

ROGUES

Two Essays on Reason

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ereigns, be **they heads** of state or military leaders, and even the institution of the death **penalty**, the last defining attribute of state sovereignty.

And yet, in the **second place**, it would be imprudent and hasty, in truth hardly *reasonable*, to **oppose** unconditionally, that is, **head-on**, a sovereignty that is itself unconditional and indivisible. One **cannot** combat, *head-on*, *all* sovereignty, sovereignty *in general*, without **threatening at the same time**, beyond the nation-state figure of sovereignty, **the classical** principles of freedom and self-determination. Like the **classical tradition** of law (and the force that it presupposes), these classical principles remain inseparable from a sovereignty at once indivisible and yet able to be shared. Nation-state sovereignty can even itself, in certain conditions, become an indispensable bulwark against certain international powers, certain ideological, religious, or capitalist, indeed linguistic, hegemonies that, under the cover of liberalism or universalism, would still represent, in a world that would be little more than a marketplace, a rationalization in **the service of particular interests**. Yet again, in a context that is each time **singular**, where the **respectful** attention paid to singularity is not relativist but **universalizable and rational**, responsibility would consist in orienting oneself without any *determinative* knowledge of the rule. To be responsible, to keep within reason, would be to invent maxims of transaction for deciding between two just as **rational and universal** but **contradictory** exigencies of reason as well as its **enlightenment**.

The invention of these maxims **resembles the poetic invention** of an idiom whose singularity would not yield to any nationalism, not even a **European nationalism**—even if, as I would like to believe, within today's geopolitical landscape, a new thinking and a previously unencountered destination of Europe, along with another responsibility for Europe, are being called on to give a new chance to this idiom. Beyond all Eurocentrism. This idiom would again be a singular idiom of reason, of the *reasonable* transaction between two antinomic rationalities. At the utmost point of its extreme difficulty, indeed of its impossibility, what I call here—in these sentences and not others—the *reasonable* would be that which, in bearing within it preference itself, will always be *preferable*—and thus irreducible—to the rational it exceeds. In such sentences as these the *rational* would certainly have to do with the *just* and sometimes with the justness or exactitude of juridical and calculative reason. But the *reasonable* would do yet more and something else; it would take into account

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the accounting of juridical *justness* or exactitude, to be sure, but it would also strive, across transactions and aporias, for *justice*. The reasonable, as I understand it here, would be a rationality that takes account of the incalculable so as to give an account of it, there where this appears impossible, so as to account for or reckon *with* it, that is to say, with the event of *what* or *who* comes.

It remains to be known, so as to save the honor of reason, how to *trans-* late. For example, the word *reasonable*. And how to pay one's respects to, how to salute or greet [*saluer*], beyond its latinity, and in more than one language, the fragile difference between the *rational* and the *reasonable*.

Reason reasons, to be sure, it is right [*elle a raison*], and it gives itself reason [*se donner raison*], to do so, so as to protect or keep itself [*se garder*], so as to keep within reason [*raison garder*]. It is in this that it is and thus wants to be *itself*; that is its sovereign ipseity.

But to make its ipseity see reason, it must be reasoned with.

A reason must let itself be reasoned with.