If hospitality is an ethic—something that goes beyond mere coexistence or tolerance of the presence of strangers in the name of morality or ideology—how is it to be turned into a right and a policy? How are we to make the transition from individual conscience to a practical strategy establishing everyone’s right to acceptance and equity? How are we to pass from the home to the space of a whole nation? How can the law be made to include the right to hospitality? We already have laws restricting entry and residence; why shouldn’t we have others laws based on the idea that to welcome strangers into one’s country is a fundamental mark of civilization?

We’re not talking about someone who turns up out of the blue, but someone set by History on the path that leads to my house (my country), to a place where he will be received as a guest. He’s not an adventurer, a vagabond, or a potential usurper. The whole significance of immigration lies in the fact that immigration is expected. The Other is on his way. Maybe he wasn’t formally asked to come, but somehow or other the invitation was issued.