subject's *being welcomed to himself. This attitude* exudes "a gentleness that spreads over the face of things,"[21] and, concomitantly and perhaps paradoxically, makes hospitality towards the stranger-*Other* possible.

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[14] Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 21.

[15] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Dortrecht: Kluwer Academic,1991), 153.

[16] Ibid., 152-153.

[17] This is not a Heideggerian sense of Dwelling. In Levinas' eyes, unfortunately, Heidegger's homecoming project unfortunately seeks to bring about a return to a world of agonistic struggle, heroic creators, and rootedness in the soil (*Bodenständigkeit*) and a people (*Volk*); it is ultimately impersonal and inhospitable.

[18] See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 154.

[19] Ibid.,155-156.

[20] Ibid., 152.

[21] Ibid., 155.

At first glance, this home appears to be hospitable only for its proprietor,[22] in as somewhat Cartesian sense, but Levinas stresses that possession itself must be related to other possible possessors: here of course, Levinas is speaking of the *Other* who cannot be possessed and who, indeed, sanctions possession itself.[23] One can never be at home by oneself, but one is always at home in the face of the *Other*. This immediately shows that "home" constitutes a primordial event that involves "hospitality." Indeed, "to dwell is not the simple fact of the anonymous reality of a being cast into existence as a stone one casts behind oneself; it is a recollection ..."[24] For, in the face of an*Other* being, any monadic possessiveness is immediately called into question. For the home to be hospitable to me, it must refer to other possible possessors, where such possible proprietors do not lie in the future but are present to one. This occurs particularly in the face of the homeless *Other*. My home, therefore can never be "thoroughly intimate or calm, never a total secrecy or refuge - indeed, not even ... wholly mine."[25]

As Levinas put it very beautifully, "no face can be approached with empty hands and closed home. Recollection in a home open to the Other - hospitality is the concrete and initial fact of human recollection and separation; it coincides with the Desire for the Other absolutely transcendent. ... The possibility of the home to open to the Other is as essential to the essence of the home as closed doors and windows."[26] Hence, when the home becomes a mere temple to the monadic self, rather than a *topos* of hospitality, it becomes a morally distorted space.

To come to our query about our need for light in the face of the phenomenon of mass migration, Emmanuel Levinas held that our outlook in our Western culture means that we, perhaps unconsciously, make ourselves to be monadic individuals who are indeed isolated from genuine relations of solidarity with *Other*s. We are - perhaps unbeknown to us - swallowed up in a mode of possession and protection that imbues us with competitiveness and, indeed, in a homelessness that we perhaps feel rather nebulously but that we are often unable to articulate. I may add that we appear to be characterised by a kind of nostalgia for a home that never was - a nostalgia which expresses itself in a kind of melancholy. In addition to this, Levinas saw our Western societies as ones where the political and the ethical spheres are, not just separated, but stand in

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[22] See ibid., 157.

[23] See Bob Plant, *Wittgenstein and Levinas*, Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 2005), 182.

[24] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 155.

[25] Plant, *Wittgenstein and Levinas*, 182.

[26] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 172-173.

opposition. He saw the contemporary individual as one who relates largely in a technological manner to the world of things in such a manner as to make them fit his or her self-interests. He laments that this egological relationship with things has come to inform and distort relationships with the *Other*. In this light, materialism has indeed come to mean homelessness because the relationship in human encounters is marked by possession rather than by hospitality. We have made ourselves possessive, competitive beings always hungry for more.[27] Perhaps such reflections could shed some light on the myriad phenomena of tensions and violence present in our societies.

Perhaps, we need to go back to the origin. As Derrida pointed out, for Levinas, "it is as if the welcome, just as much as the face, just as much as the vocabulary that is co-extensive and thus profoundly synonymous with it, were a first language, a set made up of quasi-primitive ... words."[28] He held that human life is lived on a backdrop of hospitality that is prior to the political:[29] "Everything [for Levinas] seems to begin in ... the welcoming of the face of the Other in hospitality, which is also to say, by its immediate and quasi-immanent interruption in the illeity of the Third ... [Levinas] suggests that [even] war, hostility ... still presuppose and thus always manifest this originary welcoming that is openness to the face ..."[30]

But, as we all know hospitality is often difficult. Not only is it true that the *Other*, being other, can always surprise as Derrida too was wont to remind us,[31] but "the Other calls me into question ... paralyses possession which he contests by his face."[32] Hence, one does not remain comfortable; one is never simply, unproblematically *at home*. This is perhaps uncomfortable but, perhaps, one ought to remember that to be human is to be called continuously to go out of oneself - to be is to be-in-relation. And, perhaps, one should further remember that the very presence of the *Other* calls me forth to be there for him or her.

However, one wants to say that the difficulty is far greater! For, hospitality could well be dangerous:"To approach the Other is to put into question my freedom, my spontaneity as a living being, my *emprise* over the things, this freedom of a 'moving force,' this impetuosity of the current to which everything

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[27] See Yoram Lubling, *Seeing Beginnings: Buber, Levinas, and the Original Encounter*, http://www.metanexus.net/essay/seeing-beginnings-buber-levinas-and-original-encounter, accessed November 15, 2016.

[28] Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, 25.

[29] See ibid., 49.

[30] Ibid., 90.

[31] See Jacques Derrida, "Hostipitality," in *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 5, no.3 (2000): 3-18.

[32] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*,171.

is permitted, even murder."[33] There are real perils in hospitality. Not only can the *Other* arrive in a way that is unexpected, but the *Other* also interrupts me or causes discomfort by his or her visitation - particularly, if this is an irregular one.[34] And the guest can well be dangerous. He or she might catch me unawares at a moment when I feel incapable of protecting myself, and disturb me and even somehow threaten my being-at-home.[35]

Hence, a subject's relation to an *Other* is always tenuous and perhaps dangerous. However, what is also significant is the presence of a *Third* (*la tiers*) to whom each *Other* is also responsible. The *Third* - whether he or she is close by or far off - introduces the conception of justice. As Levinas put it, "the third introduces a contradiction in the saying .... A question of conscience, consciousness. Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling"[36] This means that anything I do or say is seen, even if only potentially, by the *Third*. This means that there must simultaneously be "a weighing, a thinking, a calculation, the comparison of incomparables, and consequently, the neutrality - presence or representation - of being."[37] The *Third* introduces a dimension which comprises equality and universal norms. It is this presence of this *Third*, of society, that makes politics both possible and necessary.[38]

The advent of the *Third* means that any sign of hospitality is also clearly a political act. In his conclusion to *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas acknowledges that, in "the measure that the face of the Other relates us with a third party, the metaphysical relation of the I with the Other moves into the form of a We, aspires to a State, institutions, laws, which are the source of universality."[39]

All this would mean that politics are necessary. They are necessary because a polity must act to protect against insecurity, a disruption of public order, or any severe weakening of its political and cultural milieu. Conversely, a nation-state that is reasonably prosperous and well-developed and which is not too densely

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[33] Ibid., 303.

[34] One can make reference to Jacques Derrida's distinction between "invitation" and "visitation." See Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1999), 79-153. This distinction is not a Levinasian one, but is helpful in bringing out the discomfort involved in pure hospitality.

[35] See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 39.

[36] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis (Dortrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 157.

[37] Emmanuel Levinas, "Peace and Proximity," in *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. M.B. Smith (London: Athlone, 1999),168.

[38] See Michael F. Bernard-Donals, *"'Difficult Freedom,' Levinas, Language, and Politics,"* *Diacritics* 35, no.3 (2005): 67.

[39] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 300.

populated should recognize a greater responsibility towards opening its borders to immigrants, particularly when these are politically, socially and culturally connected in their interconnected histories, and especially when there are dire coercive forces which are forcing these people to move.[40]

However, the State is not sufficient. Although the State establishes a framework - through its organs and institutions and powers, such as its bestowal of citizenship, its judicial and legal systems - and thus could have the role of providing a rational political order that recognizes personal dignity and freedom and thereby ends ostracization and exile, the welcoming of the stranger-*Other* by the Subject will always remain central and will always be radically personal since the State, "with its *realpolitik*, comes from another universe, sealed off from sensibility, or protest by 'beautiful souls,' or tears shed by an 'unhappy unconsciousness.'"[41] As Levinas writes: "To shelter the other in one's own land or home, to tolerate the presence of the landless and homeless on the 'ancestral soil,' so jealously, so meanly loved - is that the criterion of humanity? Unquestionably so."[42]

Hence, the *Third* is important but it remains, as it were, secondary. Levinas continues: "But politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus as in absentia."[43] Hence a community[44] must embrace moral universalism. However, what remains central is that, within the community, one is called to manifest one's fidelity to the (divine) pre-original, an-*archic* infinity who is addressing one in each and every *Autrui*, commanding one's responsibility which one cannot decline, even when one willingly does wrong. And one shows one's fidelity to *Le Très-Haut* by showing hospitality to the non-communal stranger who presents himself: This is accomplished when "I welcome the Other who presents himself in my home by opening my home to him."[45] It is in this sense that Levinas appeals to monotheism to avoid that the ethics of the *Autrui* be lost in the metaphysical arithmetic of totalization and the universality of the case.

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[40] See Renè Micallef, "Gates Fair on All Sides" (S.T.D. diss., Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, 2013), 580-581.

[41] Levinas, "The State of Caesar and the State of David," trans. Roland Lack, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) 274.

[42] Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 98.

[43] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 300.

[44] Which, again, can only be monotheistic in Levinas' view.

[45] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, Kluwer, 171.

This means that the subject can maintain an ethical relationship to place when he or she welcomes the Other into the home (*la maison*). Perhaps here, we can use Giorgio Agamben's concept of remnant - a messianic notion that speaks of the salvation of a people in relation to an event such as the arrival of immigrants. The presence of the immigrant, in her anguished tears, indicates the vicarious ties between the part and the whole. For she makes hospitality possible. As remnant, she appears as a salvific messianic event, a "redemptive part" that makes possible the integrity of the whole within which the event emerges. Even if the event is perceived as division and loss, it is redemptive.[46] However, the host is also obliged to show hospitality towards the *Third* by working towards political institutions that show integrity in being ethically responsible, and in both welcoming and being respectful towards the dignity of every human person who presents himself or herself.[47]

Going back to our use of "migration," perhaps, what we need is a purification of the imagination so that we become aware that we are continuously, always, *both* host and guest. Levinas held that, when an individual encounters another, he acts at once as both host and guest. In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida expanded upon the double meaning of the French term *hôte* as signifying both, and averred that there is a divine law "that would make of the inhabitant a guest [*hôte*] received in his own home, that would make of the owner a tenant, of the welcoming host [*hôte*] a welcomed guest [*hôte*]."[48] This could well remind us of the splendid page in scripture that narrates the event when Abraham welcomed the three strangers under the great oak tree at Mamre.[49] He hosted them beautifully; but the text clearly shows that he was, indeed, their guest, and received from them the gift of fatherhood through the subsequent birth of Isaac. At the time, Abraham was on a journey outwards ... his journey meant that he was not rooted in the land ... indeed, he was called to be such so as to be able to meet the needs of the Other: "To the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we wish to oppose the story of Abraham who leaves his fatherland forever for a yet unknown land, and forbids his servant to even bring back his son to the point of departure."[50] And here, the journey is marked not by a nostalgic melancholy, but

[46] See Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

[47] One must add - for Levinas - *and monotheistic in orientation*.

[48] Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, 42.

[49] See Gen 18:1-15.

[50] Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context*: *Literature and Philosophy,* ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 348.

by hope. Abraham shows beautifully that when a subject engages with an*Other*, she is both at home and in exile, neither distant from, nor completely within the home from which she speaks.

This brings us back to the consideration that the home is both a *topos* of "recollection, a coming to oneself, a retreat home with oneself as in a land of refuge," and a site of hospitality where "I welcome the Other who presents in my home by opening my home to him."[51] This also means that whenever the subject welcomes the Other into the home, the subject becomes able to divest himself or herself of possessiveness;[52] "But in order that I be able to free myself from the very possession that the welcome of the Home establishes, in order that I be able to see things in themselves, that is, represent them to myself, I must know how *to give* what I possess."[53]

Perhaps we could best end with Hannah Arendt's clear conclusion to her touching contribution *We Refugees*: "The comity of peoples will go to pieces if and when they allow their weakest members to be excluded."[54]

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[51] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 171.

[52] See Cecil A. Eubanks and David J. Gauthier, "The Politics of the Homeless Spirit," *History of Political Thought* 32, no.1 (2011): 145.

[53] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 156, 170-171.

[54] Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," in *Altogether Elsewhere*, ed. Marc Robinson (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 119.