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The Possibility of Forgiveness: Aristotle versus Derrida*

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to deal with the possibility and its conditions of forgiveness in the theory of Derrida and Aristotle. Aristotle contends that forgiveness is/should be under specific circumstances; otherwise, it is owing to some defects emanating from the forgiver, contrary to Derrida's assertion that a pure forgiveness is unconditional. The study will try to question which of the given designs in relation to forgiveness is more competent in terms of fairness and feasibility by considering whether it is progressive. It will be claimed as a result that Derrida's notion of unconditional forgiveness does not defend the forgiver's rights, causes alienation from justice, and has a detrimental effect rather than being progressive. Contrarily, it will be argued that Aristotle's idea of conditional forgiveness treats the forgiver and the forgiven fairly, operates on the premise of justice, and should be applied to social practices because of its progressive effect.

Keywords: Forgiveness, Conditional, Unconditional, Being Progressive, Justice

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Bağışlamanın Olanığı: Aristoteles versus Derrida

Öz: Bu makalenin amacı, Derrida ve Aristoteles'in teorilerinde bağışlamanın olanığını ve koşullarını ele almaktır. Aristoteles bağışlamanın belirli koşullar altında olduğunu/olması gerektiğini iddia eder; ilgili koşullar karşılanmadığı takdirde bağışlama bağışlayanın karakterindeki bazı kusurlara dayandırılır. Bununla birlikte, gerekli koşulların sağlanmadığı durumlarda ilgili kişi bağışlanmaması gerektiği eylemine uygun düşecek cezai işleme tabi tutulmalıdır. Derrida bağışlamayı koşullu/koşulsuz aporiasına dayanarak ele alır. Belirli kriterler yerine getirilmesiyle açığa çıkan koşullu bağışlama tam olarak koşullu olması nedeniyle bağışlamaktan ziyade sözleşme olarak konumlandırılır. Bu nedenle eğer olanaklıysa gerçek bağışlama koşulsuz olan olarak ileri sürülür. Çalışma, bağışlamaya ilişkin olarak verilen tasarımlardan hangisinin -geliştirici olup olmadığını dikkate alarak- hakkaniyet ve uygulanabilirlik temelinde daha yetkin olduğunu sorgulamaya çalışacaktır. Sonuç olarak Derrida'nın koşulsuz bağışlama anlayışının bağışlayanın hakkını savunmadığı, adaletten uzaklaşmaya yol açtığı ve geliştirici olmaktan ziyade zarar verici bir etkiye sahip olduğu iddia edilecektir. Buna karşın, Aristoteles'in koşullu bağışlama fikrinin bağışlayanı ve bağışlanana adil bir biçimde gözettiği ve geliştirici etkisi nedeniyle toplumsal pratiklerde uygulanması gerektiği ileri sürülecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bağışlamak, Koşullu, Koşulsuz, Geliştirici, Adalet

Introduction

The problem of forgiveness has kept its importance throughout the history of philosophy and has become a much more interesting challenge in this day and age. The problem of how forgiveness is/should be realized is important in ensuring the establishment of justice on the basis of crime and punishment ratio. Along with a theoretical presentation, the initiative that will be developed on this subject will influence social norms and possibly even play a role in the legal issue. Forgiveness has been seen by some in the inner balance of the forgiver, while by others it can maintain a separate balance regarding the forgiven and the society. While it is more spiritual to deal with forgiveness in its inner balance in general, it seems to refer to a more functional structure to deal with it in relation to the forgiven and the community.

By its very nature, forgiveness needs a dyadic relationship between at least one wrongdoer and one wronged. Supposing that forgiveness necessitates at least one wrongdoer and one wronged, it implies the existence of wrongdoing and the acknowledgement of it by the wrongdoer. Given the fact that there is no wrongdoing or an agent who accepts being as a wrongdoer, even if the wronged party wishes, forgiveness does not seem to occur since it is rooted in a dual pattern. Forgiveness that may occur in the presence of these conditions aims to declare off negative feelings towards the wrongdoer or restore the negative relationship between the parties. In order to analyze what forgiveness means, it is

essential to examine the following issues. Who can forgive to whom, when and under what conditions, whether this process will be controlled by the law, whether it is in the interest of the society other than the parties, whether it is an end or a means in itself are crucial.

In this study, the evaluations of Derrida and Aristotle on the problem of forgiveness will be discussed. While Derrida presupposes an unconditional forgiveness, Aristotle argues that forgiveness must be in certain conditions. Derrida's assessments will be covered in the first section of the study, while Aristotle's evaluations will be covered in the second section. In preferring this order instead of chronological follow-up, the idea that this arrangement would be more effective in fostering a critical mindset regarding Derrida's assertion of unconditional forgiveness. In the third part, there will be a discussion of forgiveness might be more plausible and more effective regarding the nature and function of forgiveness. In the end, it will be argued that Aristotle's theory of conditional forgiveness, which takes into account the forgiver's rights, has a progressive impact on the individual as well as the society, in contrast to Derrida's theory of unconditional forgiveness, which does not protect the forgiver's rights, and moreover, stands out as a risk factor for society.

1. Forgiveness in Derrida's Philosophy

Derrida examines the problem of forgiveness and its possibility—if there is such a thing as forgiveness—in his work entitled as *To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible* (Derrida 2015). The work begins with *Pardon*¹, which is both a name and a performative word to ask for forgiveness. This Latin word has two meanings in its origin: *don(o)*² and *donation*. For this reason, Derrida

¹ Although it is debatable, one generally accepted distinction between forgiveness and pardon is that the former is typically exercised by the victims of wrong as opposed to third-parties. Paul M. Hughes, and Brandon Warmke, "Forgiveness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.) [Accessed: 01.11.2022]. URL=<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/forgiveness/>>.

²According to Cassell's Latin Dictionary, *dono* (*donum*) means *to give as a present, to present; to grant, bestow; to sacrifice, give up to; to remit a debt or obligation; to forgive, pardon; to present a person with something*. The word *dono* leads to the words *donum* and *donation* in terms of word derivation. *Donation* also means *donatio, a giving, gift, present*. *Donum* means *a gift, present; to give as a present; a gift to the gods, a votive offering* (1938: 182). Therefore, it seems useful to look at the meanings of the words *forgive* and *pardon*. *Forgive* means *to give mercy instead of justice*. (1938: 698). *Pardon* means *an oath, (=to free from the obligation); to- a debt; to ask* (1938: 801). Since the word *forgive* sends us to the choice of mercy instead of justice, it is useful to look at the dictionary

associates the word *Pardon* with the performance of giving, and seeks to explore the similarities between them. According to Derrida, there is a similarity between giving/donation and forgiveness in terms of both being unconditional in principle and being dependent on the past, but not being measured with the present and carrying itself to the future in terms of temporality (Derrida 2015: 144-145).

In relation to the performance of giving, the concepts of forgiveness and inheritance are inextricably linked. It does not seem to be possible to understand forgiveness without understanding inheritance due to this link (Murphy 2014: 539). To forgive or not to forgive (or revenge) can also be inherited as a responsibility. It is connected to the concept of ghost in terms of not belonging to the time between forgiveness and inheritance. Derrida states:

A spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: "now," future present) (Derrida 2006: xix).

Therefore, the future comes from the back. Derrida reveals the time of the inherited the future from the past. In his own reference to Shakespeare, Hamlet is assigned *to set it right* what *time is out of joint* with his birth (Derrida 2006: 22-28). Just as *to set it right*, right to forgive or to punish or to revenge, inherited through responsibility, also seems to be linked to the concept of ghost. Derrida indicates:

If I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain others who are not present, nor presently living, either to us, in us, or outside us, it is in the name of *justice* (Derrida 2006: xviii).

In this context, it is not possible to speak of an ethics that does not respect those who are not among us, whether they are already dead or never born. That being the case, it is essential to speak of and speak with ghosts. Giving, forgiving, inheritance, and being out of time converge in this respect. One of the immanent movements in forgiveness is hence the concept of time and ghost in relation to the question who.

meaning of the word justice. Justice means (=the virtue itself, and the love of-); =equity, equitability; =right, law (=that which is considered right)...; (in gen., in daily life to give anyone what is due to him). (1938: 747) Cassell's Latin Dictionary (Latin-English and English-Latin) (1938) revised by J. R. V. Marchant and Joseph F. Charles. Cassell and Company Ltd. London, Toronto, Melbourne and Sydney.

The question of who can forgive what to whom, when and with what right is as important as the question of who can ask for forgiveness from whom, when and on what right. As far as it goes, four different hands that must be evaluated in the oscillation between the singular and the plural as to whether one can ask for forgiveness from someone, a group, a community, or an organization and vice versa. It is also debatable whether the right asking for forgiveness or to forgive in the absence of the perpetrator or the victim, and sometimes even both the perpetrator and the victim, can be inherited. Another critical point is worth questioning whether a real forgiveness is possible between the perpetrator and the victim, with the exception of an observance and an affirmation of sovereign (Derrida 2001: 146-149).

Who forgives or who asks whom for forgiveness, at what moment? Who has the right or the power to do this, “[to] whom?” And what does the “who” signify here? (Derrida 2015: 147).

Derrida deals with forgiveness through its conditional-unconditional aporia (Custer 2014: 44). He suspends the connection between this question *who* or *what* that obsesses the language of forgiveness, starting from the origin of the word. In parallel with, he professes that forgiveness is removed from its pure/authentic meaning by being associated with concepts unrelated to it. Traditional definitions of forgiveness include notions like retribution, atonement, redemption, repentance, apology, justification, reconciliation, i.e. Because he views it as an economic transaction rather than the purest definition of forgiveness, Derrida challenges the assumptions in the conventional conception. Derrida claims that in the face of all forms of profound evil, unconditional, pure and true forgiveness arises without the need for asking or deserving, on the basis of hyperbolic ethics (Derrida 2015: 152-153). The unforgivable is forgivable because, in Derrida’s view, what gives something its distinctive character is its impossible potential (Caputo 2014: 472).

... a hyperbolic ethics that would command precisely, on the contrary, that forgiveness be granted where it is neither asked for nor deserved, and even for the worst radical evil, forgiveness only acquiring its meaning and its possibility of forgiveness where it is called on to do the impossible and to forgive the un-forgivable (Derrida 2015: 154).

Derrida’s ideas on forgiveness are also founded on an investigation of Arendt’s and Jankelevitch’s inquiries into the topic as well as the word’s historical use (Rubin 2009: 2-3; Sanja 2021:3). For Arendt, although forgiveness is against vengeance, it does not directly contradict punishment.

The alternative to forgiveness, but by no means its opposite, is punishment, and both have in common that they attempt to put an end to something that without interference could go on endlessly. It is therefore quite significant, a structural element in the realm of human affairs, that men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish and they are unable to punish what has turned out to be unforgivable (Arendt 1958: 241).

Arendt asserts that it does not appear to be conceivable to punish or forgive such offences. This is so because, when it comes to radical evil, such offences are outside the purview of human affairs and power.

For Jankelevitch, it seems to be contradictory to forgive one when an act is bestial (Jankelevitch 1996: 556) and there is no regret³ (Jankelevitch 1996: 567). Based on these statements of him, Derrida criticizes Jankelevitch's reasoning that forgiveness is impossible if and when it is not implicitly or explicitly demanded and wrongdoing seriously crosses the line of the human. This is because, Derrida claims that the things that belong to the conditional forgiveness, such as regret, reparation, and apology torture the pure meaning of the unconditional one (Derrida 2015: 152-153). Although Derrida introduced it as conditional forgiveness and exploited it to support his own position, Jankelevitch genuinely opposed the notion of collective forgiveness and instead treated forgiveness as an interpersonal interaction, leaving it up to the victim.

Everyone is free to pardon the offenses that he has personally suffered if he chooses to, but those of others, what right does he have to pardon them? (Jankelevitch 1996: 569).

Jankélévitch insists that forgiveness is only possible in the interpersonal relationship (Bachmetjevas 2018: 191). In other words, it is an individual matter both on the offender's part and on the one's who is offended part. A person can forgive as an individual only because he or she has been harmed as an individual. There can be no collective amnesty because no one has the authority to speak on behalf of another.

When Derrida's analyses of Jankelevitch and of September 11 are considered together, it becomes clear that, in spite of his criticism of Jankelevitch,

³However, these arguments, therefore, only serve as a starting point for Jankelevitch's consideration of the forgiveness issue, but not his ultimate conclusion. See for this; Vladimir Jankelevitch, *Forgiveness*, trans. by Andrew Kelley, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2005, 5.

Jankelevitch's individual expectations -possible but not necessary conditions in his philosophical inquiry- are encapsulated in his own 9/11 statement. Derrida does not appear to favor a practically authentic forgiveness, as is evident from his analyses of 9/11; instead, he presents a more Aristotelian rationale, which will be covered below.

Derrida takes into account a letter that a young German named Wiard Ravel wrote to Jankelevitch. Ravel writes in his letter that he has not killed any Jews and that he did not choose to be German, but he also emphasizes that he has not approved of the process at all and is deeply sorry for what has transpired. For him, it is not understandable by what logic of us this crime has been inherited.⁴ On the other side, Jankelevitch replies to Ravel that it is too late for him to hear this long-awaited, not self-justified word but future generations may be able to overcome this obstacle (Note by Derrida 2015: 165-167). The notion that forgiveness is a prerequisite for forgiveness is exactly what Derrida rejects. In reality, he chastised Jankelevitch for his perspective on forgiveness as well as his application on this approach. However, in his interview with Giovanna Borradori, *Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides* (Derrida 2003), Derrida appears to have a perspective that supports Jankelevitch's argument in light of his remarks regarding 9/11.

Derrida asserts that although 9/11 was a significant event, it was not serious as people think it is when compared to other historical occurrences. Images of 9/11 are constantly repeated through advanced technology. Depending on the repetition of the televised images, the effect of the event is not only attenuated but also strengthened on the other. Therefore, mourning in the context of the event is not allowed. For Derrida, the main effect of the trauma stems from the chain of presents (past present, actual present and future present). Trauma becomes meaningful with the belief that what happened in the past can happen again in the future. If there had been notifications that the event would not happen again in the future, this event could not have been a trauma.

There is traumatism with no possible work of mourning when the evil comes from the possibility to come of the worst, from the repetition to

⁴ To understand this logic, one needs just turn to Aristotle. The same persons that are friends or adversaries of one another likewise develop friendships or enemies. Both parties must feel in this way. Even when they, their ancestors, or their relatives engage in conduct that impairs their dignity, people nevertheless experience shame. Aristoteles, *Retorik*, trans. by Furkan Akderin, Say Yayınları: İstanbul, 2021, 1381a- 1385a. If it is recognized as such, it is crucial to set it right or disapprove the pertinent circumstance.

come-though worse. Traumatism is produced by the future, by the to come, by the threat of the worst to come, rather than by an aggression that is "over and done with (Derrida 2003: 97).

The way Derrida views this circumstance does not seem to be consistent with his philosophical explanation of forgiveness. Since, in his opinion, the revelation of forgiveness after confessing, asking for forgiveness, expressing regret, trying to repair if possible, indicates that the forgiver is in a state of calculation. Forgiveness is, if there is a such thing, unconditional. The explanation against Derrida's analysis of forgiveness seems to have been provided by Aristotle centuries ago. For this reason, it would be useful to look at the thoughts of Aristotle, which we think provides much more reasonable explanations for forgiveness and whose theory is already in a critical attitude towards Derrida.

2. Forgiveness in Aristotle's Philosophy

A comprehensive examination of Aristotle's ethical theory is required in order to understand what forgiveness means to him⁵. In this context, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle 2009) serves as an ethical investigation that also discloses the political beliefs that make up the city-state and his other work, *Rhetoric* (Aristotle 2021), in which he also conducted research on what evil behaviours are, why they are done and under what circumstances, should be explored.

For Aristotle, the end is happiness in itself and self-sufficient (Aristotle 2009: 1905a 10- 1907b 5-20; 2021: 1362b) and for happiness, what is good for people should be investigated (Aristotle 2009: 1094b 5). As a social entity by nature, man has to live together in cities (Aristotle 2009: 1097b 10; 2018: 1252b-1253a). Therefore, what is good for man is also good for the city. It is the duty of politics to determine the sciences necessary for the city and to decide which one should be learned by whom and at what level. The law tries to reveal what is good for the city in terms of seeking what is good for people, by declaring what to do and what to avoid (Aristotle 2009: 1094b 5; 2018: 1252a). Aristotelian society and politics are not only necessary for a person to survive, but also serve as the cornerstones of his happiness and personal development. Because it is highly challenging for an individual life to be classified as excellent in a society that is badly organized or ruled by faulty rules (Can 2021: 85). In this respect, it can be

⁵ Contrary to what is claimed, Carter states that the concept of forgiveness in Aristotle is not absent, but rather has a much more modern version than is thought. Jason W. Carter (2018) "Aristotle and the Problem of Forgiveness" in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Winter 2018, 92(1):49-71.

thought that the law has the right to determine the possibility of forgiveness. So, for Aristotle, forgiveness can be necessary or/and acceptable by fulfilling some requirements. In order to be deserving of forgiveness, certain conditions must be met. Forgiveness, based on the idea of fairness, thereafter protects the needs of the forgiven, the forgiver and the whole.

Since the goal for Aristotle is happiness, forgiveness should also be preferred if it is good in terms of being a tool that will lead to happiness, and should not be preferred if it is not. In order to question whether forgiveness serves happiness or not, it seems useful to first look at how happiness is positioned. In this context, clarifying what happiness is requires investigating what is the doings of a human being in terms of being human.

...if we could first ascertain the function of man... Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies reason... if this is the case... human good turns out to be activity of soul exhibiting virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete (Aristotle 2009: 1097b 20- 1098a 15).

What goes on in the soul are in three kinds as passions, capacities, and states of character. Passions are desire, anger, fear, courage, jealousy, joy, love, grudge, longing, greed, pity generally followed by pleasure or pain. Capabilities, on the other hand, refers to the natural structure that reveals them and enables us to be affected by something. The good or bad state that emerges in relation to the passions is called state of character, therefore, virtue is the state of character (Aristotle 2009: 1105b 20- 1106a 10).

Aristotle divides the virtues into two as the virtues of intellectual and of moral. The virtues of intellectual -philosophical wisdom, understanding and practical wisdom- require experience and time because they are formed and developed through education. Moral virtues are learned by doing them through habits⁶ (Aristotle 2009: 1103a 5- 1103a 30) and aims to follow the golden mean between two extremes -excess and deficiency (Aristotle 2009: 1106b 20). Following the golden mean is needed reasoning. Forgiveness is tied to practical wisdom on the basis of equity (Long 2004: 133). While one part of the soul is

⁶ Moral virtue and habits are linked by practical wisdom due to choice. Further reading see. Christopher, P. Long, "The ontological reappropriation of phronesis", *Continental Philosophical Review*, 35: 35-60, 2002, 52.

Sezgin Seymen Çebi, Aristoteles'te *Phronesis* Kavramı ve Modern Hukukta Muhakeme, in *Hukuk Felsefesi ve Sosyolojisi Arkivi*, 27. Kitap, 2016, 30-31.

devoid of reason, another part of it shares in reason; the irrational side is the vegetative side that does not participate in the mind in any way, and the appetitive side that can be persuaded by rational principle (Aristotle 2009: 1102b 5-30). Passions are not choices, but virtues are determined by our choices, and it is in our hands to be good or bad in this mediation (Aristotle 2009: 1105b 20- 1106a 10).

Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate (Aristotle 2009: 1107a).

In this context, it is characteristic of virtue, which is the middle in feeling to do what is needed when necessary, against those who deserve, because it is necessary, to desire, to be angry, to pity, to enjoy, to feel pain i.e.

The issue of whether the activity is voluntary or not is crucial in this respect. He says:

Since virtue is concerned with passions and actions, and on voluntary ones praise and blame are bestowed, on those that are involuntary pardon, and sometimes also pity, to distinguish the voluntary and the involuntary is presumably necessary for those who are studying in the nature of virtue, and useful also for legislators with a view to the assigning both of honours and of punishments (Aristotle 2009: 1107b 30).

Every action stems from at least one of seven reasons that “*chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reasoning, anger, or appetite*” (Aristotle 2021: 1369a). Those that are revealed by chance, nature and compulsion are not due to man himself, while those revealed by habit, reasoning, anger or appetite are due to man himself. By extension, it can be said that wrongdoings are injuries contrary to law by voluntarily. Law can be special or general. Special law is written by a particular community in order to regulate its life although general laws, on the other hand, naturally refer to the set of rules that are comprehensive everywhere and for everyone, without written any contract (Aristotle 2021: 1368b- 1373b).

For this reason, wrongdoings that are done voluntarily even though these are known to be against the law are caused by some faults of characters and lack of self-control (Aristotle 2021: 1368b). However, a fault of character and/or lack of self-control does not always end up detrimental conduct. In order for people to

lead to wicked manners in cases of defect in their character and/or inability to control themselves, they must have a positive belief that they have the power to commit such harmful behaviors. In addition to this, one can feel to hide his/her crime, or even if being found out staving off a trial, or the gain seems to be greater than the penalty in recognition of amount or distance. The claim that someone can be blamed and punished for a wrongdoing requires that the act be done intentionally. The situation is even worse if the crime is inhumane and causes fear rather than pity (Aristotle 2021: 1372a- 1374a- 1375a).

In order to decide whether the actions are done voluntarily or involuntarily, it is necessary to look at the moment that are done. What is done by force or by ignorance seems to be done involuntarily. However, the ignorance in question can be about particulars, and it cannot be claimed that one does not have knowledge of universals. If so, it is already due to negligence, so it cannot be accepted as an excuse and is already worthy of blame. In addition, it cannot be claimed that moral principles such as stealing and killing are not known.

Everything that is done by reason of ignorance is *not voluntary*; it is only what produces pain and regret that is *involuntary*. For the man who has done something by reason of ignorance, and feels not the least vexation at his action, has not acted voluntarily, since he did not know what he was doing, nor yet involuntarily, since he is not pained. Of people, then, who act by reason of ignorance he who regret is thought an involuntary agent, and the man who does not regret may, since he is different, be called a not voluntary agent; ... nor ignorance of the universal (for *that* man are *blamed*), but ignorance of particulars, i.e... For it is on these that both pity and pardon depend, since the person who is ignorant of any of these acts involuntarily (Aristotle 2009: 1110b 20- 1111a).

What makes repentance notable for Aristotle is that one who does not feel remorse cannot be get better. Aristotle says: "...since a man without regrets cannot be cured" (Aristotle 2009: 1150a 20). For this reason, the legislator, who aims to promote good and prevent evil, honors accomplishments and punishes those who do bad deeds. Bearing in mind that punishment is a cure, unlike revenge, there is a case in favor of the punished (Aristotle 2009: 1104b 15; 2021: 1369b). In this sense, the man who is angry from the right motive, at the right things and with the right people, for as long as necessary, is appreciated. Being at the intermediate about anger is good-temper that is considered as a virtue by Aristotle. In this context, good-temper refers to the deliberate control of anger, which is one of the states of character, by reason (Aristotle 2009: 1125b 30- 1126b 5). After a certain time has passed, the wrongdoer admits his guilt – as a matter of fact, denial of

crime means shamelessly contempted and disrespected to the victim – and regret and distressed for the wickedness can quieten the anger of the wronged person. Good-temper refers not to the absence of anger but to being at the intermediate in anger (Aristotle 2009: 1125b 30- 1126b 10; 2021: 1378b- 1380a). Novitz also states that a tendency to forgive too easily could also be a sign of a lack of self-respect or servility, which are typically seen as moral flaws or vices (Novitz 1998: 299).

Aristotle seems to consider forgiveness mostly on the basis of the ignorance and regret of the one to be forgiven, and as a tool that will serve the good of the whole. In cases where forgiveness is not deserved and therefore does not serve the good of the whole, punishment is envisaged. In this respect, it is useful to look at Derrida's approach of unconditional forgiveness through the eyes of Aristotle.

3. A Response to Derrida from a Possible Aristotelian Approach

By definition, forgiveness implies that there are initially at least two parties, one of whom does injury to the other, after which the wounded party's unfavorable feelings against the offender vanish or, at the very least, lessen. Derrida engages in the discussion of how this process operates or should operate by substituting his own concept of forgiveness for the conventional concept through his deconstructive reading. Forgiveness, according to this new concept, is pure unconditional forgiveness, free from any possible expectation.

According to Derrida's etimological explanation, the idea of reciprocity has been removed from forgiveness. However, as was already said, despite the word's origins in giving and gifting, it also bears the implications of votive offering, sacrifice, and bestowing mercy rather than justice. Derrida appears to be concentrating on the implications of giving and gifting, which will result in unconditional forgiveness. As a matter of fact, votive offering and sacrifice require a response as an act. However, Derrida invokes the concept of the ghost, declaring that one cannot speak of an ethic that does not respect everyone who is not with us because they are dead or have not yet been born. He further states that being with ghosts and speak of and speak with them is in the name of justice. Speaking of ghosts in the name of justice and ghosts are also an answer to the question of who, then, in accordance with Derrida's reasoning, a non-calculating forgiveness may well be considered ignoring justice for the sake of mercy. In this case Kolnai states

that forgiveness is closely related to, but crucially distinct from, morally dubious actions like supporting or otherwise tolerating evil (Kolnai 1974: 98-99).

In terms of handling the discussion about who can forgive whom, why when and under what conditions, in the form of unconditional forgiveness, the role of the forgiven as an agent in relation to the act of forgiveness is also ignored. In this respect, forgiveness seems to belong only to the forgiver's own inner world, independent of the forgiven. This situation is defined by Derrida as pure/unconditional forgiveness. Novitz argues that forgiveness when it is not necessary, rather than being moral, may underestimate one's self-worth and further aggravate the harm done (Novitz 1998: 314).

Aristotle considers forgiveness as an action that takes place in society and helps us to determine the conditions of forgiveness. For Aristotle, forgiveness must be deserved and in parallel, it is a tool for happiness, which is an end in itself. Forgiveness, which is not itself a virtue, but is revealed through the good temper, requires certain conditions. What is essential for Aristotle is whether there is ignorance in revealing the action, provided that it is not about the universals. In Aristotelian society, a just man bears his part of both good and evil and thus does not transgress either the law in general or the rights of individuals (Can 2020: 146). Justice is fully manifested in this dual respect for legality within the site and equality among individuals. If the person has deliberately done harm, then forgiveness is not considered appropriate. For this is not just as it indicates a flaw in the character of the forgiver. As it is deteriorating for the polis, it will not lead to a correction in the character of the forgiven.⁷ This circumstance demands punishment, which, when appropriate, alludes to fairness and displays respect for the sufferer. Additionally, punishment serves as therapy for the victim and the polis. We are moved to pity and forgiveness in circumstances where regret and suffering are evident. It can be said that while forgiveness is a deserved and proper means in situations that reveal regret and sadness in case of ignorance, and operative for one and the whole, in other excluded cases, the means that is proper and deserved is punishment. As a matter of fact, according to Aristotle, people want good, not evil, and in this respect, the punishment should be as light as possible (Aristotle 2021: 1373a).

⁷ According to Aristotle, people who tend to forgive when it is not appropriate are generally unfriendly, not rhetoricians, or fail in the legal process as a result (Aristotle 2021: 1373a).

Derrida focuses only on the forgiver's perspective, without continuing to argue why the perpetrator would not choose, as far as the perpetrator is alive, the process of seeking forgiveness, and perhaps even the reparation process. As a matter of fact, in a possible case, Derrida does not provide a statement as to why the perpetrator prefers not to do so when he has the opportunity to ask for forgiveness and redress. Asking for forgiveness, doing something to make up for what was wrong, or expressing regret might be viewed as a goodwill gesture that the same thing won't happen again. According to Aristotle, it is crucial for the offender to acknowledge his/her guilt since the victim would become more enraged if the offender does not (Aristotle 2021: 1379a-1380a).

Bernstein claims that judgement and the conviction that the past will not be repeated are requirements for forgiveness. He evaluates Derrida's approach of forgiveness within the scope of accountability as a reductionist attitude (Bernstein 2006: 401). Forgiveness is never as blind as Derrida implies; rather, it is an act of love with the hope that it will not be repeated in the future, accompanied by a certain amount of grieving, and it is not insensitive to what is fair (Kearney 2013: 155).

What stands out in Derrida's writings is that, despite discussing the victim's act of forgiving, no mention of the perpetrator is made. If there is a crime or a mistake, it means that there are at least two people at the time of the incident. Talking about the victim in this mediation seems to make discussing the perpetrator necessary. According to Derrida, there is a need to go back to the origin of the Word Pardon in order to understand it. Notwithstanding, it does not seem clear that we do not turn to the case and the perpetrator as much as the victim to understand the forgiveness that may arise between the perpetrator and victim. When we look at Aristotle, it is seen that he focuses on the perpetrator's act and the reasons for his action rather than the victim. After the perpetrator's act is evaluated in sufficient detail, the appropriate process for forgiveness is determined. Furthermore, according to Aristotle, if the perpetrator's deed does not merit forgiveness but rather calls for punishment, the victim's own faults are to blame for the process of forgiving the perpetrator. Punishment is not revenge, moreover, it considers the benefit of the punished in terms of healing, as well as the good of the polis in total. McGonegal asserts that Derrida's thesis also runs the risk of forfeiting the victim's right to forgive the offender, even though this is not his intended outcome (McGonegal 2009: 45). Evans contends as well that forgiveness is risky and should not be done blindly (Evans 2013: 27).

Conclusion

The conclusion of my study will consist of three parts: a simple determination of the theories, a comment on potential issues with normative context, and morally-evaluable conclusions. Derrida constructed a theory of forgiveness through etymological study; maybe for this reason, it does not raise any issues pertaining to the forgiven. However, he appears to have avoided discussing the word's dual connotations in the pertinent etymological research. On the other hand, Aristotle presented a theory in which the forgiver and the forgiven are observed. For Aristotle, looking at the moment when the action is taken, ignorance is involuntary and regret is a necessary condition for the particulars. In this regard, Aristotle has dealt with the notion of forgiveness relationally with its worth in society, whereas Derrida does not appear to have done so, despite the fact that the term itself requires a double trivet. Secondly, while Aristotle appears to be more just because he acts on the basis of equity in arguing that both forgiveness and punishment are necessary in certain situations, the forgiveness revealed in accordance with Derrida's investigation seems far from justice. Thirdly, in Derrida's theory, since forgiveness is unconditional, it does not foresee an improvement in the character of the forgiven or a configuration for the situation of the forgiver, so it does not appear progressive for the relevant agents or for the society, on the contrary, it stands as a risk factor. In Aristotle's theory, on the contrary, both forgiving and punishing are progressive for agents due to the relevant conditions. In theory, Aristotle's ideas about forgiveness are more plausible and feasible both on their own and when compared to Derrida's ideas. This makes Aristotle's theory functional in the normative level. Morally, it can be argued that because Aristotle takes into account both parties -the forgiver and the forgiven- and lays out requirements, his theory of forgiveness offers a more developing impetus at the social level. On the basis of social growth, it might be argued that Derrida's idea is risky.

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