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Chapter 9

Forgiveness in the Global Age: Derrida and Buddhism[1]

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This paper adopts a transnational approach to a global issue. I bring together two different traditions to address conflicts and forgiveness in the global age. Derrida and Buddhism are analyzed side by side for good reasons. The "cosmos" underpins both kinds of praxis. Both seem to hold out new alternatives for peace where existing "institutions of forgiveness" have failed. Both are radically anti-essentialist and harbor little illusion about "self" and "substance;" both push aporetic thinking to the extreme where language, concepts, and ontology deconstruct themselves. These similarities are examined alongside their critical differences. I demonstrate how, unlike Buddhism, Derrida is not thorough enough in his "deconstructive" method. While Derrida gets trapped in his own abyss of aporias, Buddhism uses aporias to get beyond the entrapment of language, thoughts, and ontotheology. In contradistinction to Derrida who is held captive in an abyss of the "impossible but necessary," Buddhism could potentially offer a more promising future for healing wounds in the cosmos.

Central to the divergence I demonstrate between Derrida and Buddhism is how the two tackle the *Abgrund* of forgiveness. Derrida rethinks forgiveness in the groundless ground of "forgiving the unforgivable." In Buddhism, the groundless ground (samsara-nirvana) of forgiveness can be traced to the "forgoing of the self." One cannot give up one's claim if one cannot give up (parts

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of) the self in the first place. In contrast to Derrida's "impossible but necessary" forgiveness, Buddhism offers a "possible but unnecessary" forgiveness. For Derrida, forgiveness necessitates forgiving the unforgivable. For Buddhism, nothing is unforgivable. By giving up the self, there is no victim, no aggressor, and no sin to forgive in the first place.[2]

1. Reasons for Bringing Together Derrida and Buddhism

1.1. The Cosmos

The *kosmos-polis* is the context which prompts Derrida to interrogate forgiveness anew in the global age. The cosmos has an indispensable place in Buddhism also. *Karma* is a *cosmic* force which gets manifested in samsara (Herman, 1976, 275-76). While politics is commonly equated with samsara, samsara is intertwined with nirvana. Thus, although *kosmos-polis* is not a term in Buddhism, the religion has telling insights to offer on the cosmic effects of *karma* which might help guide humanity beyond global conflicts. This paper explores anew Buddhism as a path to world peace by embracing the *kosmo-polis* as part of samsara-nirvana.

The urgency of this project is prompted by the fact that, despite the mushrooming of forgiveness discourse in the global political arena, such discourse "has become hollow, void, attenuated" (Derrida 2001b, 54). Derrida interrogates anew "forgiveness" – by which he references primarily Judaic-Christianity which has become globalized – in an attempt to go beyond it.

But other alternatives exist beyond Judaic-Christianity. Shortly after 9/11, the Irish Catholic theologian Joseph O'Leary revisits "the failure of Christianity in Northern Ireland" and proposes that "in order to formulate the message of forgiveness intelligently and persuasively we should root it in Buddhist analysis of cause and conditions" (2006, 1). I take this project another step further. Bringing together Derrida and Buddhism, I highlight how, despite their common practice of deconstructing epistemology and ontology, they diverge significantly on ethics, with different ramifications regarding their efficacies for promoting world peace. My analysis reveals the reason why.

[2] For this reason, compassion rather than forgiveness is the prominent theme in Buddhism. Compassion is prior to, and encompasses, forgiveness. In contrast to dominant trends in contemporary Western political theory, world peace for Buddhism can be more readily realized through compassion than forgiveness. Due to the space limit, I cannot elaborate on compassion, and have to concentrate instead on forgiveness, the theme of this volume.

1.2. Deconstructive Practices: Derrida and Buddhism

Instead of hypostatizing "deconstruction" as the property of Derrida and his followers, I use it to denote an ethical-epistemological praxis. From the standpoint of world history, deconstruction has already been practiced by Buddhism for two thousand and five hundred years[3] – more thoroughly and with a far more cosmic dimension, samsara and nirvana being understood deconstructively in Buddhism. Both Derrida and Buddhism demystify identity and binary opposition. Both resist conceptualization in favor of non-grasping, non-appropriative, and non-reifying approaches. In the end, however, Derrida does not follow through on his anti-essentialism, and becomes ensnared by the web of aporias he spins around "absolute forgiveness." As such, his theory of "impossible but necessary" forgiveness is unlikely to have real efficacy on the global political stage.

Like O'Leary, I turn to Buddhism to address international relations both for its "practical therapeutic effect" and its "keen intellectual grip" (O'Leary 2006, 3). The two are inseparable: Buddhist deconstruction of epistemology-ontology is its method for healing wounds on both individual and global levels and is rich with potentials for releasing politics from the vicious cycle of "attacks and counter-attacks."

2. The Impasse of Christian Forgiveness for Cosmopolitics: Derridean Deconstruction and Buddhism as Alternatives

Derrida observes how the prevalent discourse on forgiveness in our age is couched "in an Abrahamic language which is "not (in the case of Japan or Korea, for example) that of the dominant religion of their society, but which has already become the universal idiom of law, of politics, of the economy, or of diplomacy" (2001a, 28). This is precisely the language that has failed time and again to restore peace.

Forgiveness is central to Christian theology, culminating in Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the cross for the sin of humankind. Joseph O'Leary points out how this is "correlated with mutual forgiveness between human beings: 'Forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you' (Eph. 3.13) [sic.].[4] To be set right with God is to be set right with one another, as the barriers of the past yield to the construction of a loving community" (2006, 5). However, precisely because God is the center of forgiveness in Christianity, there is no escape for Christian forgiveness from a fixed binary approach to the

[3] From the viewpoint of Buddhist cosmology, deconstruction is how the cosmos has been operating since time immemorial.

[4] The correct source of this quote is Ephesians 4:32.

world such as God/the Devil and Victim/Aggressor. Insofar as international politics relies on Christian forgiveness, there is also no escape from these reified identities which fan hatred and conflicts in the first place. Northern Ireland provides a good example.[5]

The Christian God, an unbarred Big Other,[6] stands behind ideas such as "selfhood" and "good versus evil." Sin is fetishized as "Original Sin," and the Bible is permeated with "divine violence."[7] Christianity which preaches forgiveness also teaches the idea of "the unforgivable." At a roundtable discussion devoted to Derrida on forgiveness, an anonymous member of the audience opined that "it is Christianity that brings in the idea of unforgivable sin, the unforgivable sin of nailing god on a cross, which then relates to the other unforgivable sin or the punishment that a heritage metes on the Jews as having resigned any right to forgiveness" (Derrida 2001b, 69). Judaism has its own repertoire of the unforgivable. Michael Lane points out how the Hebrew word *herem* can be rendered as "ban" or "exterminate," designating "something so completely irredeemable that it is contaminated and *must be utterly destroyed* lest it further contaminate that which is good" (my emphasis). 1 Samuel 15: 1-3 provides a good example.[8] Deuteronomy 20 also names six people groups who were to be subjected to *herem*: the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.[9]

[5] As O'Leary points out, "It is certainly no coincidence that two Christian cultures notoriously resistant to change – Ulster Protestantism and le Catholicisme du type irlandais – should have been involved in the Northern Ireland conflict. The dispute between Nationalism and Unionism is on its own a deadly clash of essentialisms, but its religious underpinning fits it like a glove" (13). Clinging to essentialist and rigid ideas of "self versus the other" and "good versus evil" is the source of many conflicts—personal or (inter-)national. The Northern Ireland tragedy is no exception in its essentialism, which is the most fundamental form of ignorance according to Buddhism. O'Leary observes how "'Irish' and 'British', 'Unionist' and 'Nationalist', 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' were positioned over against one another in rigid, dualistic alterity" (12), and "to hate is to grasp at a fixated sense of one's own identity and a delusive image of what one hates" (4).

[6] The unbarred Big Other in Lacan is associated with the superego.

[7] Take, for instance, the divine massacre of all Egyptian firstborn sons during the Passover (Exodus 11-12), and God's command of the nation of Israel to completely annihilate their enemies (1 Samuel 15:2-3, Numbers 21:2-3, Deuteronomy 20:17, and Joshua 6:17, 21). Jesus himself called the Pharisees "vipers "and "blind guides," admonishing that they were in danger of being cast into hell (Matthew 23:33). One wonders whether such "divine wrath against sin" did not perhaps find its way into the Nazis' demonization of Jews as "vermins" and "pests."

[8] The Hebrew word used in the original text of God's command to Saul is *herem*.

[9] Ra'anan Boustan calls the conquest of Canaan "a thoroughly violent commandment" which "in modern terms would be characterized as genocide." The word *herem* is used often in Joshua also. For example, cities such as Jericho and Ai came under *herem*—that is, to be completely destroyed except for "the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron" which were to go into "YHWH's treasury" (Joshua 6:19).

[10] Nirvana refers to the liberation from these mental projections rather than forgiveness per se.

[11] To sum up the above in Lacanian language, while Buddhism resorts to a traversal of fantasy in order to dissolve the impasse in Judaeo-Christian forgiveness, Derrida responds to the secret jouissance in Judaic-Christian morality by absolutizing it.

[12] Note the intimate connections between *property* and *propriety*, the *owning* of materialistic possessions and the owning of a self and a subjectivity, and their common ety-

2.1. Buddhism versus Derrida: Forgiveness as Giving Up the Self versus Forgiveness as Gift

If essentialism (and its correlative binary thinking) is the cause of violence, both Derrida and Buddhism would seem to provide viable alternatives for world peace.

Ontology, epistemology, and ethics form one integral whole in Buddhism. By undermining binary opposites such as self/other, the boundaries between victim and aggressor also become problematized. It is thus not surprising that "forgiveness" as it is commonly understood in the global age plays a marginal role in Buddhism. If the victim, the offence, and the aggressor are illusions, there is nothing and no one to forgive.[10]

In contrast to Buddhism which tackles the problems of Judeo-Christian forgiveness by *minimizing* forgiveness, Derrida addresses those problems by escalating forgiveness into "absolute forgiveness." This "remedy" generates two new problems. First, *absolute forgiveness requires an absolute aggressor.*[11] Secondly, *morality cannot be absolutized without also absolutizing ontology and epistemology.* While Buddhism urges forgoing the self as the key to forgiveness, Derrida rehypostatizes the self through his "unconditional forgiveness." *By making "absolute forgiveness" his central agenda, Derrida is bound to rehypostatize the binary oppositions between self and other:* "genuine forgiveness must engage *two* singularities: the guilty ... and the victim" (2001a, 42; my emphasis). His theory requires that a self be in place for forgiveness to occur – a self to whom an injury has been committed (Cheng 2008, 1184, n. 18).

2.1.1. Buddhism and the Foundation of Forgiveness in Giving up the Self

For Buddhism, all forgiveness – be it giving up one's claim, one's resentment, or one's desire or power to punish – is predicated on "giving up the self." Giving up one's claim means giving up one's ownership. Given the intimate connection between "ownership" and the self,[12] forgiveness (giving up one's

claim) can ultimately be traced to giving up the self. One cannot give up one's claims if one cannot give up (parts of) the self in the first place. "Absolute forgiveness" requires the "absolute giving up of oneself."

While forgiveness in the sense of "giving up one's claim/resentment" is a relatively peripheral subject in Buddhism, forgiveness in the ultimate sense of "giving up the self" is ubiquitous in Buddhism, as evident in the Buddha's saying, "To understand everything is to forgive everything."[13] Buddhism is about understanding the empty texture of reality and of history. For the awakened one, understanding equals forgiveness because enlightenment equals understanding all phenomena as illusions. Understanding everything thus means *giving up* (one' claim to) everything. *Giving up everything* in Buddhism is coeval with *giving up the self*—"self" and "things" being codependent in Buddhism."

Forgiveness in Buddhism is a gesture of letting go. Letting go is the foundation of forgiveness – one cannot truly forgive unless one forgoes one's own claims. This Buddhist insight of "letting go" as the primary foundation of forgiveness is borne out by a number of European languages also—not surprisingly perhaps, given that these languages' shared membership with Sanskrit in the Indo-European language family.[14] The earliest meanings of "forgive" in English, German, French, and Latin pertain more to "*giving up*" (letting go, emptying out; *giving up agency*) rather than "*giving*" (*an act of agency*). They also reference more what "forgiveness" does to the forgiver (giving up something) than the person being forgiven. The word "forgive" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, is defined predominantly as "giv[ing] *up*" one's *own* resentment or claim rather than a gift. The same dictionary points out an earlier usage of "forgiveness" meaning "giv[ing] up one's resolve (*to* do something)." It is precisely in this sense of the forgoing of passion and action – that is, the giving up of one's

mological root in the Latin word *proprius*, which as well reflects their shared historical root in the Roman law of private property.

[13] Note that the very meaning of "Buddha" is "awakened" or "enlightened."

[14] The link between Sanskrit and European languages paves the way for my later refutation of Derrida's premature etymological glossing of "forgiveness" as "gift." See 2.1.2. Like its German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese counterparts, the English word "forgive" is of Latin origin. The late Old English sense of the word as "the giving up of desire or power to punish" is derived from a Germanic loan-translation of the Vulgar Latin word *perdonare* ("give completely"). When *perdonare* was adopted into the Germanic ancestor of English, *per* was replaced by "for."

self – that Buddhism realizes itself as a praxis of forgiveness and of *nirvāna*.[15] To understand everything is to forgive everything.[16]

2.1.1.1. No Self, No Aggressor, No Injury ...

The victim, the aggressor, and the offence are unreal both in "*time*" and in "*space*,"[17] because all entities are impermanent and of dependent origination, according to the doctrines of *anattā*, *anicca*, and *paṭiccasamuppāda*.[18] As per *anattā* (non-self) [19] and *anicca* (impermanence)[20]—two central and related doctrines in Buddhism--there is no permanent self or essence in living beings. As per *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent arising), all things arise co-dependently, the act of offence being no exception.[21]

The doctrines of non-self, impermanence, and dependent origination render both the victim and the aggressor unreal, and the injury a mere mental

[15] Buddhism is a praxis rather than a "religion" or a "philosophy" in the Western sense. See n. 47 on the term *sāsana*.

[16] *Nirvāna* is forgiveness in its ultimate sense. For Buddhism, all forgiveness and all liberations associated with *nirvāna* can ultimately be traced back to liberation from the self.

[17] Time and space need to be understood differently in Buddhism.

[18] The Sanskrit expression is *pratītyasamutpāda*. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* can be found in the twelve links of dependent origination doctrine in Buddhism which describes the chain of cause resulting in rebirth and *dukkha*: "The main concrete application of the abstract principle is in the form of a series of conditioned links (*nidanas*), culminating in the arising of *dukkha*" (Harvey 54; quoted in "*Pratītyasamutpāda*").

[19] *Anattā* is a Pali expression, the Sanskrit equivalent of which is *anātman*, meaning non-self, non-soul, no essence, and substanceless.
Anattā can be found in the later texts of all Buddhist traditions. The texts attributed to Vasubandhu--a 5th-century Buddhist philosopher of the Yogachara school--discuss *anattā* as a fundamental premise of the Buddha (Emmanuel 2015, 419–28). Nāgārjuna, the second century founder of Madhyamaka which is recognized by some scholars as the central philosophy of Buddhism, is known for his extensive rejections of the metaphysical entity *attā* or *ātman* (self, soul). Chapter 18 of his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, for example, underscores that there is no such substantial entity and that "Buddha taught the doctrine of no-self" (1996, 56–57; 2011, 182-91).

[20] *Anitya* is the Sanskrit term for *anicca*.

[21] Writing in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, David R. Loy observes, "Singling out an enemy, we short-circuit the introspection necessary to see our own karmic responsibility for the terrible acts that have befallen us" (2001).

projection.[22] Understanding *anattā*, *anicca*, and *paṭiccasamuppāda* releases one from victimhood.[23]

2.1.2. Derrida: Forgiveness and Gift

Derrida's writing on "forgiveness" is a further development of his discourse on "gift." Although Derrida points out some differences between forgiveness and gift, he focuses on advancing a common logic of unconditionality for both (2015, 145).[24] Derrida links the "gift" to "forgiveness" via the "verbal link of *don* and *pardon*" in French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian (2015, 146). Derrida's association of forgiveness with gift, however, is premature both philosophically and etymologically.

Let me begin with a philosophical refutation. Firstly, *vergeben* is an act of *emptying out* – of giving *up* one's claim and resentment – or, in Buddhist terms, the giving up of one's illusory fixation on a past deed. Quite the opposite is true of *gift* – which is an *addition* rather than an emptying out. This is how the Buddhist understanding comes closer to the true meaning of forgiveness – giving up one's *own* claim means giving up the self and its claim. All forgiving requires *emptying out* rather than *adding* something as in the case of the gift. Secondly, the protagonist of giving up one's claim or resentment – that is, the protagonist of forgiveness – is the forgiver. It references

[22] As Nāgārjuna puts it, the injuries and the passions have no substance given that the self has no substance:
The defilements are somebody's.
But that one has not been established.
Without that possessor,
The defilements are nobody's. (*Mulamadhyamakakarika* 23.4)
Jay Garfield elaborates on Nāgārjuna's observations as follows: "the defilements, in virtue of depending on these attributions and upon our relation to pleasant and unpleasant things, all of which are themselves empty, are empty of inherent existence. Indeed, they are not only dependently arisen, but depend upon things or features of those things already shown to be empty" (Garfield, 285).

[23] As Satha-Anand puts it, "precisely as the Enlightened One or *Tatakhata* (Thusness), he is beyond victimhood" (246). The state of *nirvāna* is reached "when a saint (*arhat*), by uprooting craving eliminates the fuel on which the flames feed, thereby achieving a state in which [one] will be reborn no more" (Smart, "Nirvāna," 517).
In *nirvāna*, one is "completely free from all forms of bondage and attachment, having overcome and removed the cause of suffering. It is also the state of perfect insight into the nature of existence" (Puligandla, *Indian Philosophy*, 58).

[24] Derrida emphasizes how "forgiving the unforgivable" displays the same structure as the "unconditional gift"—that is, "the gift without return," or "the gift beyond the exchange economy."

what happens to the forgiver when s/he forgives – an effect which becomes especially clear in Buddhism: namely, by giving up the illusions of self, other, and defilement, one becomes released from suffering. In contrast, the primary impact of a gift centers equally, if not more, on the beneficiary.

At any rate, the connections between *don* and *pardon* in several European languages cannot add up to a philosophical argument, given that the link is of Latin origin rather than universal.[25] The connections are likely the effect of the Latin Church. "Forgive" and "gift" are unrelated even in Greek and Russian, not to mention in East Asian and other non-Western languages.

Even if our discussion is to be confined to the European languages mentioned by Derrida, his etymological argument is still subject to challenge. Derrida focuses on the suffix "give" in "forgive" and *geben* in *vergeben*, and fails to elaborate how *ver-* in German, as much as "for-" in English, can negate, invert, or pervert the act it modifies. This inversion, more pronounced in Germanic languages, is present in Latin languages also. German examples include *sprechen/sich versprechen* (speak/misspeak), *achten/ verachten* (respect/despise), *bitten/ verbitten* (beg/refuse), *kennen/ verkennnen* (know/misjudge), *lernen/verlernen* (learn/unlearn), and *zeihen/ verzeihen* (accuse/forgive). "For-" is an Old English and Middle English prefix meaning "away, apart, off," as in "forbid," "forget," and "forgo." To forget is to fail to get hold of; to forgive is to give up and to let go of one's claims. The same use of *ver-* as negation or perversion can be found in Dutch, as in *draaien/ verdraaien* (turn/turn in the wrong direction).

There is no lack of examples in Romance languages either. In the French word *perjure* – a key term in Derrida's discussion of forgiveness – *jure* is negated by *par-*. Thus, *parjure* is the breach of an oath, a contract, or a promise. In Italian, *perfido* ("disloyal," "un-trustworthy") is a negation of *fido* ("faithful", "trustworthy"). Especially pertinent for our discussion is *perdere*. The Italian *per-* twists "give" (*dare*) into "lose" (*perdere*), similar to how the German *ver-* twists "give" (*geben*) into "forgive" or "give up a claim" (*vergeben*).

With this twist performed by the prefix to "forgive" in Romance and Germanic languages, it is not surprising that the earliest meanings of "forgive" in English, German, French, and Latin pertain more to "giving *up*" (abandoning, letting go, emptying out; *giving up agency*) than to "gift-giving" (*an act of agency*). The original meanings of "forgive" are thus closer to Buddhism's "giving up the self."

[25] Derrida himself acknowledges the Latin origin of this verbal link: "In the Latin origin of this word [...], one finds a reference to the '*don*,' [the 'gift'], to '*donation*,' [to 'gift-giving'] " (2001b, 144).

Derrida himself notes in passing how *ver-* can invert what it modifies, but fails to elaborate on how this disrupts his association of "forgiveness" with "gift":

> |O|ne will oppose *to give* and *to get* | . . .| in *to forgive* versus *to forget*, forgiving is not forgetting (another enormous problem); | . . .| the use of the lexical family (*vergeben, Vergebung, Vergabe*) is both flexible and perverse: *Vergeben* can mean the misdeal [*maldonne*], the corruption of the gift, *sich etwas vergeben*: to compromise oneself; and *Vergabe* is an invitation to tender [*marché attribué*], an auctioning . . . (2015, 146)

Pace Derrida's philosophical etymological reading, the inversion *ver-* bears out the Buddhist doctrine of "giving up the self" as the real meaning of all forgiveness. One can neither give nor forgive without first of all giving up one's self (-interest) and one's claims. At one point, an inkling of this insight flashes across Derrida's writing:

> |W|e must ask ourselves, | . . .| as if forgiveness, far from being a modification or a secondary complication or a complication that arises out of the gift, were in truth its first and final truth. Forgiveness as the impossible truth of the impossible gift. Before the gift, forgiveness. (2015, 177; my emphasis)

"Before the gift, forgiveness." For-giveness – giving up (the self) – is what makes possible the giving of a gift. One cannot give without first of all giving *up* (the self): *no agency possible without first renouncing agency.* Derrida comes close to this insight but misses the real meaning of his own formulation at the last step.

By underscoring the *Gabe* in *vergeben* without simultaneously foregrounding the inversion effected by *ver-*, of the "gift" in "forgive" without stressing the negation performed by "for-", Derrida's "forgiveness" risks reinforcing the modern West's propensity to *hypostatize action (karma)*[26] *and its subject.*[27] In contrast, the groundless ground of forgiveness in Buddhism is the *forgoing of action and its agent.* Derrida's reading predicates forgiveness on one*self* giving, Buddhism on giving *up* one*self*. The former still claims ownership to the act of giving; the latter gives up ownership altogether.

[26] "*Karma*" literally means "*action*" as it is driven by intention (*cetanā*) and generates its own consequences.

[27] The moment Derrida stresses the "giving" in the "forgiving," the subject who is the agent of the act is inevitably hypostatized also – and this despite Derrida's repeated attempts throughout his works to deconstruct subject-centered reason (Cheng 2008, 1184, n. 17).

2.2. Buddhism vs. Derrida: Removing the Root Cause of the Disease versus Increasing the Dosage of the *Pharmakon*

Derrida attempts to address the inadequacies of Christian forgiveness by upping the dosage of the *pharmakon*—that is, by escalating forgiveness into absolute forgiveness. By contrast, Buddhism eradicates the root cause of the "claims" and "resentment" which calls "forgiveness" into being. Derrida escalates forgiveness into absolute forgiveness, and morality into ultra-morality. Buddhism offers a *minima moralia* and minimal forgiveness. Derrida's absolute forgiveness drags in an absolute victim, an absolute aggressor, and an absolute crime. Buddhism removes all three as mere illusions.

2.2.1. Anattā (Non-Self): Removing the Disease at its Root Cause

Buddhism's method for delivering sentient beings from suffering is by helping them to "understand the *causes and conditions giving rise to suffering*" (Reeves 2010, 153; my emphasis). The Buddhist emphasis falls thus *not on forgiving but on the foolishness of taking offence in the first place*:

> "He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me" – in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.
> "He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me" – in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease. (Dhammapada 1.3-4; trans. Radhakrishnan; quoted in Cook 106)

As B. Bruce Cook points out, Buddhism centers on release from delusion and suffering through meditation and receiving insight into the nature of reality. Buddhism questions the reality of the passions that make forgiveness necessary and the reality of the objects of those passions (2010, 106). Where the passion has arisen, Buddhism calmly proceeds to uproot its cause. O'Leary describes this as follows: "One universal process of karmic causality presides over all evils and the cure for them. Even the ultimate goal of undoing the chains of karma and entering the freedom of nirvana is attained through this analytical procedure.[28] There is no supernatural dissolution of bondage to evil by an act of grace (at least in early Buddhism)" (7). Buddhism's cure for pain centers on understanding rather than moralization.[29]

[28] I wish to suggest that O'Leary might consider clarifying his use of the term "analytical."

[29] As Ajahn Pasanno points out to a death row inmate by the name of Jaturun "Jay" Siripongs: "If we haven't forgiven, we keep creating an identity around our pain, and that is what is reborn. That is what suffers" (n.d.). Victimhood and desire for vengeance

2.2.2. Derrida—Reintroducing the Self and Reinforcing the Pharmakon

In contrast to Buddhism which removes the victim, the sinner, and the offence, Derrida's absolute forgiveness absolutizes all three. Derridean forgiveness is thus a *pharmakon* which is both a remedy and a poison (see Derrida 1981).

The Biblical forgiveness produces the very problem which it proposes to cure. Derrida's deconstructionism notwithstanding, his hyper-moralization of forgiveness ends up escalating the Christian binary opposition of "the forgiving Christian versus the evil aggressor" to a new height, thus reinforcing the poison it claims to counteract.

Derrida's habitual anti-essentialism notwithstanding, his attempt to go beyond the inadequacies of Judeo-Christian forgiveness by escalating forgiveness to "absolute forgiveness," "unconditional forgiveness," and "ultra-moral" "ultra-Kantian" forgiveness (2001b, 66) forces him to hyper-hypostatize *the binary opposites such as self/other and victim/aggressor. Absolute forgiveness requires first of all radical evil and an absolute aggressor.* Maurice Blanchot observes how forgiveness, insofar as it involves an accusation, re-affirms rather than erases guilt. Taking the passions entwined with Christian forgiveness a step further by singling out absolute forgiveness, Derrida literally calls into being the absolute sinner and the absolute crime:

> In order for there to be forgiveness, must one not on the contrary forgive both the fault and the guilty as such, where the one and the other remain as irreversible as the evil, as evil itself, and being capable of repeating itself, unforgivably, without transformation, without amelioration, without repentance or promise? (2001a, 39)

Derrida's hyper-moral forgiveness also pushes the Christian reifications of sin and sinner a step further toward hyper fixity. In "On Forgiveness," Derrida declares that unconditional forgiveness must forgive the "guilty *as* guilty" (my emphasis) – *without allowing room for transformation, amelioration, repentance, or promise.* Christianity already produces the "unforgivable sin" to demonstrate God's amazing grace. But even Christianity allows for repentance and the reform of the prodigal son. By contrast, the Derridean radical forgiveness could permit only radical evil. In the Derridean discourse, an

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are fixations—a mind karma which psychoanalysis understands as repetition compulsion and death drive.

O'Leary rightly points out that "The biblical healing comes too late, when we are already fixated on imagining the other as enemy. Biblical salvation is atonement for evils that have occurred: Buddhist salvation [...] prevent[s] the evils from arising in the first case" (6).

"irreparable or irreversible wrong" must exist, likewise an absolute sinner and an absolute victim. Essentialism in this way returns in a potentially hyper-dangerous form in Derrida's hyper-moral forgiveness as it reifies the other into the essence of evil. *The more hyper-moral the forgiveness, the more hyper evil the criminal,* and the more sinful the sinner ... Contrast this to Buddhism, for which there is no sin, no victim, and nothing to be forgiven.

2.2.2.1. Hypostatizing the Self

In contrast to Buddhism's forgoing of the self and forgoing all claims, Derrida's "absolute forgiveness" brings back an absolute binary opposition between "self" and "the other":

> [F]orgiveness can only be asked or granted "one to one," face-to-face, so to speak, between the one who has committed the *irreparable or irreversible wrong* and he or she who has suffered it and who is alone in being able to hear the request for forgiveness, to grant or refuse it. (2015, 148; my emphasis)

"Pure forgiveness" depends on a radical disjunction between self and other that cannot even tolerate a third party. Pursuing the logic of this structure of forgiveness, it would seem clear that *the other is actually secondary to the self:* forgiveness is no forgiveness without there being *first* an injured self. If there is no such self, the other won't even be relevant. Derrida's hyper-moralization thus ends up rehypostatizing metaphysical constructs and binary opposites that give rise to violence in the first place.

2.2.3. Derrida's "Impossible but Necessary" Forgiveness versus Buddhism's Forgiveness which is "Always Already Possible but Unnecessary": Derrida's Imprisonment by Aporias versus Buddhism Using Paradox to Get beyond the Trap of Language and Logic

Derrida pushes forgiveness into the extreme paradox of "impossible but necessary." Buddhism offers a forgiveness which is "always already possible but unnecessary." *While Derrida gets trapped in an abyss of the "impossible but necessary," Buddhism uses paradox to get beyond the traps of language, thoughts, and ontotheology, and could potentially offer a more promising future for healing wounds in the global community.*

For Buddhism, there is *no unforgivable,* and there is *nothing that cannot be let go.* By contrast, there is *no aporia which Derrida would let go.* Further-

more, in Derrida's world of forgiveness, there is *only the unforgivable*, since there is forgiveness only where there is the unforgivable:

> [F]orgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. One cannot, or should not, forgive: there is only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable. That is to say that forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible (2001a, 32).

Note that the "impossible" in Derrida is an impossibility constructed on the basis of logic. Derrida uses the term aporia[30] which signifies "an insoluble contradiction in a text's meaning and a "logical impasse suggested by a text or speaker" (*Webster*).[31]

Buddhist literature is also populated with paradoxes – with self-contradictory statements which can only be true if they are false, and vice versa. However, Buddhism uses paradox to move beyond paradox which is a form of entrapment by conceptualization and the ego. Zen Buddhism, for example, is known for the use of *kōan*, which is "a succinct paradoxical statement or question used as a meditation discipline for novices [. . .]. The effort to 'solve' a *kōan* is intended to exhaust the analytic intellect and the egoistic will, readying the mind to entertain an appropriate response on the intuitive level" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

By contrast, Derrida seems to be (trapped in) spinning aporias for the sake of spinning aporias, engaging in conceptual sparring for the sake of conceptual sparring. I put "trapped" in parenthesis because he who plays with language could end up being played by language. After all, language speaks; language deconstructs itself.[32] Derrida's meticulous teasing out of aporias in the concept "forgiveness" is no doubt an analytic *tour de force*, but whether it

[30] He even wrote a book entitled *Aporias*.

[31] The Latin term *aporia* is the translation of ancient Greek ἀπορία (aporia), from ἄπορος (aporos, "impassable") which features a combination of ἀ- (a-, "a-") with πόρος (poros, "passage") (*Webster*). "Aporia" in Greek means "no crossing," "no ford," or "no way through or over" (McGauhey, n.1). Aporia is a philosophical puzzle constituted by yoking together equally plausible yet inconsistent premises. Compared to paradox, aporia includes an additional reference to the state of perplexity induced by the philosophical puzzle. Derrida deploys the term to "indicate a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself" (39).

[32] "*Language speaks*" (*Die Sprache spricht*) is a famous coinage by Martin Heidegger, first formulated in his 1950 lecture "Language" (*Die Sprache*). It is often used by deconstructionists to convey how *language speaks* of—that is, performs—its own deconstitution or self-redegeneration.

could be considered a deconstruction of "the egoistic will" as in the case of *kōan* I am not so sure. One cannot help question, for example, whether the following is truly an ethical-political practice about (global) forgiveness instead of an exercise in linguistic and intellectual virtuosity:

> I must ask forgiveness—*pour être juste* [for being just/to be just]. Listen carefully to the equivocation of this "*pour*." I must ask forgiveness in order to be just, *to be* just, with a view to being just; but I must also ask forgiveness for being just, for the fact of being just, because I am just, because in order to be just, I am unjust and I betray. I must ask forgiveness for (the fact of) being just. Because it is unjust to be just. I always betray someone to be just; I always betray one for the other, I perjure myself like I breathe. And this is endless, for not only am I always asking forgiveness for a perjury but I always risk perjuring myself by forgiving, of betraying someone else by forgiving, for one is always doomed to forgive (thus abusively) in the name of another. (2015, 179; my emphasis)

In contradistinction to Derrida who seems to be exposing logical impossibility for the sake of the impossibility, Buddhism uses paradox to demystify logic and liberate practitioners from conceptualization which falsifies and is a crucial source of the ignorance that keeps us stuck in *saṃsāra*.[33] Zen Buddhism uses *kōans* – that is, succinct paradoxical statements or questions – to awaken novices to the limitations of logic and language. The paradoxical constructions create an impasse for the human intellect, halt the thought process, and ready the mind for non-verbal and non-conceptual experience of reality (Capra 48-9).

Similar paradoxical structures have been deployed by Derrida and Buddhism in their deconstructions of logic and language. However, the two's responses to paradoxes cannot be more different. Derrida "indulges in" (and is thus held captive by), and even intensifies and multiplies, those paradoxes, in contrast to Buddhism which uses the intellectual impasses to liberate humanity from those impasses. Take, for instance, the conundrum of how forgiveness is possible since the one forgiven is no longer the one who committed the crime. Such paradox would initiate a moment of awakening for the Buddhist when s/he becomes liberated from fixations on "the victim," the sinner," and "forgiveness." By contrast, Derrida's response is to dial up the aporetic pressure to the point of "madness":

> Imagine, then, that I forgive on the condition that the guilty one repents, mends his ways, asks forgiveness, and thus would be changed

[33] This view about conceptualization is held by *Madhyamaka*, and by *Mahāyāna* in general.

> 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. In this case, can one still speak of forgiveness? This would be too simple on both sides: *one forgives someone other than the guilty one.* In order for there to be forgiveness, must one not on the contrary forgive both the fault and the guilty as such, where the one and the other remain as irreversible as the evil, as evil itself, and being capable of repeating itself, unforgivably, without transformation, without amelioration, without repentance or promise? Must one not maintain that an act of forgiveness worthy of its name, if there ever is such a thing, must *forgive the unforgivable*, and without condition? And that such unconditionality is also inscribed, like its contrary, namely the condition of repentance, in "our" heritage? Even if this radical purity can seem excessive, hyperbolic, mad? [...] *forgiveness is mad, and that it must remain a madness of the impossible* [...] (2001a, 38-9; my emphasis)

Paradoxical structures similar to the above are not difficult to find in Buddhism. For Madhyamaka,[31] the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth. "X is x only if it is not x" is a common paradoxical structure in Buddhist literature. Mahāyāna sutras abound in statements with the structure "x is not x, therefore it is x." However, while *Buddhism would use this paradoxical device to awaken practitioners to the empty texture of language, reality, and history*, and *enable them to move beyond the paradox, Derrida seizes upon the aporia and keeps intensifying the aporetic pressure* ad infinitum *and* ad absurdum. To return to the above quote, *Derrida capitalizes upon the aporia to further fetishize the aggressor as absolute aggressor.* "In order for there to be forgiveness, must one not on the contrary forgive both the fault and the guilty *as such*, where the one and the other remain as *irreversible* as the evil, as evil itself, and being capable of repeating itself, unforgivably, without transformation, without amelioration, without repentance or promise?" (2001a, 39).

Derrida's obsessions with the logical deconstruction of logic ends up with his entrapment by both:

> We constantly struggle in the snares of an aporia whose abstract and dry form, whose *logical formality* is as implacable as it is indisputable: There is only forgiveness, if there is such a thing, of the un-forgivable. Thus forgiveness, if it is possible, if there is such a thing, is not possible, it does not exist as possible, it only exists by exempting itself from the law of the possible, by im-possibilizing itself, so to speak, and in the infinite endurance of the im-possible as impossible [...] (2015, 177; my emphasis)

[31] Madhyamaka is a later school of Buddhist philosophy associated with its founder Nagarjuna and his commentators. It had a major influence on the subsequent development of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition.

The opening sentence is telling: Derrida admits to being caught in the "snares" of the "logical formality" he himself constructs. However, to call this logical formality "implacable" and "indisputable" is an act of fetishization. For Buddhism, paradox enacts how language and concept deconstruct themselves. "Folly is its own undoing" refers no less to the disintegration of the power of language and logic, than to the dissolution of the projected reality of the victim, the aggressor, and the offence.

Unlike Buddhism, Derrida simply would not "*for-give*"/forgo *language and logic* which are the cause of the problem, in the same way as he refuses to "*for-give*"/forgo "*forgiveness*" which produces its own victim, aggressor, and acts of offence. Quite the contrary: he hypostatizes all three.

In the last interview he ever gave, Derrida defended his use of aporias as "an ethics of writing and thinking that is [...] incorruptible (Helene Cixous calls us the "incorruptibles"), without compromise even with regard to philosophy, which does not retreat despite the prospect that public opinion, the media, or the fantasies of an intimidating readership might effectively demand that we simplify, or shrink back" ("I am at War with Myself").[35] Back in the second half of the 1960s when he, Foucault, and Deleuze earned the name "the incorruptibles" from Cixous, Derrida's aporias could well have been motivated by non-conformism. However, what might have started out as an ethics of refusal of intellectual and linguistic conventions seems to have evolved over time into a repetition compulsion. There is a potential danger to Derrida's "ethics" of imprisoning ethics inside logical formality. I cannot help but be reminded of Hegel's criticism of Kant: that it is perfectly possible to be entirely logical and still unethical. I am equally unconvinced that disrupting logic and playing with aporias necessarily equal being ethical. *Ethics cannot be reduced to logic (or anti-logic).*[36] Nor can *the ethics and politics of world conflicts and forgiveness be reduced to a mere matter of refusing concession to philosophy and public opinion.*

[35] This was the interview he gave to *Le Monde* on August 19, 2004.

[36] One cannot help question whether the "impossibility" Derrida dwells on over and over is indeed "necessary," especially in cases of ethics and politics where the stake is not about (concession to) philosophy, but about weighty human issues involving life and death—human issues which *certainly resist being contained by* language, logic, and the text, *pace* his 1960 claim that "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" (*Of Grammatology*).

Buddhism uses the contradictions in logic as a raft[37] *to ferry humanity across to the ethical. Derrida, by contrast, declares an equation between aporias and the ethical, and fetishizes the former.* (De-)Constructing his ethics on the basis of (anti-)logic, Derrida's *indulgence in aporias* goes hand in hand with his escalation of morality into hyper-moralization, and "forgiveness" into "absolute forgiveness." *The more (logically) impossible, the more (ethically) necessary.* In this vicious cycle, he ends up destroying his deconstructive practice by hyper-hypostatizing the "self versus the other" into the "absolute victim versus the absolute aggressor," and "good versus evil" into "radical good versus radical evil" in his campaign of "absolute forgiveness." In short, Derrida tries to address the inadequacies of Abrahamic forgiveness with ultra-logic (which destroys logic) and ultra-morality (which destroys morality). Buddhism can address the same issue, but would do so by giving up logic and moralization altogether as "empty talks." Only through the realization of this emptiness can one give up the wounded self, the evil offender, and the injury. Only then can only truly forgive.

3. Ethics and Cosmopolitics: Derrida and Buddhism

3.1. Ethics

The divergence between Buddhism and Derrida regarding what they deem to be the "ethically and logically prior" in the structure of forgiveness accounts for the significant difference in mood between the Buddhist "letting go" and Derrida's "impossible but necessary." The former calls to mind a Buddhist tranquility, the latter "a madness of the impossible" (2001a, 39 and 45). Doesn't the "madness" sound dangerously close to the sadistic superego to which both Freud and Lacan alert our attention? Psychoanalysis, with its remote Buddhist heritage, reminds us of a dangerous proximity between Kant's categorical imperative and Sade's *jouissance* (Lacan 1963). It is not surprising that even Derrida himself has reservations about his "pure forgiveness":

> Imagine a victim of terrorism, a person whose children have been deported or had their throats cut, or another whose family was killed in a death oven. Whether she says "I forgive" or "I do not forgive," in either case I am not sure of understanding. I am even sure of not understanding, and in any case I have nothing to say. (2001a, 55)

[37] The parable of the raft is one of the Buddha's most famous teachings. The dharma is like a raft-- useful for crossing the river but should be *let go of* once the other shore has been reached:
I have taught the Dhamma [dharma] compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the Dhamma as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of Dhammas, to say nothing of non-Dhammas.

From a Buddhist perspective, the "impossible" in Derridean ethics is another *self*-generated illusory blockage.

To hold on to a victimized self inevitably drags in an other who must be guilty. Since the rise of Judaic-Christianity, the *identity of being a victim and the idealideology of victimage have fostered much self-righteousness and rancor—passions which have continued to drive ghastly acts of aggression.* Drawing from Nietzsche, one can trace this victim-aggression complex to *the biblical elevation of the persecuted Christian.* Significantly, Derrida keeps referring to the *Judaic-Christian* tradition in his works on forgiveness.[38]

By contrast, *Buddhism has no room for identity and ideology, or "victim" and "victimage."*[39] *By giving up the self--that is, by giving up ownership--one gives up one's ownership of victimage also.* Buddhist forgiveness makes no room for the drive due to the fact that giving up one's claim is a *natural* consequence of giving up one's self. (Since there is no self in Buddhism, there is no need for repression, and hence no leftovers of obscene *jouissance.*) In fact, "consequence" is not the right word. Giving up one*self is* giving up one's *own* claim. *For Buddhism, there is no "unforgivable" because to for-give already breaks the spell of the "unforgivable."* There is nothing and no one to forgive, and hence the Buddhist forgiveness is marked by a total absence of the "impossible" superegotistic strain. This is how Buddhist ethics does not get caught in the "impossible but necessary" formula which Derrida seems compelled to repeat over and over. The forgiveness that Buddhism achieves is based not on *repression* of self-interest (under an impossible demand), but *dissolution* of the self and its correlated libidinal energy. It seems that between the two, Buddhism has produced a more *natural* and plausible ethics.

[38] This is *not* to say that Derrida's ethics of forgiveness promotes a witch-hunt for the "guilty other." Nonetheless, since "genuine forgiveness" for Derrida must engage *two* singularities: the guilty ... and the victim" (2001a, 42; my emphasis), it can easily lend itself to abuses and distortions--especially among those already prone to victim complexes. More importantly, to produce a subject and then keep applying to it demands of "the impossible" paves the road for the drive--the deadly force of the sadistic superego which Freud and Lacan so insightfully analyze, respectively in *Civilization and its Discontents* and "Kant *avec* Sade."

[39] In the days of poststructuralism and postmodernism, the ideas of "hero" and "heroism" have been repeatedly critiqued and debunked. The ideologies of "victim" and "victimage," on the other hand, have not been the subject of equally rigorous interrogations.

3.2. Cosmic Peace – Forgiveness according to Derrida and Buddhism

Given Buddhism's treatment of conflicts at its root cause, world peace is simply a matter of collective recovery from delusions. In keeping with Buddhist simplicity, O'Leary describes this peace project as follows: "If nirvana has no real existence but is merely the cessation of clinging to illusions of real existence, so peace is a cessation of clinging to all the delusive passions that cause violence" (2006, 33).

One important difference between Buddhism and Christianity can be found in the former's "error and defilement" versus the latter's "sin and guilt." As Radhakrishnan points out, the Buddhist ideas of "error and defilement do not readily translate into the biblical categories of sin and guilt" (quoted from O'Leary 2006, 6). Unlike sin and guilt, debt can be made good with payment.[40] Likewise, error and defilement can be amended, in contrast to sin and guilt which are as abysmal as Hell[41] and which get branded into a person as his/her essence and identity. The Buddhist approach to human conflicts are thus infinitely *simpler*, versus the Christian approach which is infinitely entangled – an abyss of entanglement which surfaces also in the form of aporias in Derrida's thought as he tries to work and subvert from within that tradition in both its religious and secularized forms. Compassion, rather than forgiveness (with its aporetic insistence on – and hence reproductions of – the self as the persecuted and the other as the devil), is the ultimate Buddhist way to release all beings from conflict and suffering. Buddhism might hold out a better promise for cosmic peace, not the least because *Buddhism does not ontologize sin*. As the Buddhist historian Donald Lopez points out, "If there is no idea of sin, there is nothing to be forgiven." Sin is not merely wrong acts, but "a deadly blockage between human and human and between humankind and ultimate reality (O'Leary 43), as well as between humankind and the cosmos.

3.2.1. Derrida and Cosmopolitics

Derrida links his forgiveness to international politics. Derrida maintains that pure forgiveness must "exceed all institutions, all power, all juridico-political authority" (2001a, 53-4). At the same time, he insists that unconditional forgiveness must engage the empirical and the pragmatic: "the two poles are irreducible to one another [...] but they are indissociable" (2001a, 51):

> In order to inflect politics, or what you just called the "pragmatic processes", in order to change the law (which, thus, finds itself between the two poles, the "ideal" and the "empirical" – and what is more important to me here is, between these two, this universalising mediation, this history of the law, the possibility of this progress of the law), it is necessary to refer to a "hyperbolic" ethical vision of forgiveness". Even if I were not sure of the words "vision" or "ethics" in this case, let us say that only this inflexible exigence can orient a history of laws, and evolution of the law. It alone can inspire here, now, in the urgency, without waiting, response and responsibilities. (2001a, 51)

[40] See Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*.

[41] The term "abysmal" is used because, in contrast to debt, sin and guilt cannot be gotten rid of by "payment."

3.2.1.1. Problem I: A Cosmopolitics Based on an Abyss of the "Impossible but Necessary"

Regarding the impasse between the "pure" and the pragmatic, between an amnesty where apologies are asked for and absolute forgiveness, all that Derrida has to offer is an abyss of aporias and his compulsive repetitions about how the connection between the two is "impossible but necessary" (2001a, 51).

Derrida's aporetic "impossible but necessary" forgiveness renders it either *impossible* to be transformed into political action, or too dangerous to be transformed into political action should one act out of *necessity* – condemned as humanity is as per Derrida to a state of "absolute unknowing" and "radical undecidability." That the human condition is one of radical unknowing does not mean that we can refrain from acting. In our unknowing we must still act, and that can be very dangerous.

3.2.1.2. Problem II: Cosmic Peace? --"The Unforgivable" and the Prioritization of the "Human"[42]

Derrida's unconditional forgiveness risks reifying "the unforgivable." This would not seem helpful for international relations.

[42] Due to limitation of space, this essay concentrates on world conflicts and forgiveness in the human realm. My next essay will extend this subject matter beyond Derrida's cosmopolis to the entire cosmos of Buddhism. This extension is all the more necessary in that wounds in the global age are inflicted not just at inter- and intra-national levels, but also in humanity's treatments of the environment. Global warming, for example, is no less a global issue than forgiveness in our day and age.
In contradistinction to Derrida who focuses his discussions of forgiveness on (crimes against) humanity, Buddhism could potentially offer a more promising future for healing wounds in the global age, in that global issues are not just confined to the global human community, but concern the entire *cosmos*—that is, the World as it is shared by all sentient beings.

Derridean forgiveness's engagement with global law and politics centers on crimes against humanity – the primary subject animating his discourse on "absolute forgiveness." All three of Derrida's key subjects – "the unforgivable," "forgiving the unforgivable," and "crime against humanity" – have their roots in Christianity which, as elaborated before, produces the problems it attempts to resolve with its reified binary categories such as the good Christian versus the evil aggressor.

Suffice it to add here that the Christian origin of the concept "crime against humanity" might – in addition to compromising Derrida's attention to animals in his other writings – render his cosmopolitics less ethical and "egalitarian" than Buddhism which urges compassion for all sentient beings in their common capacity for suffering. Humanity has a special privilege in Derrida's discussion of cosmopolitan forgiveness:

> What is unforgivable today before the law, in France and elsewhere, is a crime against humanity, that is what is inexpiable and unforgivable. That means that what becomes unforgivable is a crime directed against what is *most sacred in humanity, in the humanness of the human, the most sacred.* The concept of a crime against humanity implies something sacred. It is an absolute principle; no one would oppose that. Today the *cornerstone of international law is the sacred, what is sacred in humanity.* You should not kill. You should not be responsible for a crime against this sacredness, the sacredness of man as your neighbor, your brother, the Christian man, made by God or by God made man. That is, God-made man. *Man is divine, sacred,* and the crime of what is inexpiable is crucifixion, a crime against the most sacred dimension of humanity. In that sense, the concept of crime against humanity is a Christian concept and I think there would be no such thing in the law today without the Christian heritage, the Abrahamic heritage, the biblical heritage. That is why I do not think there is anything secular in international law today. The idea of crime against humanity is a religious law. (2001b, 70; my emphasis)

As Derrida himself points out, crime against humanity is upheld in international law[43] as the hallmark of the imprescriptible because "Man is divine, sacred," made by God and in the image of God—an idea foreign to Buddhism which

[43] *International law* is Christian-European in its historical, theoretical and political origins. A number of scholars such as Martti Koskenniemi, Antony Anghie, Brett Bowden, David Kennedy, and Makau Mutua have pointed out the colonial origin of international law.

preaches compassion for all beings who bear the pain of existence. Prioritizing humanity above other creatures could create its own form of danger.[44]

3.2.2. Buddhism and World Politics: Nirvana is Samsara and Samsara is Nirvana

While Derrida is caught in an endless abyss of undecidability "between these two poles [of pure forgiveness and the political-juridical order], "irreconcilable but indissociable" (2001a, 45), Buddhism extricates humanity from conventions and dualisms – not to some comforting monistic transcendental ground, but to "the groundlessness of all experience" (Huntington, 26).

For Derrida, the theological – that is, pure forgiveness, which is both a remedy and a poison – must inform the political despite their incompatibility. For Buddhism, there is no divine and no theological-political.

For Derrida, the theological and the political are indissociable albeit irreconcilable. For Buddhism, ultimacy and conventions are also intertwined, but without the Derridean "impossible" antagonism. Nirvana is samsara and samsara is nirvana. Nâgârjuna underscores the impossibility of speaking coherently of reality independent of conventions. Karl H. Potter explains that perfect insight does not simply dismiss our dealings with conventional speech and concepts: "Perfect insight is not different from the real nature of those characteristics of the attached mode which, conventionally, the perfection of insight is supposed to eliminate" (Potter, 85).[45] Garfield points out how "Nirvana is simply samsara seen without reification, without attachment, without delusion" (331): "Just as the ultimate truth is related to the conventional as an understanding of the way things really are as opposed to the way they appear to be, nirvana is related to samsara as a state of awareness of things as they are as opposed to a state of awareness of things as they appear to be" (Garfield, 322).

It is worth underscoring that Buddhism does not reify emptiness. "Emptiness itself is empty," Nâgârjuna reminds us. As Garfield puts it, "[emptiness] is not a self-existing void standing behind a veil of illusion comprising conven-

[44] If human beings could be set above other beings for its sacredness, it would be difficult to condemn the Nazis for setting "humanity" above the "subhuman"—including the Jews, the Romas, the blacks, the mentally disabled, homosexuals, ... The list could go on.

[45] O'Leary elaborates on this as follows:
[...] *what is really being aimed at in my delusive conventional language about God is retrieved at the ultimate level in a quite different key.* [...] Dogmatic assertion has [...] a very limited and modest role and is always outstripped and overshadowed by a sense of its inadequacy to the ultimate reality that it seeks to point to from within conventional discourse. (2006, 18; my emphasis)

tional reality, but merely a characteristic of conventional reality" (91). O'Leary explicates this teaching as follows: "What is dependently-arisen neither has intrinsic being nor it is a nihilistic nothing – its mode of being is empty of such grounding substantial identity. Nirvana or ultimacy would be nothing more than the fully enlightened realization of this emptiness (by a Buddha)."

Given the intrinsic connections between nirvana and samsara, Buddhism does not necessarily have to draw a clear line between itself and politics. Rather, it can engage international politics and "bring the powerful machinery of delusive reification and all its deep emotional correlatives to a complete halt" (O'Leary 31), by educating the world to see through the utter emptiness of their passions and mental projections. Major General Aung San, the Father of modern-day Myanmar,[46] led his nation's struggle for independence by synthesizing Buddhism and socialism. Gustaaf Houtman notes how the political terminology deployed by Aung San is often firmly rooted in the *samatha* practices[47] which suspend the *kilesa* (mental defilments), "but they are at the same time selected practices which allow the cross-over to *vipassana*" (262).

Let us compare what roles Buddhist and Derridean forgiveness have assumed in facilitating world peace. I am hard pressed for examples of interventions of Derridean forgiveness into world politics. However, we may consider Aung San's encouragement to the Sangha to "perform the highest politics" (1971, 59; quoted from Houtman 262) by carrying the *sāsana*,[48] and in particular the message of loving-kindness, into the world: "Only then will the people of the world, having developed *metta*, be able to live together with tolerance and in brotherhood." Where non-violence had failed as a means to achieve national independence, he argued substituting it not with violence, but with global loving-kindness: "If we cannot find a way of attaining independence by our own non-violent devices, and we must use another way, then we will achieve it with global loving-kindness [...]" (Ibid.,164; quoted from Houtman 262).

We might also mark Burma's pursuit of "world *metta*" under Major General Aung San's leadership – a term which can be translated as "international

[46] Aung San (13 February 1915 – 19 July 1947) distinguishes between Buddhism and Buddhendom—the former being Buddha's teachings as correctly implemented in one's life, versus the latter which is a degenerated form of folk belief. The Buddhist persecution of the Muslims in Burma today would have been examined by Aung San as a degeneration of Buddhism into Buddhendom.

[47] *Samatha* (*śamatha* Sanskrit) aims at calming the mind by single-pointed meditation--most commonly through mindfulness of breathing.

[48] *Sāsana* (*śāsana* in Sanskrit) can be translated as teaching, practice, doctrine, and Buddha *śāsana* (the teaching of the Buddha). The term is deemed by Buddhists and Shaivites to be more appropriate than "religion" for describing their commitments.

understanding," "international goodwill" or "brotherhood of man." In correlation, we can also contemplate Aung San's success at bringing together the ethnic minorities and "had the fires of racial hatred stamped out" (Ibid.,145; quoted from Houtman 262). Associating *metta* with "unity," Aung San pleads with the Sangha to "please, when you travel across the country, preach loving-kindness and unity" (Ibid; quoted from Houtman 262).

Aung San assigns Buddhism an important role in encouraging the highest political values, such as "love (*metta*), truth and righteous living" (Ibid., 59; quoted from Houtman 258 and 262). On the other hand, Aung San equates politics in its mundane endless repetition with samsara: "As a matter of fact, politics knows no end. It is Samsara in operation before our eyes, the Samsara of cause and effect, of past and present, of present and future which goes round and round and never end" (Houtman, 260). However, as Gustaaf Houtman points out, the translation "the laws of cause and effect" obfuscates the original Burmese reference to *paṭiccasamuppāda* (Ibid., 260). As discussed in §a.1.i, *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) refers to how all *dharmas* ("things") arise in dependence upon other *dharmas*, in the manner of "if A exists, B exists; if A ceases to exist, B also ceases to exist."[49] Liberation from the endless cycles of rebirth and *dukkha* can be attained by breaking the chain of co-dependent origination. This means all beings in the world are given *direct agency* to bring about cosmic peace: if we stamp out our illusions, no conflicts will arise or continue.

In contrast to Derrida's focus on the imprescriptible and the unforgivable, Buddhism centers on dislodging humanity from the passions that fuel conflicts and violence. Here is Dalai Lama's Buddhist take on Saddam Hussein who, in the language of international law – that is, a Christian-Western norm in its globalized format[50] – was supposed to have committed "crimes against humanity":

> "Saddam Hussein's dictatorship did not come out from the sky by itself," the Dalai Lama explained. "Saddam Hussein: dictator, invader, bad." He ticked off the points on his fingers, his expression grave. "But bad things happened because of his army. Without his army, without his weapons, he cannot be that kind of aggressor. These weapons not produced by Iraqis themselves, but come from West. Western compa-

[49] Peter Harvey explains as follows: "This [doctrine] states the principle of conditionality, that all things, mental and physical, arise and exist due to the presence of certain conditions, and cease once their conditions are removed; nothing (except *Nibbana*) is independent" (54).

[50] Saddam Hussein was tried by the Iraqi Interim Government for crimes against humanity.

nies helped to produce this aggressor. They did it, but afterward they blame on that person. Unfair." (Chan 2004, 124)

True to the Buddhist practice of shaking up one-sided reified thinking, the Dalai Lama quickly adds how the reverse is also true: "Another example. In [Osama] bin Laden's eyes, America one hundred percent evil. This ignorance brings disaster" (Ibid., 125).

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Chapter 10

Confucian Forgiveness and the Rectification of Names

David R. Corner and Jordan R. Corner

Introduction

Confucianism counts itself among the world's great religions; however, like all religions, it has a philosophical dimension. It is on that aspect of Confucianism that we will focus here. We will look primarily at the writings of the early Confucians: Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi.

Confucian thought has a long pedigree and bears a great deal of similarity to virtue-based ethical theories such as Aristotle's. The primary concern of the Confucian tradition is with order, and particularly social order, which is fostered by the cultivation in human beings of *ren*. This word has been translated in a number of ways: human-heartedness, benevolence, love; here we will understand *ren* as *humanity*. It is important to bear in mind, however, the distinctiveness of this Confucian concept. One cannot understand the humanity of a single being in isolation from others; *ren* is inherently relational. That is to say, the Confucian understands human beings as social creatures and as expressing their humanity in terms of concrete relationships with others. This has led to a common understanding of *ren* as "co-humanity;" being human is something we do together. Some Confucian authors, such as Mencius, thought of *ren* as a sort of human essence, an inherent tendency toward certain kinds of relationships. All humans, he tells us, have hearts that are not unfeeling toward others. He thinks this is true because if a child were about to fall into a well, "anyone would have a feeling of alarm and compassion." He tells us explicitly that anyone lacking important moral feelings such as compassion, disdain, deference, or feelings of approval and disapproval would not be human (2008, 44ff).

The second fundamental concept in the Confucian tradition is *li*, commonly understood in the early Confucian context as "rites" or "ritual propriety." Humanity must be expressed in concrete forms of social interaction. These help to define various relationships, such as that between a king and his minister, or a father and his son, in an idealized form. That is, the *li* governing the interactions