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UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS IN DERRIDA

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Abstract: Jacques Derrida's ethics generates a vision of what the community of nations, states, people is and should be beyond a separation made by what he calls 'interest' by which he means that the human interiorizes everything outside himself in order to configure a self. For Derrida, forgiveness must not be in the service of any finality such as spiritual (atonement, redemption, salvation), social, national, psychological, and political orientation, since these are reconciliation for the sake of other goals rather than forgiveness. The 'unconditional forgiveness' is against the 'normalization' by which I argue, in the first section, that Derrida means 'interest.' In the second section, through the notion of aporia, without (a-) a way out, it is argued that one is situated in the state of 'difference' by which Derrida means that an individual is not individual because of difference in identity with another individual, since the identity closes one to the other. Rather, one individual is different from another one by being open to itself and another one. In the forgiveness, this 'difference' entails abandoning oneself to the 'other' by which one is 'forgiven for existing.' The third section discusses Abraham's sacrifice of his son to illustrate the absolute responsibility for the 'other' by which we can rethink morality.

Key Words: forgiveness, unconditional, interest, aporia, difference, normalization, ethical responsibility, Levinas

Introduction

Jacques Derrida has always been concerned with ethics as the responsibility we bear to recognize the difference of the 'other' and attempted to clarify it throughout most of his main discussions. To mention the ethics in this sense, we must look at Emmanuel Levinas's notion of ethics which has been read by Derrida.¹ Levinas names his thought regarding the relation between the self and the 'other' ethics. The ethics, for him, is the rejection of the cognitive act of the ego that reduces all otherness to itself. In other words, the ethics is the self-critique by which the self opens itself to the 'other' or an exterior.² Levinas distinguishes between morality and the ethics where the former refers to the 'socio-political order of organizing and improving our human survival' and the latter founds the *prima philosophic* of an ethical responsibility towards the 'other'.³

According to Derrida's notion of forgiveness, one, for instance, cannot still speak of the forgiveness, if "the guilty one repents, mends his ways, asks for forgiveness, and thus would be changed by a new obligation, and that from then on he would no longer be exactly the same as the one who was found to be culpable."⁴ In this condition, the guilty person is not guilty and no longer to be forgiven. So there must be no place for the reversibility for the guilty person, that is, not being able to repent or promising not to repeat. In other words, the guilty person must be forgiven before he/she asks for forgiveness. On the side of the person who forgives, there must be no application of sovereignty. Derrida dreams of this forgiveness as the purity of a forgiveness without power. The one who forgives must not be in a place in up and addresses the one who is down. In order not to be in the state of power to forgive, Derrida writes that the one who forgives must not see himself as victim and not know the criminal: "As soon as the victim understands the criminal, as soon as she exchanges, speaks, agrees with him, the case of reconciliation has commenced and with the ordinary forgiveness which is anything but forgiveness."⁵ Derrida's forgiveness is possible when the victim does not consider himself as victim and without knowing that he forgives somebody. In other words, forgiveness should be granted the guilty as guilty. This should not be confused with the idea of forgiveness for the sake of forgiveness but you forgive without any condition, that is to say a pure forgiveness.

In discussing about those crimes which are determined as imprescriptible, Derrida reads Jankelevitch's 'L'Imprescriptible' in which the 'imprescriptible' means inextinguishable, something that cannot be atoned or reconciled and it can be unforgivable like Shoah which produced the creation of the legal concept of crimes against humanity. Pushing the imprescriptible crime to its limit, Derrida thinks that the crimes against humanity have been proliferated in the past since the end of the Second

World War, that is, many “scenes of repentance, or of asking forgiveness signifies, no doubt, a universal urgency of memory: it is necessary to turn toward the past; and it is necessary to take this act of memory, of self-accusation, [...] of appearance at the same time beyond the juridical instance.”⁶ Here, the human has committed all the crimes by itself against itself, against humanity. Derrida thinks that this crime against humanity is “against what is most sacred, and thus already against the divine in the man, in God-made-man or man-made-God-by-God.”⁷ This makes the crime to be globalized both individually and collectively. Thus, the humanity has been subject to the crime. The danger is that the human has lost the characterization of crime and forgiveness generally. It would be hard to distinguish between the prescriptible and the imprescriptible crime.

Jankelevitch believes that there is no possible forgiveness for the inexpiable; therefore, forgiveness does not have meaning in this case. In other words, if the crime is unforgiveable, the forgiving of it is meaningless. For Jankelevitch, as Derrida writes, when the human is incapable to punish an action, it is unforgivable and forgiveness does not have meaning. It implies that the human cannot forgive if an action is not subject to punishment, law or justice. In other words, one cannot forgive or forgiveness is impossible because we cannot subject it to law or judgment. It is in the reaction to this sense that Derrida writes that one must forgive what cannot be punished. In other words, for Derrida, forgiveness escapes from punishment and justice. When Jankelevitch writes that the forgiveness died in the death camps he means that the human cannot punish what is unforgivable or the human is incapable of forgiveness. This is where Derrida writes “forgiveness forgives only unforgivable.”⁸ The forgiveness must forgive only the unforgivable in order to be the forgiveness otherwise it is not pure and is subject to a condition. Derrida calls the pure forgiveness as the ‘unconditional forgiveness.’ Derrida thinks that Jankelevitch’s idea is problematic when he says forgiveness must have meaning. For Derrida, forgiveness must not be in the service of any finality such as spiritual (atonement, redemption, salvation), social, national, psychological, and political orientation, since these are the reconciliation for the sake of other goals rather than forgiveness. This is why Derrida claims that the human is always subject to these limitations which cause forgiveness not to be experienced as it is.

By reflecting on the unconditionality of forgiveness and the gift, Derrida in the essay ‘To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible’ refers to the Latin origin of the word ‘pardon’ to find that the ‘don’ means the ‘gift’ and the ‘donation’ means the ‘gift-giving.’ Derrida brings the forgiveness and the gift together to discuss that the idea of the gift is inherent within the forgiveness.⁹ Derrida continues to tie together these two notions to the notions of originary guilt and hospitality by noting that “I always have to be forgiven, to ask forgiveness for not giving, for never giving enough, for never offering and welcoming enough. One is always

guilty, one must always be forgiven the gift.”¹⁰ In this notion, the human is primordially guilty even he hospitalizes others prior to any interest. To Derrida, thus, forgiveness and guilt do not belong to the political or legal sphere. Derrida opposes the symmetry between punishing guilt and forgiving; he does not admit that they may be placed side by side. If we follow the analysis of the nature of guilt in Karl Jaspers written by Paul Ricoeur, guilt takes on four forms: criminal, collective (political), moral and metaphysical (the fact of being a human being). According to Ricoeur, forgiveness responds to moral guilt, an individual guilt for which one is personally responsible.¹¹ In this sense, guilt cannot be politically and criminally institutionalized. Here, it can be thought that Derrida ponders guilt morally and metaphysically. As a result of all the existing issues about the nature of guilt, crime and forgiveness, Derrida begins to rethink the concept of forgiveness fundamentally.

For Derrida, the ethical concepts remain enigmatic and subject to controversy at last as he writes about forgiveness: “as enigmatic as the concept of forgiveness remains.”¹² The responsibility for the ‘other,’ for Derrida, generates a vision of what the community of nations, states, people is and should be beyond a separation made by what I call ‘interest’ by which he means that the human interiorizes everything outside himself in order to configure a self. To put it another way, the self excludes any otherness for its own interest. By putting into question this self-interest, which founds concepts such as gift and forgiveness, Derrida revises the global condition of humanity.¹³

The human is never able to forgive for the sake of a pure and ‘disinterested’ forgiveness, since, he always, as Derrida writes, ‘normalizes’ it aimed at some reorientation. The ‘unconditional forgiveness’ is against the ‘normalization’ by which I argue that Derrida means ‘interest.’ If we forgive for the sake of any reason, there is an ‘interest’ in forgiveness. In contrast, the ‘pure forgiveness’ is ‘dis-interested.’ Derrida hints at ‘disinterestedness’ in the last chapter of *Given Time* in the passage which entangles the motifs of unconditionality and the ‘disinterestedness’:

The condition common to the gift is certain unconditionality [...] The event and the gift, the event as gift, the gift as event must be irruptive, unmotivated - for example, disinterested. They are decisive and they must tear the fabric, interrupt the continuum of a narrative that they nevertheless they call for, they must perturb the order of causalities: in an instant.¹⁴

Although this passage describes the idea of gift, it speaks of Derrida’s idea about ethics. The unmotivated, irruptive act of giving gift to somebody is similar to the forgiveness in which one forgives without

‘normalization’ or ‘reconciliation.’ In the ‘unconditional forgiveness,’ one forgives without motive, a dis-interest event ‘in an instant.’

Normalization and Interest

For Derrida, forgiveness in ethics is a context like other contexts such as politics, history, sociology, psychology, etc. which is subject to limitation. Derrida writes on the thought of the ‘unconditionality’ in ‘After-word’ to *Limited Inc.* as the affirmation which crosses the ‘normalization’ in order to leave the context of forgiveness open:

This leads me to elaborate rapidly what I suggested above concerning the question of context, of its non-closure or, if you prefer, of its irreducible opening [...] In different texts I have written on (against) apartheid, I have on several occasions spoken of ‘unconditional’ affirmation or of ‘unconditional’ ‘appeal’. This has also happened to me in other ‘contexts’ and each time that I speak of the link between deconstruction and the ‘yes.’ Now the very least that can be said of unconditionality is that it is independent of every determinate context, even of the determination of a context in general. It announces itself as such only in the opening of context. Not that it is simply present elsewhere, outside of all context; rather it intervenes in the determination of a context from its opening, and from an injunction, a law, a responsibility that transcends this or that determination of a given context. Following this, what remains is to articulate this unconditionality with the determinate condition of this or that context; and this is the moment of strategies, of rhetorics, of ethics, and of politics. The structure thus described supposes both that there are only contexts, that nothing exists outside context, as I have often said, but also that the limit of the frame or border of the context always entails a clause of non-closure. The outside penetrates and thus determines the inside.¹⁵

This complex and compact passage shows that the thought of ‘unconditionality’ traces back to Derrida’s main argument, that is, ‘there is nothing outside the text.’¹⁶ Derrida in describing what he calls ‘writing’ argues that language is only the play of the differences among the signi-

fiers which are without signified because signification is produced as the result of difference between two signifiers. Thus, the chain of signifiers makes the signification possible. As the difference among the signifiers makes the signification possible, the formation of the signification is deferred from one signifier to another one. Derrida expresses this process as 'différance.' As he writes, "it is because of différance that the movement of signification possible."¹⁷ In a given context, the relation among the signifiers can be set in the unlimited forms. In every arrangement of the network of signifiers, something from outside determines the arrangement. The unlimited possibility of forms in a context makes the frame or border of the context to be open from its beginning. This is what Derrida means by 'non-closure.' In other words, according to Simon Critchley, who has quoted the same above passage from Derrida to discuss the idea of non-closure in the context of ethics, "the context itself contains a clause of non-closure."¹⁸ The point is that in every arrangement a signifier is arbitrarily determined as center according to which the arrangement of other signifier is set. As Critchely discusses, "Derrida wants to extend this account of the written sign to the entire field of what philosophy call experience, even the experience of Being."¹⁹ In this respect, in making a concept such as forgiveness, a center determines what the forgiveness is. The human always by having in his mind a benefit or advantage determines what a concept is. This benefit or interest is the center which frames the concept. In this sense, a positive or proper meaning such as forgiveness is subject to the différance within the human life. The 'unconditional' forgiveness must go outside this différance, outside the human capability which is limited by his interests. James K. A. Smith argues that Derrida's sentence 'there is nothing outside the text' enlightens the human's experience of the world and himself: "There is no aspect of our 'experience' that escapes the play of signifiers or the conditioning of *différance* [...] there is no 'access' to either the world or *ourselves* which is not subject to differing and deferring of différance."²⁰

In this sense, Derrida writes: "so if forgiveness happens, *if* it happens, it should exceed the order of presence, the order of being, the order of consciousness."²¹ For Hegel, being is conceived as giving presence to what the human's consciousness produces. Consciousness constitutes being by the process of making concepts: "(spirit) is in itself the movement which is cognition - the transformation of that in-itself into that which is for itself, of Substance into subject, of the object of *consciousness* into an object of self-consciousness, i.e. into an object that is just as much superseded, or into the *Concept*."²² The human's cognition transforms anything outside himself into a concept for his own interest. He deprives the substantiality of everything exterior in order to acquire self-consciousness. Derrida criticizes this notion of being as consciousness. The concepts made by the human's consciousness are problematic, since they are produced for the sake of self-interestedness: "Once you grant some privilege to gathering

and not to dissociating, then you leave no room for the other, for the radical otherness of the other, for the radical singularity of the other.”²³ Having this in mind, the ‘I’ cannot present forgiveness because he is subject to ‘interest.’ Thus, if forgiveness is presented as such, the human must exceed being.

Moreover, Nietzsche argues that the human acquires knowledge only by looking at the world outside himself and finding similarity or difference among objects in the world. The concepts which the human made out of this act of specularity are only the similarities or the differences among objects rather than each object seen in itself. This point specifies that any concept never is fixed in its meaning, since it is made through the difference and is always subject to delay: “This creator only designates the relations of things to men...After all what is the law of nature as such for us? We are not acquainted with it in itself, but only with effects, which means in its relation to other laws of nature—which are known to us only as sums of relations.”²⁴ Perhaps Nietzsche’s argument vindicates Derrida’s claim that forgiveness must be outside the human capability because his capability is limited. It can be perceived now that the unconditionality of forgiveness releases it from any condition in order to let it be emerged in itself. In this sense, the unconditionality, for Derrida, entails absolutely affirmation.

In order to see what makes forgiveness conditional, one must begin with the ‘interest’ of the subject or the self in itself, self-interestedness. When the subject is interested in itself, it forgives for the benefits of itself. It never becomes disinterested unless it forgets its subjectivity. The self-interestedness makes the possibility of an ‘I’ which privileges its own benefit. The point is that the ‘I’ who has made an identity of itself is possible only by dominating anything outside itself. The theme of ‘sovereignty’ underlies any self-interest in the integration of an individual or an institution or a nation. According to Derrida, the ‘I’ is formed only by dominating the ‘other’: “You understand that fighting for your identity is not exclusive of another identity, is open to another identity.”²⁵ It implies the equation of identity-as-authority.²⁶ Derrida rejects the empirical forgiveness, since it does not forgive but applies sovereignty. The ‘I’ forgives for the benefit of the self-determination by which dominates others. This entails that the ‘I’ is founded by the violence. In other words, subjectivity is nothing but violence. Derrida argues that if I am conscious that I forgive, I not only recognize myself but I thank my self, or I am waiting for the ‘other’ to thank me. For Derrida, this is the inscription of forgiveness into an economy of exchange.²⁷ This exchange keeps previously the interest for the ‘I’ who forgives. The ‘I’ forgives for the sake of self-interestedness that is.

Aporia and Difference

Forgiveness, according to Derrida, is possible if one is dis-interested, i.e. one is not subject to the 'normalization' or the 'interest.' Derrida's critique of the notion of aporia clarifies how the dis-interestedness works in forgiveness. He writes that he is torn between the 'pure forgiveness' and the forgiveness which is subject to reconciliation: "The two poles are irreducible to one another, certainly, but they remain indissociable."²⁸ Although Derrida discusses 'aporia,' without (a-) a way out (poros), not in his argument about forgiveness, 'aporia' can illustrate what he means by the unconditional forgiveness. Derrida marks three senses for aporia:

In one case, the nonpassage resembles an impermeability; it would stem from the opaque existence of an uncrossable border: a door that does not open or that only opens according to an unlocatable condition. In another case, the nonpassage, the impass or aporia, stems from the fact that there is no limit. There is not yet or there is no longer a border to cross, no opposition between two sides: the limit is too porous, permeable, and indeterminate. Finally, the third type of aporia, the impossible, the antinomy, or the contradiction, is a nonpassage because its elementary milieu does not allow for something that could be called passage, step, walk, gait, displacement, or replacement, a kinesis in general.²⁹

In these three senses, it could be understood that something as border does not exist and exists at the same time. In this sense, the meaning of crossing a limit or a border will be impossible. We no longer speak of the passing or crossing beyond while we simultaneously believe that the border exists. This means that the limit or the border is dispersed and permeable. It cannot be located anywhere but exists everywhere. The first aporia is the economics of closure or totality and the second is the economics of openness or infinity. The third aporia seems to be the state of dilemma and paradox which is neither the totality nor the infinity. But it is not necessarily negative that paralyzes us.³⁰ In the third aporia, one is situated in the state of 'difference' in which the economics of the totality and the infinity are together. The 'difference' does not mean that either individuals are divided because of the difference in identity or the sense of identity is removed because all individuals are in a state before being individualized - namely they are same. The 'difference' makes an individual different from another one not by giving identity but by opening the individual within itself and to another one. Derrida writes: "Identity is a self-differentiating identity, an identity different from itself,

having an opening or gap within itself [...] I am not one with myself that I can speak with the other and address the other.”³¹ An individual is not an entity acquiring definite attributes but remains unknown and open to the other individuals. Such individuality, for Derrida, lives in singularity, as he writes: “The singularity of ‘who’ is not the individuality of a thing that would be identical to itself, it is not an atom. It is a singularity that discloses or divides itself in gathering itself to answer to the other, whose call somehow precedes its own identification with itself.”³² The ‘difference,’ for Derrida, is the condition in which individuals are different from one another not due to the identity which society constructs but by opening individual to one another.

By looking at Derrida’s argument about sexual difference, we better conceive the notion of the ‘difference.’ Derrida in ‘Choreographies’ sketches a notion of sexual difference before all the existing determination or identifications of male/female opposition. He thinks of the community in which individuals are in the condition prior to the masculine/feminine opposition. He writes: “I would like to believe in masses, this interminable number of blended voices, this mobile of nonidentified sexual marks whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each ‘individual,’ whether he be classified as ‘man’ or as ‘woman’ according to the criteria of usage.”³³ Here, it seems that Derrida believes in a-sexuality but it is the absence of any mark belonging to one of the sexes. Derrida thinks of a sort of re-sexualizing which does not carry with it the mark of the masculine/feminine opposition. This re-sexualization does not assume the secondary state for woman in relation to man. For Derrida, the primordial ‘difference’ between sexes never privileges one over the ‘other.’ He calls this primordial condition “the primordial level of the human element.”³⁴ In his reading of Heidegger in terms of the sexual difference in Dasein, Derrida argues that one recognizes an intrinsic possibility of multiplication in Dasein’s sexual difference which is different from a simple formal plurality of determinations. As Derrida writes, “one must avoid the representation of a large primal being whose simplicity was suddenly dispersed into many singularities.”³⁵ Peggy Kamuf explains that the intrinsic singularity of the sexual difference within Dasein means that the sexual difference is inscribed and effaced at the same time: “This back and forth describes the movement of its displacement through a system, its repeated inscription and effacement.”³⁶ In ‘the primordial level of the human element,’ Derrida’s ‘sexual difference’ implies that the binary opposition is neutralized but it preserves the binary which works by producing ‘difference’ both within each side of the binary and their relation to each other. In this sense, this neutralization of the ‘primordial level’ is productive - produces singularities and we are living no longer in the sphere of generalized binary opposition of the sexual difference. This ‘sexual difference’ is outside the sex-duality by which we mean the ge-

neralization of gender into the male/female category. According to this notion of sexuality, Derrida speaks of ethics in an interview:

Thus the possibility of ethics could be saved, if one takes ethics to mean that relationship to the other as other which accounts for no other determination or sexual characteristic in particular. What kind of ethics would there be if belonging to one sex or another became its law or privilege? What if the universality of moral laws were modeled on or limited according to sexes? What if their universality were not unconditional, without sexual condition in particular?³⁷

The unconditional ethics or forgiveness is neutralized to sex-duality but sees the sexual difference which deconstructs itself.

This is the notion of the 'difference' in the third aporia which opens one to the 'other.' It places us in relation with the 'other' not trapped in dilemma that separate us from the 'other.' As Derrida writes, "singularly exposed in our absolute and absolutely naked uniqueness, that is to say, disarmed, delivered to the other [...] there in this place of aporia."³⁸ Here, I suggest that the unforgivable is the action which the 'other' performs and I as the one who forgive open myself to this 'other' outside any law of justice without intending to punish. In this sense, Derrida writes: "The other makes the decision in me which does not mean that I am passive, that I am simply obeying the other."³⁹ Derrida argues that this is the freedom of forgiveness in relation with the 'other.'

As soon as the present of freedom at once conditions responsibility and finds itself limited, even negated by it, I am responsible before the other, at the heart of my freedom and even before being free in order to be free. Here is what Levinas precisely calls, already, a paradox: 'this is the most profound paradox in the concept of freedom: its synthetic bond with its own negation.' A free being alone is responsible, that is, already not free.⁴⁰

Both forgiving the 'other' and asking the 'other' for forgiveness depends on abandoning myself to him. One must abandon himself in order to be free to forgive or ask for forgiveness. If one negates himself, he is free and therefore delivered over to forgiveness. It could be what I call the 'ethics of the aporia,' the ethics of being naked to the 'other.' For Derrida, this aporetic condition is the experience of responsibility and making an impossible choice. It can be understood that when Derrida is torn between

the 'pure forgiveness' and what ordinarily perceived as forgiveness he means that one neither forgives by his self-interest nor in the state that he is neutralized because of having no difference with other individuals. This suspense is the aporia which invents the possibility of an impossible choice. Derrida thinks of forgiveness in two poles of conditional and unconditional and remains in suspense to choose between them. According to Simon Critchley, "it is precisely in the suspension of choice or decision between two alternatives, a suspension is provoked in and through an act of reading, that the ethical dimension of deconstruction is opened and maintained."⁴¹

Being naked to the 'other' is not to be passive; it is the active preparation for the 'other' to come. By abandoning myself to the 'other' in the pure forgiveness, I find myself and I am able to constitute myself. By forgiving the 'other,' I will be given existence; I am "forgiven for existing."⁴² This forgiveness breaks with the traditional ontology. The ethics begins prior to ontology and the pure forgiveness is "no longer a second, contingent, moment in a kind of chapter of ethics."⁴³ As Levinas writes, "morality is not a branch of philosophy, but first philosophy."⁴⁴ Here, it should be noticed that he considers the morality outside the traditional sense of morality. The morality in Levinasian sense is the study of being according to which being is an ethical action.

Abraham's Case, the Ethics of Aporia

Abraham's sacrifice of his son is exemplary of the ethics of aporia, the absolute responsibility for the 'other.' If God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son, the killing of the son is evaluated outside the human law of morality. This singular call to kill the son seems to be an aporia - to transgress every rule Abraham has ever been taught. To respond to this call would be to violate every principle of morality - Abraham cannot appeal to any rule or law that would justify his action. Derrida in *The Gift of Death* argues that Abraham's response is the responsibility or the decision which takes place outside any utilitarian frameworks: "The activating of responsibility will always take place before and beyond any theoretical or thematic determination. It will have to decide without it, independently from knowledge; that will be the condition of a practical idea of freedom."⁴⁵ For Derrida, what Abraham pictures for us is our 'absolute duty' to the singular call of the Wholly Other, the 'absolute responsibility' for the other.⁴⁶ According to Derrida, this is a paradox which involves a conflict between 'duty' and 'responsibility.' Tyler Robert discusses that the former is the ethical imperative to generality and universality and the latter is the imperative of singularity, that it is Abraham who must decide and act face to face with God without the support of rules, whether teleological or deontological, that would tell me what to do or allow me to calculate the 'proper response.'⁴⁷ Abraham is called by Kierkegaard 'the

knight of faith.' Faith, for Derrida, signifies having the absolute responsibility for 'an utterly faceless other.' Derrida in 'Faith and Knowledge' uses 'chora' in Plato's *Timaeus* to develop the idea of the 'faceless other.' According to Derrida, 'chora' is the name of the place that will never entered religion and will never permit itself to be sacralized, sanctified, humanized, theologized, cultivated, historicized. It is neither Being, nor the Good, nor God, nor Man, nor History.⁴⁸ The 'chora' is not what the human knows by the name of God who gives reward. If we believe in God with the characterization of the 'chora,' we do not expect any gift from God. The facelessness of the 'other' also signifies that the human must enter into relationship with the 'other' economically. The question would be: does Abraham responds to God as 'the faceless other' or God who returns him His favor when Abraham sacrifices his son? Is the sacrifice of the son still interested? Does Abraham expect a gift from God - the transcendence for the sake of nearness to God or to win God's favor? Perhaps this is the matter of intention of Abraham who sacrifices his son. Derrida writes that: "So if forgiveness happens, *if* it happens, it should exceed the order of presence, the order of being, the order of consciousness."⁴⁹ Abraham must not be conscious in responding to God. It seems to be an impossible action. Tyler discusses that "responsibility demands one (not) sacrifice oneself. A certain egoism is good for the other, is necessary for being good to the other, indeed for being separate from and other than the other."⁵⁰ This back and forth movement does not mean that one has self-interest. One exceeds the order of presence. One does not try to have self-identification. It would be the experience of impossible conditions in which we reply the call of the 'other.'

Conclusion

When we think of the 'disinterestedness' in Derrida's forgiveness, can we distinguish moral from non-moral action or crime from non-crime? Can one say: 'I forgive' when there is no value system for the human action? These questions imply that our moral system is founded because the human lives by his 'interest' and is subject to what Derrida considers as 'normalization.' When the 'interest' is removed and the human is disinterested, it is indecisive to judge any human action morally. Therefore, it is undecidable when there is no 'interest' or better to say there is no need to decide. Derrida writes about this indecisiveness in the 'Force of Law:'

The undecidable is not merely the oscillation or the tension between two decision; it is the experience of that which, though heterogeneous, foreign to the order of the calculable and the rule, is still *obligated* to give itself up to the impossible

decision, while taking account of laws and rules. A decision that did not go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision, it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process.⁵¹

Remembering the human's ontological quest to be in Levinas, it can be thought that this quest becomes the interest forcing one man to usurp the space belongs to the other man in order to have right to be.⁵² This oppression of the other man is problematic, as one responds to his egoistic interest. Morality as a set of rules prescribing norms (as in Platonic and Aristotelian 'Good') is enforced to stop this usurpation. All non-moral actions oblige the human to totalizes his ontological being. Any violence excludes the other man in the fear of murdering his existence. Prior to this ontological interest, both Derrida and Levinas think of the face-to-face relationship to the other for an infinite non-ontological being. In this sense, the one who is disinterested is free to decide outside moral laws and rules to open itself to the 'other.' The 'undecidability,' for Derrida, means that in the evaluation system, it is impossible to decide freely, since every decision is haunted by the ontological interest. The 'free decision' implies that the moral judgment will be unnecessary, since everybody is disinterested and never commit crime. Any crime or violence, thus, is committed because one is interested in others to eliminate or control them. Accordingly, if the human is disinterested in not having the ontological egoistic quest and open to welcome the 'other,' we live outside the category of the moral/non-moral proposition, since the human is free of such interest and prepared to hospitalize the 'other.'

Notes

¹ Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Routledge: London, 1978).

² See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans., Alphonse Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); *Existence and Existents*.

³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Face to Face with Levinas*, 29.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 27.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, 49.

⁶ Jacques Derrida, 28.

⁷ Jacques Derrida, 31.

⁸ Jacques Derrida, 32.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, "To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible," in *Questioning God*, ed. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 21.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, 22.

¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans., Kathleen Balmey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 471.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 27.

¹³ Derrida argues his own version of 'gift' in *Given Time*. See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, 123.

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 152-3.

¹⁶ Derrida argues this notion in *Of Grammatology*. See Jacques Derrida, '...That Dangerous Supplement...' in *Of Grammatology*.

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 13.

¹⁸ Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 32.

¹⁹ Simon Critchley, 34.

²⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Jacques Derrida, Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2005), 44.

²¹ John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon, *Questioning God* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2001), 53.

²² G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 488.

²³ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 14. For Derrida's reading of Hegel regarding how spirit closes itself by itself, see *Glas*.

²⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," in *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. Ansell Pearson, Duncan Large (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 116.

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 13.

²⁶ Nicholas Royle, *After Derrida* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 165.

²⁷ John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon, 53.

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, 51.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, 20-21.

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, 12.

³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 14.

³² Jacques Derrida, "Eating Well," in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, 100.

³³ Jacques Derrida, "Choreographies: Interview," in *Feminist Interpretation of Jacques Derrida*, 40.

³⁴ Jacques Derrida, 41.

³⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Geschlecht I: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference," in *Psyche: Invention of the Other*, 19.

³⁶ Peggy Kamuf, *Book of Addresses* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 99.

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, "Choreographies: Interview", 35.

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, 12.

³⁹ John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon, *Questioning God*, 63.

⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 390-91.

⁴¹ Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, 88.

⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 391.

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, 391. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 304. For further reading on the relation between Derrida and Levinas, see Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*.

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 304.

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 26.

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, 66.

⁴⁷ Tyler Roberts, "Sacrifice and Secularization," in *Derrida and Religion*, ed. Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart (London: Routledge, 2005), 268.

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 59. Derrida in 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials' explores the analogy and disanalogy of chora with God of negative theology. See Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Derrida and Negative Theology*.

⁴⁹ John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon, *Questioning God*, 53.

⁵⁰ Tyler Roberts, 'Sacrifice and Secularization' in *Derrida and Religion*, 271.

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 252.

⁵² Emmanuel Levinas. "Ethics as First Philosophy," in *The Levinas Reader*, 82.

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