

On the Rates of Differentiation: Derrida on Political Timing

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Always faithful to the *différance* that “arch-structures” reality, both the democracy to come and autoimmunity articulate the double bind of possibility and impossibility that lies at the very core of politics. Pragmatist thinkers like Richard Rorty charge that the double bind stymies the very possibility of making short-term pragmatic decisions, which he sees as the essence of good politics.

I see romantic and utopian hopes of the sort developed in *The Politics of Friendship* as a contribution to Derrida’s private fashioning ... [b]ut I do not see texts such as *The Politics of Friendship* as contributions to political thought. Politics ... is a matter of pragmatic short-term reforms and compromises.... Political thought centers on the attempt to formulate some hypotheses about how, and under what conditions, such reforms might be effected.¹

If Derrida’s thesis is true about the nature of time as irreducibly bringing undecidability into play, then the effectiveness of short-term “deals” and political compromises comes into question.

A second limitation may be addressed by the following question: How can Derrida’s political philosophy give any concrete account of the singularity of political events when they seem to be irreducibly “arch-structured” by the double bind that is the democracy to come? In other words, all political events suffer from the same irreducible logic of possibility-impossibility or *différance*, making all political events ultimately and irreducibly undecidable. The significance and status of political events and decisions continually change or differentiate themselves and are therefore inaccessible or meaningless. On Derrida’s view, the singularity or unicity of any political event, including the great political events that have shaped the Western world like the American, French, and Russian Revolutions, and the fall of the Soviet Union, would be undecidable.

J. Claude Evans discusses this problem in analyzing Derrida’s reading of the Declaration of Independence.² Evans recapitulates Derrida’s thesis:

Against this background, Derrida states the programmatological thesis: ‘One cannot decide—and that’s the interesting thing, the

force of such a declarative act—whether independence is stated or produced by this utterance.’ This undecidability is ‘necessary’ and ‘essential’: ‘Is it that the good people have already freed themselves in fact and are only stating the fact of this emancipation in [*par*] the Declaration? Or is it rather that they free themselves at the instant of and by [*par*] the signature of this Declaration?’ One can already suspect that the answer will be ‘neither’ and ‘both.’ ‘This obscurity, this undecidability ... is required in order to produce the sought-after effect.’³

Evans notes that Derrida names and refers to the Declaration of Independence as the act by which the colonies moved to separate themselves from Great Britain. This is mistaken, as the actual decision to separate from Great Britain happened two days earlier in the Resolution of Independence.⁴ Evans shows that “[t]he undecidability which [Derrida] claims to find at work in the Declaration is read into, not out of the text and context of the Declaration.”⁵ Evans wishes to show how decisive the situation was that led up to the American Revolution, whereas he reads Derrida as forcing undecidability into the situation. In other words, Derrida is accused of making the American decision to separate from England fit his own arch-structure of undecidability as opposed to showing how undecidability plays itself out in the situation.

Central in both Rorty’s and Evans’ critiques is the role of time, as the to come draws on the spatio-temporization that is *différance*. The impossibility of a living present concomitant with the Derridean notions of the past and the future as iterable and open-ended render impossible decisions that can be effective here and now. This paper challenges this “pragmatic” notion of timely political decision-making. I argue that Derrida does indeed give us a way to make concrete political decisions “here and now,” but this entails an understanding of Derridean time *not* only as differentiating and spatio-temporizing; it also involves the necessity of thinking of time as flowing at a consciously perceptible rate such that one can experience all of the differentiating moments differentiating themselves in the way Derrida says they do. Derridean notions of instantaneity, heritage, and the to come need not flow at rates or speeds that absolutely transcend human consciousness, thereby resulting in an impossibility or undecidability of meaning. In fact, instants differentiate themselves, albeit not always clearly and distinctly, with perceptible words, ideas, and utterances. If they did not do this, there would be no *héritage* or legacy or texts to which one could refer. The simultaneity of the impossibility and possibility that constitute the double bind presumably flow at such a rate that they are intelligible as a double bind, hence making them comprehensible, concrete, tangible, and prag-

matically accessible. If politics is structured by time, as Derrida maintains, then the differentiating moments that make up the double bind need not erase and open up horizons of meaning and activity that flow at such a rate that the here and now become inaccessible. The Derridean critique of the metaphysical here and now consists in the fact that it is too absolute, too fixed, and ultimately unaware of the larger temporal dynamics that constitute its reality, namely, *l’héritage*. The Derridean paras(c)itical project requires some kind of sustaining host or enduring but reiterating concrete givenness, which Derrida calls heritage. Little has been written about this key concept in Derrida’s later philosophy.

My argument consists of the following. First, I will show how Derridean time articulates itself as arch-structuring by examining his notion of *différance*. Here, the double bind of possibility and impossibility comes to show itself. I shall also discuss how it is that Derridean time may be understood as instantaneous, especially given his use of the terms *à l’instant* and *à la fois*. Finally, I will show how the double bind structures the democracy to come. I will demonstrate how the structure of the democracy to come contains a notion of instants that neither flow so rapidly that they are unintelligible or meaningless nor admit any kind of duration. Also, a developed notion of heritage, drawn heavily from Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, concomitant with a critique of the “today,” allow one to give content, at a more or less intelligible rate, to political events and situations that necessitate and facilitate the making of concrete and pragmatic political decisions and interventions. An argument for Derrida’s own political commitments, which are unmistakably singular and definite, must be read within the operative context of an enduring heritage that is also a temporal given.

The Spatio-Temporization that is *Différance*

Différance must be understood within the framework of time flow and iterability. The “movement” that is *différance* can be understood as a flow of constantly differentiating instants that can no longer refer back to the origin. Repetition has folded within its structure an elusiveness or transcendence. Differentiating objects of consciousness are not exactly identical to the way we perceive them to be because time flow continually alters the repetitive instants constitutive of our differentiated experience. Hence, the object we have before us in consciousness, or the speech we hear, or the words we read, transcend us, especially in communication. The speaker utters a certain phrase at a certain instant, but the hearer hears otherwise because the speech is delayed and differentiated for the hearer. Repeating the same phrase, the very phrase becomes imbibed with new senses. The phrase escapes the

hearer just as words escape the author once another person reads the author's work or once they are written.⁶ Hence, meaning or sense cannot survive a second time because it cannot survive a second saying. The sense continues to be differentiated as it is passed along in the chain of communication. This must be because the sense can no longer be communicable unless it is differentiated. In a profound sense, then, to say what an object truly is becomes undecidable or, better still, it is impossible to employ traditional metaphysics, especially with its notion of presence, in order to understand fully the objects before us in consciousness or in words read or spoken.

Any significant communication, that is, any communication that uses phonemes or graphemes (speech and writing) and that keeps historically referring back to them (*renvois*), will never be able to express fully its meanings because the sign is of a different order than that which it tries to represent.⁷ What is repeated in the sign is temporally delayed *vis-à-vis* its "origin" and it is different from its referent and other signs as the sign and the referent can never be identical. The "origin" can never come to presence through the sign. It is this delay and differentiation that Derrida calls *différance*.

Furthermore, meanings are not fully present. There are meanings that completely evade and transcend the text as well, as evidenced by Derrida's reading of Plato's *pharmakon* and other definitively undecidable readings of many classic texts. Meanings are polysemantic and open-ended. If this is the case then there must be some drastic rupture or cleavage, namely, the interval, which would allow the elements of linguistic communication not simply to refer to the originally present. By having this completely different possibility, words and speech need not have a literal meaning in that they can continue to differentiate freely without having to refer constantly to the "living present" or modifications thereof. We are left with a double bind situation. Meanings are possible, but they can never be fixed. Hence, they are simultaneously possible but impossible. Simultaneity here refers to different instants that appear at one and the same time. These instants have to have some kind of duration in order to be perceived in consciousness as a double bind. Meanings, insofar as they are conditioned by the spatio-temporizing that is *différance*, are ultimately undecidable.⁸

At this point, it would be useful to remark that both decidability and undecidability operate simultaneously as co-constitutive structures of *différance*. The language that Derrida employs to describe this simultaneity is that of instantaneity. *A l'instant* and *à la fois* are terms that have multiple senses, including here and now, simultaneously, this instant, at the same time, etc. They are decidedly temporal terms and are consistent with the spatio-temporizing structure of *différance*. Though these

terms are temporal and do convey a sense of simultaneity and instantaneity, Derrida does not speak about the speed or rate at which these spatio-temporizing "moments" flow or differentiate themselves. On my reading, Derrida attaches no speed, unlike Deleuze and Virilio, to the rate of *différance's* flow. Derrida does not use the term flow. I use this term to describe *différance's* movement or "*Bewegung*," a term that Derrida himself employs. The movement refers to the way *différance* spatio-temporizes, how it operates in a double bind fashion. Also, he does not define the length of any one instant. If there is no set speed or rate of flow, there is nothing to say that an instant cannot have any kind of duration or, in more Derridean language, a trace or heritage. Though the instants of possibility and impossibility occur simultaneously, this does not mean that they cannot stand together; they need not cancel or annihilate one another in any absolute fashion. That these instants must appear together and that they must both be perceptible is the case because, first, how else could they be described as occurring if they were not perceptible or experienceable in the first place? Second, the nature of double bind demands that both instants exist simultaneously; otherwise there would be no double bind.

Critics of deconstruction accuse it of tearing apart given structures, leaving very little that can be defined or definitively pointed to as some form of concrete meaning; a skepsis ensues. But if this were true then Derrida would have very little to draw upon; he cannot be a good "parasite" as there would be no stable or given host. Meaning can only continue to multiply and change, be iterable, as Derrida says, when there is something it can transform. This is the legacy of texts and political events that not only are transformed in meaning by the logic of the trace but also have some kind of enduring *positum* that we call heritage. Heritage may be viewed, albeit not exclusively, as that which is possible, something to which we can decidedly point. But it does not exist alone, for it is always appearing with its own impossibility as well. All of Derrida's textual interests are part of this legacy that we share in common, including Kant, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Cixous, etc. As with any legacy, Derrida continues to return to these sources. The duration and rate of differentiating flow of instants and simultaneous moments of decidability and undecidability, possibility and impossibility, guarantee this legacy as somewhat enduring and traceable, but it also remains inaccessible and iterable. Politically, there are events that Derrida keeps returning to: Auschwitz, the death penalty, terrorism, genocide, the Declaration of Independence, *mondialisation*, etc. These political events can be continually pointed to; they have a heritage yet their meanings are not fixed or absolute.

Time and the Democracy to Come

I would now like to discuss Derrida's political heritage in order to show how against the abovementioned background Derridean time permits us to make some kind of enduring decisions, even "short-term ones," to borrow from Richard Rorty, albeit never absolute and eternal ones. In *Voyous*, Derrida counts the five foyers that belong to the democracy to come. The language here is definitive and identificatory: 1. a militant political critique without end; 2. an advent that will never come to show itself fully (the promise); 3. a moving beyond borders and citizenship to an international notion of sovereignty which differentiates itself and shares new things (*nouveaux partages*); 4. a justice; and 5. an unconditional injunction.⁹

I would like to expand, albeit in a different order than that proposed by Derrida above, on the constitutive elements of the democracy to come. Speaking at an international philosophy colloquium in April 1968, Derrida maintains that democracy is the *form* that such colloquia should take. He also argues that the form of democracy should be the political form of organization for society.¹⁰ He maintains that for an identity to exist democratically, all that is non-identical must come to have a voice; it must be represented in the politically temporalized sense. All diversity must be allowed to articulate itself within a democracy, however problematic that may be. Until the fullness of diversity is articulated, a true democratic political organization cannot realize itself fully. However, the differentiation and delay of *différance* ensure that differences can never come to full articulation. The democratic articulation of fullness remains undecidable and uncertain. Yet the injunction of the to come as assured by iterability means that any political discourse or experience will require a continual playing out of *différance* and the double bind. Our failure to achieve this full democratic articulation of individual differences calls us responsibly to make it "present" time and again.

In a Derridean democracy a subject differentiates itself from another but makes no claim to possess the difference. Such a subject is an erasing trace that can never be fully present to itself. Its decisions, conventions, and political opinions are all signs operated upon by a non-originary origin which is delayed and delaying.¹¹ Derrida notes that what is at stake is not so much not having an identity, for that would be non-sensical, but having an identity that is rooted in non-identity. Non-identity is not an identity of no-thingness or apophysis, but is a resistance to reducing one's difference to full presence. A subjectivity that is rooted in non-identity ensures that one is never reduced to any qualifier that is present at hand. For example, the traditional description, "I am Canadian" would become "I am not only a Canadian." A person is

often identified by what she does, but she is always more and always less than this. Following Derrida's early semiology, she is never fully present to herself or to another *originaliter*. Derrida favors the excess that is the person understood through *différance*. The moment a difference is asserted (possibility), it must not be reduced to an identity. This allows for the excess that is (not) the person (impossibility); it leaves a space (as long as there is repetition) for the promise of the person that "is" to come. Such is the nature of the democratic subject who belongs to a democratic culture.

Concretely, the unfulfilled desire to articulate all differences in Derridean democracy is problematic on two accounts. First, on a pragmatic level, one needs a language to articulate this diversity; the unavailability of suitable expressions or even the repression of speech make such diversity inexpressible. However, the challenge to political language brought on by Derridean deconstruction is much deeper than not finding the right words through which diversity can be expressed. Deconstruction challenges the possibility of language ever bringing any kind of diversity to full presence; the double bind structures its linguistic expression as undecidable. A deconstructive form of political communication must avoid a language of presence and instead highlight the double bind at work. The language of the promise speaks of things as possibly happening but never actually coming to their full realization. *Différance* brings into play the excess of meanings of political language that the language of a metaphysics of presence can never possibly contain. Differences need to be articulated; given certain pre-existing political structures, this is impossible to do. Moreover, and within the rubric of Derridean time, the uncertainty and undecidability that structure any political reality will render political communication even more complex.

Second, and again on a pragmatic level, the unfulfilled desire to articulate all difference in Derridean democracy is problematic because of tensions between divergent individuals or groups attempting to give voice to their own differences. Derrida is acutely aware of the violence that may ensue from the articulation of difference(s), yet he does not consider it a deterrent to their eventual "representation" or playing out in a democratic society.¹² The critiques of human nature offered by thinkers like Hobbes and Nietzsche suggest that different individuals will naturally oppress one another in order for their own individuality or difference to come to the fore. The sheer brute force of political will makes the Derridean democratic project of the articulation of differences quite impossible. Derrida would acknowledge this eventuality as concrete and rooted in a tendency to revert to the metaphysics of presence. He knows full well that the very nature of undecidability as well as our epoch's use

of force for political ends render the possibility of lapsing into a metaphysical politics quite concrete. In response, his *Force de loi* proposes a deconstructive reading of the law, opposing it to justice and showing the inadequacy and impotence of law's force.

Another Derridean condition for democracy is that all nationalist political platforms be dropped. We see here the emphasis on each differentiating person articulating herself. At the same time, however, such differences are never absolute. This condition forms an antinomial notion of democratic nationhood. On one hand, a democratic nation can only be democratic if it cultivates and allows all diversity to come to the fore; on the other hand, it may not lay claim to a national identity based on such diversity. It may not nationalize diversity. In *Voyous*, Derrida acknowledges that nations may have a national identity insofar as all reference to national sovereignty is not abolished. This is so because the articulation of a national sovereignty may very well be the articulation of a difference. At the same time, however, a new differentiating international political space must be provided in order to keep differentiation from being nationalized.¹³

For example, nationality and citizenship are affected by the double bind of the democracy to come. Nationality is not to be relinquished passively; its rules and guidelines will have to be deconstructed. The borders that define, confine, exclude, and include nations in relation to one another will have to be fluid rather than exclusive and absolutizing. In short, Derrida is advocating a new international juridical space "sans abolir toute référence à la souveraineté, ne cesse d'innover, d'inventer de nouveaux partages et de nouvelles divisibilités de la souveraineté."¹⁴

Derrida is not simply advocating a complete abolition of all claims to national sovereignty. He recognizes the need for a new international space that would be beyond the claims of countries to their own national sovereignty and to their own national identities, but at the same time he recognizes that there is a place for national identities and claims of national sovereignty. The double bind structure that is the mark of Derridean philosophy comes to the fore again. Practically, what does this mean? It means that we create a space where we try to eliminate metaphysical differences that exist among and divide nations while at the same time creating a universal and therefore international space where differences can continue to defer and differentiate themselves, including national ones. We will never be able to make this state fully present, but we keep trying. It is a future possibility that will never come to be fully present. Derrida has no illusion that his political vision is easy to accommodate and implement. One need only look at any of the hundreds of world conflicts that revolve around claims of sovereignty and national identity. The conflicts between Palestine and Israel, North and South

Korea, the situations in Columbia and the Congo are but a few examples where Derrida's political vision would seem just as difficult as any other proposed plans. In part this is due to the fact that these conflicts do not remain localized. Everyone must become involved in order to make the universalizable democracy to come function. To convince all nations to become involved in conflicts so seemingly far removed and irrelevant is an enormous task. The many conflicts that rage in Africa, including the bloodshed in Nigeria, Sudan, and the Ivory Coast, appeal (*injonction*) to us to respond; they call for justice. Many Western countries have only a passing interest in such conflicts and Western media coverage rarely focuses on the bloodshed.

Could the double bind structure that Derrida advocates result in some kind of political peace? Yes and no. A Derridean international cosmopolitanism¹⁵ rooted in hospitality (and the tensions/conflicts of friend-enemy) could ensue, but that cosmopolitanism would not result in a peace of stasis or calm. There would be the constant tension of the double bind and the attempt to make come that which will never come. The peace that would result would be marked by the flow of iterability and *différance*. If anything, the peace would be one of tension as opposed to harmony or stasis.¹⁶ The tension of the double bind and the tension between the push for a new international space and various claims to national state sovereignties would be critical for ensuring that a flow remains and that the Derridean democracy to come continues to unfold.

Derrida offers a democracy to come that allows a subjectivity to "happen" through the temporizing structures of *différance* and the promise. The simultaneous affirmation and erasure of difference as one's own happens not because it is willed but because it simply is, *es gibt*; it is given (*la donation*).¹⁷ The moment we try to de-structure the irreducible structure of *différance* is the moment we fall into the trap of a political thinking saturated by propaganda and the metaphysics of presence. The letting happen here is not passive. It refers to the inevitability or irreducibility of *différance*. Because it is irreducible, it will always haunt us. This is not a guarantee against ontotheological political thinking and doing. The letting happen is something that we must work to achieve. In this way, Derrida sees his notion of the democracy to come as a "militant political critique without end."¹⁸ Derrida's language here is very assertive; it is neither deconstructive nor hypothetical while it carries the weight of decisive interventions. The democracy to come is not just a prophylactic; it establishes structures and takes on stances that will allow justice to come to the fore. Justice in turn creates those political structures through which undecidability can play itself out. Derrida's call for the establishment of *villes-refuges* and his campaign

against capital punishment are concrete examples of such a critique.

For Derrida, justice, as the irreducible undecidability of *différance*, is the final constitutive element of the democracy to come.¹⁹ Justice too is structured by the aporia of the double bind. It too is an injunction.²⁰ However, the injunction can be just only when articulated in an oblique fashion.²¹ In *Le siècle et le pardon*, Derrida addresses the question of justice and its impossibility in order to determine whether the act of political pardoning can ever bring about justice. He describes himself as "*partagé*"; he is subject to the double bind.²² He recognizes that asking for the pardoning of certain crimes against humanity is an attempt to make just amends. However, an injustice is folded into such an attempt. The crimes remain impossible to pardon, especially since most of their victims have been murdered and cannot pardon directly. Moreover, if pardon is to be truly pardoning, it must be unconditional, absolute. It would be illogical to claim that one is half-pardoned for one's crime. Yet absolute pardon is impossible because it is always conditional on the other. The pardoning that is to be unconditional is conditional on the person or party pardoning: "[L]e pardon pur et inconditionnel, pour avoir son sens propre, doit n'avoir aucun 'sens,' aucune finalité, aucune intelligibilité même. C'est une folie de l'impossible."²³

As signs, original justice and injustice are always delayed. The meaning of a political situation must change, as must the attempt to bring about justice. Speaking of the crimes of the French in Algeria, Derrida recognizes that undecidability structures justice. Temporality too will mutate the sense of a political event and the attempt to bring justice to a political situation. However, and alongside undecidability, two decisive moments emerge from the aporia of the double bind. First, the language of the irreducibility of undecidability itself; one is *never* sure that one has made the just choice. Second, the specific instant or time when the re-evaluation of a situation must happen: "C'est là que les responsabilités sont à réévaluer à chaque instant selon les situations concrètes, c'est-à-dire celles qui n'attendent pas, celles qui ne nous donnent pas le temps de la délibération infinie."²⁴ Decisions cannot wait; one does not have the luxury of infinite deliberation. If undecidability is arch-structuring, what prevents these two decisive moments from being deconstructed? Why do they appear as irreducible? This is where we see the aporia of the double bind opening even further. In addition to undecidability, a certain decidability emerges, namely, a time for decisions and a time without the luxury of infinite deliberation.

Given the constant and simultaneous disjunction between justice and injustice, what prevents us from simply viewing claims of justice and injustice as related but mutually undoing, and therefore anarchic? Is it possible to redress real injustice without it being necessarily undone?

Derrida would reply in the affirmative and say that his own struggles to address injustices such as racism and sexism are a testament to his sense of engagement. But how do we philosophically account for a possibility that comes undone with its own impossibility and undecidability? If the double bind truly structures all reality then must not war crimes, holocaust, murder, and rape remain ultimately undecidable?

To the charge that deconstruction fails to engage serious social and political questions Derrida responds that the time structure of the promise, especially in the democracy to come, gives one a framework in which to insist on justice even in the wake of its possible impossibility. Justice here belongs to the irreducibility of *différance*. Hence the demand to reject the metaphysical presence contained in the crimes of rape, murder, or the holocaust. Such crimes reduce their victims to an absolute difference: victims of Nazi aggression were just "Jews," "homosexuals," "gypsies," etc. The differentiation and delay of the senses of their persons are brutally exterminated.²⁵

The injunction of justice to be *semper reformanda*, always reforming, makes room for the possibility of justice while making us responsible for its absence. The Derridean sense of oblique justice is that call for a continual responsibility to be just. It is the very non-achievement or imperfection of justice (i.e., injustice) that serves to motivate or call us to act even more justly, to respond by its very non-achievement. Unjust, violent, and dehumanizing acts demand a response (that this response is given or even acknowledged is never guaranteed), but how and why we redress them will always be inadequate. One can never fully make amends or redress that which has been violated or destroyed. That which has been violated or destroyed can never return; it is impossible.

Within Derrida's semiology, it is impossible to claim that anything comes to presence fully. Our structures of law, government, means of decision making, and public representation are delayed and deferred; they are undecidable. Yet these structures are what "the people" desire and deem to be of concern *today* (*le quotidien*). In making such a claim, we lose sight of the differentiation and delay that is truly happening and which is contained in the horizon of the promise. The classic example here is the daily silencing of minority groups that are too small or powerless to have any real differentiated voice as a democratic subjectivity.

At the same time, Derrida wishes to maintain that a certain heritage belongs to the realm of politics. Whence this heritage? It is given to us as a legacy of thought and management of worldly affairs. But how do we perceive this heritage? Is it not subject to structures that are temporizing and spacing? This heritage is impossible to perceive. It is subject to the logic of trace and erasure; it has already been. Does it haunt us or is it present at hand? Derrida would argue for the haunting presence of a

heritage conditioned by the double bind;²⁶ the nothing of the impossibility makes the perception of, and therefore interaction with, a heritage tenuous and truly not a thing, that is, nothing. How, then, can Derrida have any force or call for the end of perceived injustice when its present or heritage is dubious and undecidable, given the force of the nothingness of impossibility and the powerlessness of possibility to guarantee any actuality? Derrida insists that there is no heritage without the critical affirmation of a responsibility and a debt that will remain at work in all thought.

L'héritage

At first glance, the notion of heritage seems misplaced in Derridean philosophy, especially if we concede that Derrida's project is to dismantle the heritage and legacy of ontotheology. Yet deconstruction operates in a parasitical fashion. It requires the tradition or heritage of the past in order to carry out its responsibility to the injunction of *différance* and the democracy to come. Here too we encounter the double bind. I see heritage as vital for deconstruction as it not only provides givens, and "textual" and "contextual" realities upon which it draws—this Derrida concedes—but it also gives some kind of duration of instants which is constitutive and simultaneously autoimmune to the temporal flow that is iterability conditioned by the erasure of the trace. The durations that Derridean time flow gives to us must not be understood as fixed or existing *sub specie aeternitatis*.

In order to carry out my argument I must examine two central claims. First, I must go to the "origins" of Derrida's use of the term heritage, namely, Heidegger. Second, I wish to make a distinction: Derridean simultaneity, where intervalling signs or realities spatio-temporize themselves at the same time or instant, must not be conceived as a mere *coincidentia oppositorum* in the Cusanian sense, or as apophasis or as the *Aufhebung* of Hegelian dialectic. Rather, Derridean differentiation includes a double bind: duration and erasure. Though erasure may erase or make unrepeatable that which once was, that which once was does not necessarily disappear completely. It is not negated absolutely, nor does its opposite take its place. It stays behind in some form or another such that we can point to it and draw upon it in order to continue our deconstructive understanding of realities. It is perceptible in time. A differentiation of meanings is possible, but that which is differentiated is singular and not absolutely determinate. Yet it still leaves behind a trace of itself such that it can be built upon in the sense that it is the stuff or *hylé* that further deconstruction employs in order to continue with its parasitical task. The double bind refers to the coexistence and co-

constitutive nature of a multiplicity of meanings that may radically challenge the claim to any one absolute meaning or sense. Differentiation in the Derridean sense, then, leaves a heritage that can be commonly referred to, but it continues to multiply in meaning. Political events and decisions have a heritage that is perceptible and can be referred to. They are not absolutely undecidable, as this would mean there is no double bind and that we have lapsed into an absolute metaphysics of presence. The rate of differentiation of *différance* ensures that the constitutive instants of decidability and undecidability can be simultaneously experienced and referred to, thereby preserving the movement that is the double bind.

Let us turn to Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Here, Heidegger maintains that "[t]he resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself discloses the actual factual possibilities of authentic existing in terms of the heritage (*aus dem Erbe*) that resoluteness takes over as thrown."²⁷ He sets the discussion within the context of historicity. History, both communal (i.e., destiny) and personal, when appropriated by Dasein as conditioning one's own existence in the world and the meaning of the question of being in general, hands down (*traditio*) to Dasein a heritage, a legacy of factual possibilities, which Dasein can resolve to question and make meaningfully concrete as its own.

In the appropriation of Heideggerian heritage, Derrida justifies his own appeal to history, to the great texts and events of existence, which he draws upon to formulate his own views. Derrida not only uses the texts and events of history, these already-having-beens, to deconstruct or destroy, to use Heidegger's term, their objectivist or ontotheological claims, but he also para-cites; he cites around them, creating new sites and possibilities of understanding, opening up an open-ended horizon of possibilities of meaning being reiterated over and over again and anew. Though Derrida subscribes to a Heideggerian logic of a double bind of occlusion and manifestation, the former distinguishes himself from the latter in that he does not wish to situate his philosophy within the larger question of Being. Heritage within this context, for Derrida, is something that is a given, which he draws upon as text and context, but rather than it giving existential possibilities of self-appropriation it simply opens up the spatio-temporization that is *différance*; it makes manifest an "arch-structure." Derrida draws upon an enduring philosophical instant, namely, Heidegger's view of heritage, to help formulate his own instantiation and differentiated understanding of the term. This move is only possible if there is some kind of duration that is only possible through a rate of differentiation of instants (i.e., *différance*) which does not transcend the flow-rate of human consciousness itself. Ultimately, what Heidegger gives to Derrida is an enduring moment to draw upon, a moment that

has a definitive start and that continues to flow so long as human consciousness flows. Duration, however, does not imply total clarity of meaning. It is intelligible, but it is not an *absolutes Wissen*. This is also true for Derrida, especially now after his untimely death.

Let us now move to the important distinction between simultaneity and instantaneity. Here we find a more philosophical and argumentative justification of the notion of heritage. The signs that differentiate themselves spatio-temporally through the iterable flow that is “text,” or what we may loosely call reality, as there is nothing outside of the text, result in two consequences. First, there is a newness, a newness of possibilities and meaning, as there is a repetition of intervalling signs which continue to become different. This newness we saw echoed in the democracy to come when Derrida refers to sovereignty as facilitating “nouveaux partages” or new sharings/divisions/parts. Second, there is the trace that refers back or points back to an origin that conditions but is never fully present. Nonetheless, it is something that endures as origin even if we do not know what it is absolutely. These origins—and there are many—form what we can call a heritage or legacy upon which we draw and yet which continue to differentiate themselves. If we look at language or politics we can see that newness and heritage are fundamental and occur simultaneously or at the same instant, but they do not cancel one another out. They produce different meanings and senses of reality. As with Saussure’s semiology, Derrida draws upon its inherited structure to show how *différance* actualizes itself. In politics, for example, Derrida’s definite calls for *villes-refuges*, his determinate definition of the five foyers of the democracy to come, his engaged and definite positioning and lobbying to ban the death penalty, all of these draw upon a legacy or heritage while simultaneously and at the same instant calling for new thinking and positions that will alter old ones. Moreover, these are enduring instants in Derrida’s political thought and action. They belong to his person and no one else’s. They form part of his heritage, upon which we can draw.

Persecution, genocide, the exploitation of what Agamben calls “bare life” all have a heritage, though their meanings continue to differentiate themselves. Direct interventions to actualize new meanings and change deadly and violent political programs need to happen given this bloody heritage, but it should be remarked that our changes and reforms will never be absolutely adequate. The Derridean injunction of the democracy to come pushes us to be ever vigilant, to be aware of the flow of *différance* or the democracy to come, and to try to make better or more humane the heritage that will always be both already and altered in meaning. In the case of Abu Jamal, Derrida draws upon the open-ended meaning of freedom and what it is to be human to show that none of

these meanings can ever be absolutized as *différance* serves as a prophylactic against such definite judgments as the death penalty. If it is true that freedom’s heritage is and will continue to be open-ended, and if we understand freedom as essential for what it is to be human as guaranteed to us by justice—for there is no justice without freedom—then killing Abu Jamal violates this very freedom, and to execute him, or anyone for that matter, is to determine them absolutely and in a non-Derridean fashion. Abu Jamal, as all those condemned to die, must not incur the death penalty. The injunction of the democracy to come to allow his freedom to draw from the heritages of freedom and justice in order to continue to differentiate itself must be allowed to actualize itself.

Conclusion

Temporality reveals the undecidability that structures politics. Its aporia radically undermines how we think and concretize political structures and conventions. Our political stands and interventions are haunted by the undecidability of the promise. What we try to bring to concrete presence will eventually be undone; it will never come to full political presence. The frustration inherent in this aporia produces a tension between the possible and impossible; it forces us to act continually through the injunction of the promise, always striving to make politically present that which we desire to make present. The Derridean aporia of undecidability pushes us to strive to “concretize” political “goals” while remaining mindful that such goals operate within a *res fluxarum*; they are always inadequate. The inadequacy pushes us to make our political goals and interventions more adequate (and also more inadequate, depending on our political desires). Yet adequacy is undone by the very undecidability of the attempt. This is the heritage of the democracy to come. We make political decisions that are not absolute, and we know we have to keep making more, new, and revised ones, always drawing upon a given heritage which simultaneously endures and reiterates itself. These decisions are short-term and long-term; they resist the charge of inaction and undecidability only insofar as they are never absolute or eternally frozen moments in time. They flow as instants in time, marked by some form of duration and iterability.

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Notes

1. Richard Rorty, “Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism,” *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge, 1996),

17.

2. J. Claude Evans, "Deconstructing the Declaration: A Case Study in Programmatology," *Man and World* 23, 1990. Evans is citing from Derrida's deconstructive reading of the Declaration of Independence.

3. Evans, 177.

4. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia first introduced to the Second Continental Congress the resolution calling for independence from Great Britain. This resolution was passed on July 2, 1776. The Declaration of Independence, as drafted by Thomas Jefferson, was debated one day later and was adopted formally on July 4, 1776. See L. P. Todd and M. Curti, *The Rise of the American Nation* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 118.

5. Evans, 177.

6. Jacques Derrida, *Limited, Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 61–2.

7. "Retenant au moins le schéma sinon le contenu de l'exigence formulé par Saussure, nous désignerons par *différance* le mouvement selon lequel la langue, ou tout code, tout système de renvois en général se constitue "historiquement" comme tissu de différences" *Marges* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 12–3.

8. This undecidability is articulated clearly when Derrida considers the work of Freud in his essay, "La différence," *Marges*, 20.

9. Derrida, *Voyous* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), 126–35.

10. Derrida, *Marges*, 134.

11. "Le propre d'une culture, ce de n'être pas identique à elle-même. Non pas de n'avoir pas d'identité, mais de ne pouvoir prendre la forme du sujet que dans la non-identité à soi ou, si vous préférez, la différence avec soi. Il n'y a pas de culture ou d'identité culturelle sans cette différence *avec soi*.... Cela peut se dire, inversement ou réciproquement, de toute identité ou de toute identification: il n'y a pas de rapport à soi, d'identification à soi sans culture, mais culture de soi comme culture de l'autre, culture de *double génitif* et de la *différence à soi*. La grammaire du double génitif signale aussi qu'une culture n'a jamais une seule origine. La monogénéalogie serait toujours une mystification dans l'histoire de la culture"

L'autre cap (Paris: Minuit, 1990), 16.

12. Derrida, *Voyous*, 126–35.

13. Ibid., 127

14. Ibid., 127.

15. Ibid., 134.

16. Ibid., 128. Derrida speaks of rethinking the traditional notion of justice (*dike*), understood as harmony, as being out of joint (*désajointement*). Here, Derrida is recapitulating themes already elaborated in *Spectres de Marx*.

17. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 56.

18. Derrida, *Voyous*, 126.

19. Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 309.

20. Derrida, *Voyous*, 128.

21. Derrida, *Force de loi* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 26.

22. Derrida, *Foi et savoir* (suivi de *Le siècle et le pardon*) (Paris: Seuil, 1996, 2000), 127.

23. Ibid., 119–20.

24. Derrida, *Le siècle et le pardon*, 130.

25. Derrida, *Force de loi*, 60–1.

26. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 269.

27. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 351.