ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The 'measure of a man' and the ethos of hospitality: towards an ethical dwelling with technology

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Abstract In this paper, I argue for the impossible possibility of an ethical dwelling with technology. In arguing for an ethical comportment in our dealing with technology, I am not only arguing for the consideration of the ethical implications of technology (which we already do) but also, and more importantly, for an ethics of technological artefacts qua technology. Thus, I attempt to argue for a decentering (or rather overcoming) of anthropocentric ethics, urging us to move beyond any centre, whatever it may be—anthropological, biological, etc. I argue that if we take ethics seriously we must admit that our measure cannot be that of man. To develop the argument, I use an episode in Star Trek where the fate of the highly sophisticated android Commander Data is to be decided. I show how the moral reasoning about Data remains anthropocentric but hints to other possibilities. I proceed to use the work of Derrida and Levinas (with some help from Heidegger) to suggest a possible way to think (and do) an ethos beyond traditional ethics—an ethics of hospitality in which we dwell in a community of those that have nothing in common.

1 Introduction

Increasingly we find ourselves surrounded by technological artefacts, artefacts that have become increasingly complex and ubiquitous. As we draw on, and become dependent on the possibilities they provide, the boundary between our machines and us are becoming less and less obvious. What

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is a soldier without the technology of global positioning, night vision, laser guided telescopes, mobile telecoms, and more? What is the detective without the detecting technology of genetic profiling, fingerprint matching, voice recognition, bugging, and so forth? Is a soldier really a soldier without her kit? It seems that her kit is becoming integral to what she is, *as a soldier*. As society develops, we are putting more of ourselves 'into' technological artefacts (depending on them to make decisions we used to make), and technological artefacts are increasingly 'inserting themselves' into us (as artificial limbs or extensions of ourselves), doing very important things we used to do for ourselves. At the end of the progression, we have the android and the cyborg. We are becoming, or always have been, human/machine hybrids (Haraway 1991; Latour 1993). As we progress along this path, which we clearly already started with the first tools, and without wanting to speculate about the inevitability of such a progression or how rapid or slow this may be, it will certainly become increasingly important for us to consider an ethics of technological artefacts qua artefacts.

When referring to an 'ethics of technology' or an 'ethics of the artificial', I am referring to it in two very distinct ways. In the first, more traditional sense, I mean the values and interests built into the very materiality of the technologies we draw upon—inscribed in their 'flesh' as it were (Winner 1980). In drawing upon the possibilities presented by these technologies, we become wittingly or unwittingly enrolled into particular scripts and programmes of action (in the actor network theory sense of the word). These scripts and programmes make certain things possible and others not, include certain interests and others not (for example the increased use of ATM may have lead to the closure of bank branches which exactly excludes those that can not use ATM's, such as physically disabled people). In

this sense of use, the ethics of machines is very important and is in desperate need of our attention (an example of this type of work is the paper by Introna and Nissenbaum (2000) on search engines and the work of Brey (2000) as proposed in his disclosive ethics). However, this paper is not primarily concerned with this sense of technological ethics. It is rather concerned with the question of the moral and ethical significance of technological artefacts in their technological being, i.e. the question of the weight of our moral responsibility towards technological artefacts as artificial beings.

In order to develop and structure the discussion, I will draw on a particular episode of Star Trek (2003) titled: "The measure of a man".[1] In this episode, the ethical significance, and therefore subsequent rights, of the android Data becomes contested. This 'case study'—if I may call it that—will give us some indication of how the problem of ethical significance of the artificial can become apparent and considered. In discussing this case, I will argue that its approach to the issue, as well as the work of Levinas, is essentially anthropocentric—ultimately the measure of ethical significance is 'the measure of a man'. I will argue, with Heidegger (1977a), that it will ultimately fail to provide us with an adequate way to consider the ethical significance of the artificial. I will then proceed to suggest, with the help of Derrida, a more radical interpretation of Levinas as a possible way forward towards an ethics (or rather ethos) of *hospitality*—an ethical dwelling with the artificial other that so pervade our everyday being in the world.

2 Commander Data and the measure of a man

Those familiar with Star Trek will know that Commander Data is a highly sophisticated android designed by Doctor Noonien Soong. Dr Soong created only one Data in his lifetime. Lieutenant Commander Data is now one of the officers on the USS Enterprise, which is part of the Federation's Starfleet. The acclaimed robotics expert Commander Maddox has been authorised by Star Fleet's Admiral Nakamura to remove Data from the USS Enterprise for study, with the intention to refit and replicate him. Maddox intends to download Data's brain into a computer for analysis, and then reload a copy back into a refitted and upgraded Data. Due to certain technical complexities, the procedure is risky and he could not guarantee the end result. Data objects to the procedure by claiming that the end result would not be him. He suggests that "there is an

ineffable quality to memory that [would not] survive the shutdown of [my] core." As such he is concerned about the continuity of his identity, for him it would be like dying and waking up as somebody else.

After considering a number of options, Data decide to resign as officer of the Starfleet in order to prevent the possibility of being disassembled. Commander Maddox responds by arguing that Data does not have the freedom to resign since he is a machine and as such the property of the Starfleet—a view shared by Admiral Nakamura. He argues that they "would [not] permit the computer on the Enterprise to refuse a refit", why should Data be accorded such a right? The matter is referred to Captain Phillipa Louvois of the understaffed local Judge Advocate General's (JAG) office for a decision. After considering the legal position, she issues her own summary ruling that Data is not a sentient being but mere machine, and therefore, as property of the Federation, lacks the legal right either to refuse Maddox's refit or to resign from the Starfleet. The USS Enterprise's Commanding Officer, Captain Picard, immediately challenges her decision. Due to resource constraints of the JAG office, an impromptu hearing is arranged by Captain Phillipa Louvois where Captain Picard will defend Data and Commander Riker, the direct subordinate of Captain Picard, will represent the Starfleet view that Data is a machine and as such cannot resign or refuse the refit. Commander Riker is profoundly disturbed at being placed in this position as his relationship with Data leaves him in no doubt as to the status of his colleague and trusted friend. However, if he refuses Captain Louvois' ruling will stand, thus, he agrees.

The court case starts with Commander Riker outlining the case for the Starfleet, i.e. that Data is a machine and as such cannot resign or refuse the refit

RIKER	Your honor, there is only one issue in this case and one relevant piece of evidence. I call Lieutenant Commander Data. Data seats himself in the witness chair, and places his hand on the scanner.
COMPUTER VOICE	Verify, Lieutenant Commander Data. Current assignment, USS Enterprise. Starfleet Command Decoration for…
RIKER	Your honor, we'll stipulate to all of this.
PICARD	(leaping to his feet) Objection, your honor, I want it read. All of it.
PHILLIPA	Sustained.
COMPUTER VOICE	(resuming)… Gallantry, Medal of Honor with clusters, Legion of Honor, the Star Cross.

RIKER	Commander Data, what are you?
DATA	(looking to Picard for guidance, Picard nods to him to answer) An android.
RIKER	Which is?
DATA	Webster's Twenty-Third Century Dictionary, Fifth Edition, defines Android as an automaton made to resemble a human being.
RIKER	(musing) An automaton. Made. Made by whom?
DATA	Sir?
RIKER	Who built you, Data?
DATA	Doctor Noonien Soong.
RIKER	And he was?
DATA	The foremost authority in cybernetics.
RIKER	More basic than that. What was he?
DATA	(puzzled, but groping for the right answer; he says questioningly) A human?

*** [He removed Data's hand after a demonstration of Data's strength] ***

RIKER	(continuing) Data is a physical representation of a dream, an idea conceived of by the mind of a man. His purpose? To serve human needs and interests. He is a collection of neural nets and heuristic algorithms. His responses are dictated by an elaborate software program written by a man. The hardware (slapping the hand [of Data] against his palm) was built by a man. [Riker has been preambulating around the courtroom, each step bringing him closer to Data. He is now at his side, and without warning he leans down, presses the switch, and turns him off. Data collapses like a broken toy].
RIKER	(continuing) And this man has turned him off. Pinocchio is broken, the strings are cut. Riker lays the hand down next to Data. Shocked silence fills the room. Picard's reaction—shock and certainty that he cannot win.
PICARD	I request a recess.
PHILLIPA	Granted.

Riker who, as he walks to his chair, is in agony. A single tear runs down his cheek. He has destroyed a friend.

Riker's argument is simple and clear. Data is an artificial machine, made by a man for serving the purposes of man, as such he is subjected to man's choice—he can be switched off. As a machine, he has no intrinsic value or significance other than his value to those who made him, his owners. Since they wish to replicate and upgrade him they are free to do so. There is of course an interesting contradiction in the proceeding, as hinted by Picard, in that Data has previously been awarded the 'Command Decoration for Gallantry', and medals of honour for services rendered. Presumably such distinctions have not been awarded to the computer on the Enterprise.

In his defence, Captain Picard realises that he cannot deny the obvious, i.e. that Data is a machine, once made by a man. He opens his defence:

PICARD	(making his opening statement) Commander Riker has dramatically demonstrated to this court that Lieutenant Commander Data is a machine. Do we deny that? No. But how is this relevant? We too are machines, just machines of a different type. Commander Riker has continually reminded us that Data was built by a human. We do not deny that fact. But again how is it relevant? Does construction imply ownership? Children are created from the building blocks of their parents' DNA. Are they property? We have a chance in this hearing to severely limit the boundaries of freedom. And I think we better be pretty damn careful before we take so arrogant a step.

Picard argues that it is plausible for us to think of ourselves as 'machines'. It is not whether we are or not machines. It is rather the status we attribute to the machine when interacting with it. If we award a machine medals are we not implicitly according the machine a sort of autonomy that would make it meaningless to award the medals to his designer or to a chair? Presumably if we award it medals we will also hold it, rather than the designer, accountable in the event of a mistake or inappropriate behaviour.

Picard proceeds with his defence with Commander Maddox on the stand. Maddox suggested that Data is a machine because he is not sentient. He defines sentience as having intelligence, self-awareness and consciousness. He reluctantly agreed that Data seems to conform to at least the first two of these. Nevertheless, he insists that Picard is sentient and Data not. Picard proceeds:

PICARD	But you admire him?
MADDOX	Oh yes, it's an outstanding–
PICARD	(interrupting) Piece of engineering and programming. Yes, you've said that. You've devoted your life to the study of cybernetics in general?
MADDOX	Yes.

PICARD	And Data in particular?
MADDOX	Yes.
PICARD	And now you're proposing to dismantle him.
MADDOX	So I can rebuild him and construct more!
PICARD	How many more?
MADDOX	Hundreds, thousands. There's no limit.
PICARD	And do what with them?
MADDOX	Use them.
PICARD	How?
MADDOX	As effective units on Federation ships. As replacements for humans in dangerous situations. So much is closed to us because of our fragility. But they…
PICARD	(interrupting; he picks up an object and throws it down a disposal chute) Are expendable.
MADDOX	It sounds harsh but to some extent, yes.
PICARD	Are you expendable, Commander Maddox? Never mind. A single Data is a curiosity, a wonder, but a thousand Datas, doesn't that become a new race? And aren't we going to be judged as a species about how we treat these creations? If they're expendable, disposable, aren't we? What is Data?
MADDOX	What? I don't understand.
PICARD	What… is… he?
MADDOX	(angry now and hostile) A machine!
PICARD	Is he? Are you sure?
MADDOX	Yes!
PICARD	But he's met two of your three criteria for sentience, and we haven't addressed the third. So we might find him meeting your third criterion, and then what is he?
MADDOX	(driven to his limit) I don't know. I don't know!
PICARD	He doesn't know. (to Phillipa) Do you? That's the decision you're facing. Your honor, a courtroom is a crucible. In it we burn away the egos, the selfish desires, the half-truths, until we're left with the pure product—a truth—for all time. Sooner or later it's going to happen. This man or others like him are going to succeed in replicating Data. And then we have to decide—what are they? And how will we treat these creations of our genius? The decision you reach here today stretches far beyond this android and this courtroom. It will reveal the kind of a people we are. And what (points to Data)… they are going to be. Do you condemn them to slavery? Starfleet was founded to seek out new life. (indicating Data) Well, there he sits,

your honor, waiting on our decision. You have a chance to make law. Well, let's make a good one. Let us be wise.

PHILLIPA	This case touches on metaphysics, and that's the province of philosophers and poets. Not confused jurists who don't have the answers. But sometimes we have to make a stab in the dark, and speak to the future. Is Data a machine? Absolutely. Is he our property? No… The courtroom erupts in joy.

It seems to me that there are at least three distinct steps in Picard's argument for us to consider. Firstly, he argues that the whole court case is meaningless since the Federation has already confirmed Data's status as more than a 'mere machine' since they have placed him in a role of responsibility and have allocated him certain duties in which they expected him to be accountable. They have also judged him to be doing these duties exceedingly well by awarding him medals. Therefore, all their past interaction with Data already suggests a status that this case now attempts to deny.

His second step is to suggest that Data is not a machine but a person since he conforms to all the criteria of sentience suggested by Maddox: intelligence, self-awareness and consciousness. He gains agreement that Data is intelligent and self-aware, both of which suggests consciousness. Although he cannot prove it, the court (and in particular Maddox) can equally not prove that he, Picard, possesses all of these, except by some form of intuition. Such intuition would suggest that it is evident to any human being that they possess these capacities and therefore other human beings should also. However, this intuition would not tell us anything about androids such as Data. Nevertheless, it is possible to imagine that we could construct a Turing type test for sentience, and that it seems entirely feasible that Data could succeed in passing such a test (based on the evidence of Data's behaviour in the Star Trek series). However, the most important point in his defence, for my argument, is that he takes the measure of ethical significance to be the 'measure of a man', i.e. *machines are ethically significant if they are like us, sentient beings*. It would be an interesting thought experiment to imagine a world in which the androids were the majority and they would decide that, besides sentience, having a 'reuseable' body is the ultimate measure of ethical significance. Such a suggestion points the intimate link between ethics and politics. I will return to this matter in the next section.

The final step in his defence, which draws on the first two, is that ultimately we are going to be judged as a species about how we treat these creations of ours; and if

they are "expendable, disposable, aren't we?" This is an interesting step and captures the essence of Heidegger's argument against western metaphysics which is humanistic and in which everything is valued in human terms and subsequently everything (also humanity) is robbed of its worth:

> [I]t is important finally to realise that precisely through the characterisation of something as 'a value' what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued *is admitted only as an object for man's estimation*. But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does no let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid—solely as the objects of its doing (Heidegger 1977a, p. 228, emphasis mine).

In this regard, neither Riker nor Picard escape this anthropocentric valuing. Riker argues that machines are instruments of man, at its disposal. They should be valued in terms of their value 'for us.' However, in the socio-technical assemblages of contemporary world, it is increasingly difficult to draw a clear boundary between 'them' and 'us.' If they are merely 'for us', then we all are a 'for us'. As Heidegger (1977b) argues in his essay *The Question Concerning Technology,* in such a world we all become 'standing reserve' (at the disposal of the network). Picard's humanistic defence invokes a hierarchy of values in which Data becomes valued because he is 'like us' (sentient beings). However, if Heidegger is right then even where valuing is positive it is always subjectivising. Thus, neither of these positions escape the 'technological' world view in which the world is rendered present as a 'for us' (*Gestell*/enframed in Heidegger's terminology). As enframed beings not only the artificial but also man becomes mere 'standing reserve' within which other possibilities for being are concealed. Not only this. In framing beings (and itself) *in its own terms* the very concealing of other possibilities for being itself becomes concealed.

Instead of creating value systems in our own self-image, the absolute otherness of every Other should be the only moral imperative, so argues Levinas and Derrida. We need an ethics of the artificial that is beyond the self-identical of human beings. Such an ethics beyond anthropocentric metaphysics need as its 'ground', not a system for comparison, but rather a recognition of the impossibility of any comparison—every comparison is already violent in its attempt to render equal what could never be equal (Levinas 1991[1974]). How might we encounter the other, ethically, in its otherness? This is what I will no turn to.

3 Hospitality as the ethics of a community that have nothing in common

> "Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the ethos… *ethics is hospitality*; ethics is entirely coextensive with the experience of hospitality, whichever way one expands or limits that."—Jacques Derrida, On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness, p. 16–17.

The fundamental problem for the android Data is that the question of the ethical, its imperative, is already colonised by humans. In this ethical landscape, it becomes impossible for Data to state his case unless it is made in human terms—terms such as 'machine', 'property', 'sentience', etc. It is us humans who are making the decisions about the validity, or not, of any criteria or category for establishing the ethical significance of a being. It is Data—and by extension all non-humans—that is on trial, not we humans. Our moral worth is taken for granted. As such we are the measure. For example we often take 'sentience' as criteria for considering moral significance or worth because we argue that it is a necessary condition for the feeling of pain (Singer 1977). Why should pain be a criterion for moral significance? Is it because we can feel pain? Are not all our often-suggested criteria such as originality, sentience, rationality, autonomy, and so forth, not somehow always already based on that which we humans by necessity comply with? Is not the essential criterion for moral worthiness (in most ethical thought) a being in our image, like us? Is our ethics not always an ethics of those with whom we have something in common?

Obviously one can legitimately ask whether it is at all possible for us humans to escape our own moral prejudices—especially if we realise the intimate link between ethics and politics. Furthermore, it seems that every attempt one might have to define common inclusive ethical categories or criteria *for all things*[2] will fail, as it already violates every entity by exactly denying that which is most significant—its radical otherness. Indeed, as was suggested, most attempts (even some radical environmental ethics) are mostly informed by the assumption that at some level we can indeed compare the incomparable—and, ultimately that the only legitimate reference point for such comparison is that which is in the image of the human Other. But what about the non-human Other, the inanimate, the artificial? What about the community of those with whom we have nothing in common?

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[2] There has been many attempts to define more inclusive ethical categories and values such as a biocentric ethics (Goodpaster 1978; Singer 1977), an ecocentric ethics (Leopold 1966; Naess 1995) or even an infocentric ethics by Floridi (2003).

4 The non-human (inanimate) other

One might suggest that, for us human beings, a wholly Other, that is indeed *wholly Other*, is the inanimate Other. In many respects, the destitute face of the human Other, in the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas for example, is already in some sense a reflection of the human face opposite it. We can indeed substitute ourselves for the Other (become her hostage) because we can imagine—at least in some vague sense—what it must be like for the human Other to suffer violence because we suffer violence. It is possible for us to substitute 'us for them' because it could have been my friend, my child, my partner, etc.). As Husserl (1970/1929) argues, in his *Cartesian Mediations*, through empathy, "we project ourselves into the alien cultural community and its culture" (p. 135) in which the "the Other" exists "phenomenologically [as a 'modification' of myself]" (p. 115). Through empathy, our egos constitutes a "single universal community" of human intersubjectivity (p. 140)—a community with a common unity. As human beings, that also encounter ourselves as Other, we know that we always exceed and overflow the caricatures that the intentionality of consciousness endeavours to impose on us, that we are always infinitely more (or radically other) than any and all such caricatures. It is this infinity that Levinas points to when he claims ethics as 'first philosophy.'

What about the inanimate Other? In his book *Technology and Lifeworld* Ihde (1990) argues for an extension of Levinas' notion of alterity (or quasi-otherness) to inanimate things.[3] He argues that the 'religious object' "does not simply 'represent' some absent power but is endowed with the sacred. Its aura of sacredness is spatially and temporally present within the range of its efficacy" (98). Ihde argues, however, that this quasi-otherness always remains in the domain of human invention. In other words, it is still within the realm of that which we humans bring to it—even if it is unintentional or not for instrumental purposes, hence his designation of the object as quasi-other. One might say it is plausible to see the religious object as an Other in some way (even if it is quasi-other) but what about everyday objects such as the table? I want to suggest with Harman (2002, 2005) that the table (and all other inanimate objects) are also infinitely other, always more than that which human intentionality brings to it.

In *Tool-Being* Harman (2002) argues that even the table, in the fullness of its being, is infinite. Although the intentional acts of consciousness transform it by necessity into a caricature (into some form of present-at-hand being), such acts do not, and never can, exhaust it. As Harman (2002) suggests: "However, deeply we meditate on the table's act of supporting solid weights, however, tenaciously we

monitor its presence, any insight that is yielded will always be something quite distinct from this act [of being] itself" (22)—what he calls its tool-being. The table, here before me, is always more than all the perspectives, levels or layers that we can enumerate, more than all the uses we can put it to, more than all possible perspectives, levels, layers or uses. Harman (2002, 2005) argues that any and all possible relations between humans and things will inevitably fail to grasp them as they are; they are, in the fullness of their being, irreducible to any and all of these relations.[4] In short: they are, in the fullness of their being, infinite and wholly Other. Indeed, as was suggested above, one might claim that they are in a sense more Other (if one can say this at all) than the human Other since we can never in any sense put ourselves 'in their shoes,' as it were. Thus, if the infinitely otherness of the Other is what compels us—puts our own right to existence into question, as Levinas argues—then we have no basis for excluding the inanimate Other from the kingdom of Others—even if Levinas did not arrive at this conclusion. His Other is always the humanistic, or ultimately, the theistic Other. This paper endeavours to go beyond this boundary, to forsake all boundaries, to enter into a community that have *nothing* in common (Lingis 1994).

Is such a community possible? How is it is at all possible to approach the wholly Other, in any way whatsoever, without turning the Other into an image (or project) of the self (or the same). Differently stated: is it at all possible to be altruistic, wholly Other (*Autrui*) centred? Is there an ethic that takes the irreducible and wholly Other as its only imperative? To this question, Derrida responds with the aporia[5] of hospitality (an ethics of hospitality one might say).

5 Ethics is hospitality

According to Levinas (1996), it is the always already otherness of the Other *is what moves ethics*. In the disruptive presence of the stranger, the wholly Other, the question of ethics really becomes alive—it is a real question in that puts us humans (our categories, values, etc.) into question. How is this stranger to be responded to? Derrida suggest that we should suspend our judgement (our

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[3] Also refer to Irwin (2006) for a similar argument.

[4] Nathan Brown (2007) in his essay "The inorganic Open: Nanotechnology and physical being" proposes the notion of 'nothing-other-than-object' to name this infinite physical being, "this immanent otherness of that which is never nothing and yet not something" (41). Also refer to Benso (2000) and Davy (2007) for arguments to extend Levinas' ethics for the no-human domain.

[5] I use the term 'aporia' as Derrida does to indicate the double meaning of something that is both an expression of doubt and a perplexing difficulty.

ethical categories) and allow her in 'unconditionally', as an act of hospitality. As Derrida (2002, p. 361) points out: "If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognise in advance because I expect the coming of the *hôte* as invited, there is no hospitality". This act of hospitality constitutes the host and guest pairing. In this relation, the other can only be faced, as Other, in the radical asymmetry of *unconditional hospitality*. However, when we say this, we must also immediately say that for hospitality to really be an act of 'hospitality', the welcome must also contain within itself the irreducible possibility of hostility (hospitality and hostility share the same etymological root)—without a boundary (and the possibility to enforce it) letting the total outsider in 'as a friend' would not make sense as an act of hospitality. Thus, in hospitality there is a paradox, the unconditional is always already conditional. For Levinas, this aporia of hospitality is expressed as the aporia between ethics and justice—the other (the guest) and the third (the host). Let us consider this relation before we attempt to imagine what hospitality towards the artificial might mean.

For Levinas, ethics happens, or not, when the self-certain ego becomes disturbed—shaken and fundamentally questioned—by the proximity, before me, of the absolute Other, the absolute singular (the Infinite); "[w]e name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other, ethics" (1967: 43). The wholly Other that takes me by surprise, overturns and overflows my categories, themes and concepts; it shatters their walls, makes their self-evident sense explode into non-sense. For Levinas, the claim of conventional ethics that we can *know*, the right thing to do, is to claim that the absolute singular can become absorbed into, domesticated by, the categories of my human consciousness. Once the Other, this singular before me, has become an instance in my categories or themes it can no longer disturb the self-evidentness of those categories. Nothing is more self-evident than my categories and likewise with the singular now absorbed as an instance of them (Introna 2001, 2002, 2003). Within the category, we can reason about rights, obligations, laws and principles, and yet ethics may never happen—actual beings may starve, die, be vandalised, dumped and scorned as they circulate in the economy of our categories. They fall through the cracks of our debates, arguments and counter-arguments, and yet we feel justified—we have our reasons; it was the right thing to do after all.

Levinas (1991[1974], 158) also argues that we cannot speak of our radical asymmetrical relation with the infinitely Other without immediately and simultaneously also referring to all other Others. The radical otherness of the Other obsesses me both in its refusal to be contained (rendered equal) *and* in its simultaneous recalling of the always already equal claim of all other Others weighing down on me in this particular singular here before me now. In the radical claim of the Other is signified always and already the claim of all other Others—the 'third' in Levinas' terminology. In the words of Critchley (1999, pp. 226–227):

> Thus my ethical relation to the Other is an unequal, asymmetrical relation to a height that cannot be comprehended, but which, at the same time, opens onto a relation to the third and to humanity [an all beings] as a whole—that is, to a symmetrical community of equals. This simultaneity of ethics and politics gives a doubling quality to all discourse…the community has a double structure; it is a community of equals which is at the same time based on the inegalitarian moment of the ethical relation.

It is exactly this simultaneous presence of the Other and all other Others that gives birth to the question of justice. The urgency of justice is an urgency born out of the radical irreducible asymmetry of every ethical relation with the Other. Without such a radical asymmetry, the claim of the Other can always in principle become determined and codified into a calculation, justice as a calculation and distribution. Thus, justice has its standard, its force, in the ethical proximity of the singular Other. As Levinas (1991[1974], 159) asserts: "justice remains justice only, in a society where there is no distinction between those close and those far off, but in which there also remains the impossibility of passing by the closest. The equality of all is born by my inequality, the surplus of my duties over my rights. The forgetting of self moves justice" (emphasis added). This formulation of the aporia between ethics and justice by Levinas highlights the tension, one may say the profound 'paradox' of hospitality in the relation between the quest and the host. We can welcome the guest (the wholly Other) unconditionally but we must simultaneously assert that the host (and all other possible guests) are also, and need also be taken as, radically singular Others. Without this impossible possibility ethics and justice (or rather hospitality) will not have the urgency of an ethics that really matters. Buts what does this mean for Data and all other artificial beings?

6 Responding to the wholly Other

One may respond by claiming that an ethics of hospitality leaves us in a dead-end with nowhere to go. Yes, it does leave one in an impossible possibility but that is exactly its strength. It is when we believe that we have 'sorted' ethics out that violence is already present. Conversely, it is when we become unsure, when we are full of questions, when our categories fails us, and we need to think afresh, start all

over again, that it becomes possible for us to be open to the questioning appeal of the otherness of the Other, to be truly hospitable. Where does this leave us? What do we concretely do? I will suggest—in following Derrida and Levinas—that an ethics of hospitality could be based on, but not limited to, the following aporia:

- The suspension of the law (unconditionally)
- Letting the Other speak
- Undecidability and impossibility
- Justice for all Others (for every third whatsoever)

6.1 The suspension of the law (unconditionally)

Derrida (1992) suggests, as was argued above, that it is only when we suspend the law unconditionally (categories, codes, values, etc.) to make a 'fresh' judgement, that hospitality becomes possible. If the possibility of becoming unsettled by the otherness of the Other becomes circumvented by the self-evidence of the category, code, reasons, etc., then the law becomes a law onto itself—pure violence. Hospitality demands that we interrogate again and again the implicit judgements—inclusions and exclusions—already implied in the law. In the case of Data, the categories and judgements remained in tact in many interacting ways. It was Data that was on trial, not the humans. It was evident to everybody that he was the 'lesser' machine and that they had the right to decide his fate. The right of the humans to decide did not come up for consideration. Furthermore, once the court case started his friends ironically believed that his moral worth was in being 'like them'. They did not suspend their categories of 'machine', 'person' and 'sentience' and asked the question "what is it about Data, as Data, that is significant". One can most certainly question whether Data really did find 'justice' in being spared because he was almost like them? Without radically unsettling the implicit judgements about "the measure" to be considered ethics did not happen. More generally, our human tendency to treat the inanimate, the artificial, as our instruments, as being in our service, for our purposes, needs to be suspended unconditionally. Without such as step the possibility of an ethics of hospitality towards all beings is not possible.

6.2 Letting the other speak

Levinas suggests that it is in *speaking* that the other reveals itself as Other. For Levinas, speaking is the showing of the Other of itself and from itself as always already Other (Levinas 1991[1974]). Speaking expresses the otherness of the Other and in so doing leaves a trace. How do artificial beings—and things in general—speak? Of course, Data could speak, but his speaking only mattered in as much as

this provided a basis for arguing for the measure of man. How might the inanimate speak (not in our terms but in their terms)? It seems that there are at least two ways in which they 'speak.' First, they speak in their silence. The fragility of their radical passivity, their 'voicelessness', serve to highlight and reveal (in a very stark manner) implicit force of our moral judgements. As we dispose of them in scrap heaps, landfills and garbage cans our power as the only moral authority is seemingly confirmed—yet they remain silent; 'turning the other cheek' one might say. Second, they speak as 'mirrors', revealing us to ourselves. As Robert Hughes once remarked "societies reveal themselves in what they throw away" (Hughes 1991, 333). What do we see if we listen to the things that surround us? What do our scrap heaps, landfills and garbage cans reveal to us. They reveal us as consumers seeking an endless proliferation of possibilities to enact our own identity and power. They reveal us as having a 'one-dimensional' relation with them, as instruments 'for us', 'for our purposes', 'for our projects'. We use them then we dump them.

Yet, sometimes, they also point to a possibility that it could be different. Notice what happened when we individuate them by decorating them (the Latin root of 'decoration' is to honour)—as was done in the case of Data for example. When we engage with them in their *singularity*, a certain intimacy is possible. I am not referring to a singular piece of Royal Dalton that is valued because of its monetary value. Rather I am referring to simple everyday objects that are valued because they reveal to us something more than their instrumental purposes suggest. For example, the intimacy we find between musicians and their musical instruments, or craftsmen and their tools. Their relationship is not just one of use but also one of care. Nevertheless, it seems that such appreciation and honouring only comes when we come to see our own fragility and dependency on the possibilities provided by our relation with them—i.e. when our own self-certainty becomes unsettled. This seems less likely in a 'plug and play' world of machines designed for consumption and disposal. Hospitality will happen only if we become unsettled by the voices of the Others that surrounds us. Data never got the opportunity to speak—except in answering their questions. However, outside the court he did speak. When confronted by Maddox about his resignation he said: "I am the culmination of one man's dream. This is not ego or vanity, but when Doctor Soong created me he added to the substance of the universe. If by your experiments I am destroyed, something unique and wonderful will be lost." Data is claiming (on behalf of all artificial beings) that it is exactly his/their *singularity* and Otherness that is at stake here. For Maddox, the issue was the possibility of reproducing him. For in reproducibility lays the possibility of consumption and disposal—of

hiding, covering over, our fragility and dependency. It is through consumption and disposal that we can confirm our power and eventually also our own supposed moral worth.

6.3 Undecidability and impossibility

The reality of ethical situation that confront us (as was the case with Data) is that eventually a decision has to be made—one way or the other. This decision is mostly required in the 'now' of our everyday flow of life. Hospitality does not have the luxury of time to think about all the alternatives, weigh them carefully and come to a reasoned, justifiable outcome. We can obviously talk and reason but in the final instance the decision is now, yet it is undecidable. As Derrida (1999: 66) argues: "there would be no decision, in the strong sense of the word, in ethics, in politics, no decision, and thus no responsibility, without the experience of some undecidability. If you don't experience some undecidability, then the decision would simply be the application of a programme… ethics and politics, therefore, start with undecidability." It is undecidable in the sense that we cannot construct a framework that will 'solve' it for us 'once and for all.' Thus, there can simply be no final reckoning, no balancing of all the books (Caputo 1993). Indeed the agonising that accompanies hospitality already suggests that every welcome is also an implicit transgression. We know that every act of hospitality doomed to failure, since we were forced to compare what is incomparable. Thus, when we make the decision to welcome (or not), which we eventually will have to do, we must, for the sake of hospitality, immediately and simultaneously declare the inherent uncertainty and exceptional nature of the act. If it no longer unsettles us to simply *dispose of any thing* (to turn the stranger away), then the possibility for hospitality have disappeared. The silent trashing of the disposable cup and the destitute face of a fellow human being must interrogate our ethical relationship to the Other with equal urgency for an ethics of hospitality to become a impossible possibility. Any framework or category that will remove the trauma of the undecidable will turn hospitality into hostility, pure calculation.

6.4 Justice for all others (for every 'third' whatsoever)

In the final instance, we humans must admit that justice is also a political question. To say that it is not a political question because it is based on some sort of reasonable reason (proof, evidence, argument) is to cover over the fact that such a criteria already benefits us as animals with the capacity to reason. How will we find justice for all others? Hospitality immediately and simultaneously implicates

politics, the question of justice (Critchley 1999). By avoiding the trauma of undecidability that hospitality demands the participants in the court case have also committed an injustice to all. How then will we move towards including all others into the sphere of ethics? Clearly, this will not be easy. There is no doubt that Data's case is a difficult one, yet not the hardest one could imagine. In the case of Data, one might ask: what about all the people that may in future lose their lives because there is not a Data available? What about the knowledge lost by not doing the disassembly? And we may add many more 'thirds' here. Without simultaneously considering all the other thirds (who bears the cost of the welcome to Data) the hospitality extended to Data is not real hospitality; it is a welcome of what we are 'ready to welcome.' We cannot speculate about how the case would have turned out had they followed an ethics of hospitality. Nevertheless, what seems to be a victory for Data is not necessary so. All we can claim is that it would have been more just—and more terrible—if they had truly confronted an ethics of hospitality, if they really made a decision.

7 Some concluding thoughts

What now? In considering an ethics of hospitality, which include *all* strangers, we have multiplied many times over our moral responsibility. This does not mean that we need to treat an inanimate object *the same* as a human—absolutely the opposite. There is no 'same' whatsoever. We do not have the comfort of a boundary, we are forever in the open sea with no land in sight. Hospitality throws us back into the aporia of the wholly undecidable; exactly that which an anthropocentric metaphysics (and ethics) wanted to free us from. In an ethics of hospitality, we are in an impossible situation where we have to continually "compare the incomparable." We have to face undecidability, suspend our prejudices and reinvent how we ought to live, here and now, again and again. The hierarchy of values can no longer 'simplify' ethics for us. Not that it ever did. It merely covered over the trauma we did not dare to face. Hospitality is impossible! Yes, and so it should be. The insurmountable weight of our ethical responsibility is exactly what gives hospitality its force (Levinas 1991[1974]). To live a moral life in the shadows of undecidability is to realise that 'the decision is terrible.' Clearly we must make very difficult choices on an everyday basis. However, in being truly hospitable we must work out, instance by instance, again and again, how we ought to live, with *all* Other (things). This is the task of an ethics of hospitality—the ethics of a community that have nothing in common (Lingis 1994).

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