

## **ETHICS IN THE 20TH CENTURY.**

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The development of many ethical theories in the twentieth century in the continental tradition has taken place against the background of Nietzsche's celebrated critique of morality, as well as in response to the holocaust and the unprecedented horrors of the century. While there have been many noteworthy developments in the areas of feminist ethics, the "discourse ethics" of Habermas, and the work of the later Foucault, we will focus within the confines of this essay on Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida, as representative works in continental philosophies of ethics.

Nietzsche's attacks on morality have often been described as a nihilistic enterprise of destruction of values leading to the impossibility of ethics. Consequently, continental philosophies of ethics, which are in their very basis post-Nietzschean thoughts, have also been accused of moral relativism and nihilism. However, one could argue that they instead elaborate anew the very senses of the ethical, that they re-engage the philosophical basis of ethics, re-evaluate its possibilities and limits. Thus, Sartre finds the origin of ethics in the disappearance of a theological foundation for values, Heidegger would rethink the ethical by way of a critique of the metaphysical tradition of ethics, and Derrida questions the limits and aporias of ethics as the very possibility of ethical decision, etc. Consequently, whether explicitly or implicitly, continental philosophies allow for a rethinking of ethics, including when they take issue with traditional models.

Furthermore, one already notes that Nietzsche's critiques are not the simple dismissal of ethics as such, but rather an attack on a certain way of understanding ethics: Nietzsche targets what he terms "life-denying" ethical philosophies, which he sees in Christianity, and of course Platonism, both of which posit another world beyond this world in the projection of ideals. What is thus at issue

is the positing of the ethical values of “good” and “evil” as transcendent values lying beyond this world, a movement indicating an implicit rejection and hatred for this life in this world (as betrayed by the presence of guilt and shame as cornerstones of such ethics). This is the sense of Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals: to return to its actual basis in life itself, so as to reveal the material, historical, “human, all-too human,” origins of ethics and values, as opposed to some ideal provenance. Nietzsche actually calls for a re-evaluation of our ways of evaluating, namely for a life-affirming ethics, known as his philosophy of the overman and of joyful wisdom.

The proper site of ethics, which is Nietzsche’s question, is at the centre of the phenomenological enterprise, in which ethics is grounded on a phenomenal basis, as opposed to being left groundless in abstract theorizing on so-called applied and theoretical ethics. By ethics, one should indeed not understand a mere "application" of principles to various practical concerns, as if thought could be used as some kind of tool, following a consequentialist, utilitarian or instrumental model. The current and growing development of so-called “applied ethics” in the curriculum could be said to conceal a peculiar and paradoxical blindness regarding the nature of ethics, as well as a neglect of a genuine philosophical questioning concerning the meaning of ethics, at the same moment that it betrays an almost desperate need for ethics in our age. But this need arises out of the fact that ethics is left groundless. It is then ethics itself that is in need of a philosophical foundation, even it that means revealing its... groundlessness. Indeed, the notion of "application" assumes a ground for ethical precepts: ethics is guaranteed by a theoretical basis. But ethical judgment, as Sartre or Derrida would argue, takes place in an un-grounded way. One cannot secure in advance the norms and the values of the choice that chooses norms and values. The concept of "applied ethics" is thus self-contradictory, an oxymoron of sort. At issue is how ethics must be considered. Jean-Paul

Sartre, for instance, thinks ethics not as some theoretical principles to apply, but as the very condition of human existence.

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Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy of existence, or as he labelled it himself, existentialism, explicitly places itself within the horizon of Nietzsche's questions and challenges to traditional philosophy and theology, and particularly understands itself as a consequence of what Nietzsche called the death of God. Sartre thus explains that by existentialism, "we mean to say that God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequences of his absence right to the end." It will appear that existentialism not only is a humanism but also needs to be understood in its ethical significance. For the withdrawal of theological foundations and principles frees existence as a responsibility for itself. Sartre defines existentialism as that philosophy which claims that existence precedes essence. He distinguishes between two types of existentialism: the Christian existentialists, such as Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel (and one might add Emmanuel Mounier as well), and atheistic existentialism, of which he is the main representative. Atheistic existentialism claims that existence precedes essence because there is no God to provide an essential justification for our existence. Existence before essence, or without essence, means indeed existence without God and without a theologically founded morality. The death of God thus has an immediate ethical impact. In fact, it not only has an ethical impact, it also drives us to rethink what we mean by ethics, and to entirely reconsider ethics from the ground up. Why? Because if there is no God to provide transcendent values to base our ethical comportment on, then it is the very basis of ethics as traditionally conceived that disappears. This is why Sartre would insist that he does not propose a "secularised"

version of a theological foundation through which one would "suppress God at the least possible expense" and in fact continue to appeal to an objective set of values we could draw from. He rejects any notion of a priori values, whether they lie in an atemporal human nature or in the structure of pure reason. There are simply no values or principles "inscribed in an intelligible heaven." The existentialist, Sartre insists, draws the consequences of the death of God by stating that if God is dead, then, "one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given specific human nature," and we are then provided no values or commands that could legitimise our behaviour. This is why Sartre states that the existentialist "finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears with Him all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven." Does this mean that ethics in its very possibility disappears as well? Not in the least, for Sartre does not state that there are no values (that would be nihilism) but that there are no transcendently given objective values: they are not transcendent, but immanent to existence itself; they are not given a priori but to be created, and chosen (and once chosen, they are not established once and for all but are to be chosen again and again); they are not objective, because they express subjective life. According to Sartre, our ethical values are not given in a transcendent and objective sphere, but rather have to be invented in the motion proper to existence. Ethics thus becomes the praxis of our very freedom, and its justification ultimately lies in such a praxis. We choose values, and we also choose how we choose values. In that respect, Sartre's ethics takes on its main sense, one of absolute responsibility.

Responsibility constitutes the core of existentialist ethics, because existentialism recognizes that human beings invent what they are and the values they live by. Ethics is the heart of human existence ("to be" means to be responsible), and is consequently far from being dismissed by Sartre's condemnation of theological thinking. One may even argue that the possibility of ethics -- the absolute responsibility of an essence-less existence for itself -- is the consequence of the death of

God. At every moment, without any support, man needs to invent man. To that extent, he is absolutely responsible, not only for what he does, but above all for what he is. Ethics is here situated at the heart of existence as absolute responsibility, and is based on the absence of an a priori table of values, an "ethical scripture." Such a responsibility is for Sartre absolute, overwhelming, excessive or infinite, and universal (Sartre's existential ethics is not relativistic).

a) It is absolute, because of Sartre's very conception of freedom as absolute, that is, absolutely freed from any deterministic principle. Sartre goes so far as to claim that facticity -- that is, the very order of the not chosen, such as birth -- is a matter for my responsibility, and is in a sense chosen too. My responsibility becomes absolutized in this reduction of facticity and in the absence of any determinism. Because there is no essence, my responsibility knows no bounds.

b) Responsibility is thus infinite and excessive because there are no "natural" bounds to restrict it. I am responsible for existence, as we saw, because there is no foundation for existence... except itself. To be responsible hence means to be responsible for that very responsibility, for the lack that subtends it. There is therefore a hyperbolic inflation of responsibility, which encounters no limits, and becomes infinite and excessive for a finite subject. Sartre explains that there is no event in the world that does not in fact concern me, which is not mine to take on... This leads to another sense of our responsibility as universal.

c) As we saw, Sartre rejects a priori given values, values that would impose themselves on all humans. However, he does not embrace a kind of relativism but, on the contrary, stresses that our responsibility extends to all human beings. When I choose a value, I choose a form, a concept or an ideal, a notion that I project as a value to be embraced by all; I project a universal horizon, or rather a horizon of universality, to be chosen by others. There is therefore a universal scope of values for Sartre, not because they would be given a priori, but because I engage the world in my choices.

There is a universality, but it is neither given nor objective. Sartre does not believe in a private sphere of subjectivity. I exist in the dimension of the universal, but this universal can only exist as chosen.

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In Heidegger's work, the question of ethics is situated in and arises out of the very event of being and its givenness. Ethics is understood in terms of being and of what Heidegger calls "Dasein," the human being conceived in its relation to being itself. Traditional accounts of ethics are indeed phenomenologically "destroyed" or deconstructed in Heidegger's work, but in order to retrieve a non-metaphysical, non-theological, more original sense of the ethical. For instance, when Heidegger takes issue with the theme of empathy in Being and Time, it is not in order to condemn an ethical motif as such but to show how the problematics of empathy are still too dependent on Cartesianism and ego-based philosophies. Instead, Heidegger retrieves what he calls the dimension of "being-with," which is the originary being-with-others of Dasein, rendering moot the question of accessing through empathy another mind. Similarly, when Heidegger takes issue with ethics as a metaphysical discipline in "Letter on Humanism," it is with the intent of uncovering a more originary sense of ethics as "authentic dwelling" and "standing-in" the truth of being. Ultimately for Heidegger, as he himself states in the "Letter on Humanism," the thinking of being is an "originary ethics" because being is not some substantial ground but an event that calls for a responsible engagement and praxis. Let us first situate Heidegger's thought in relation to ethics in general.

In his "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger says he is developing an "originary ethics." Such a project might seem at first, for some, paradoxical, if not impossible: Indeed, Heidegger has often

been reproached for his alleged neglect of ethical issues, specifically his "inability" to propose or articulate an ethics or a politics or even a perspective for practical engagement in the world. The simple fact that he never wrote an ethics as he himself admits in his "Letter on Humanism" seems an eloquent fact in this regard. Whatever the reasons advanced, Heidegger's thought of Being, it has been concluded, cannot contribute to ethics or politics, or to practical philosophy broadly conceived as a domain of action and of collective existence. This charge of a neglect of the ethical may rest on a radical misunderstanding: one seeks to find in Heidegger's work a classical problematic, does not find it, and concludes that he ignored the ethical dimension of existence. It is indeed accurate to state that Heidegger does not offer us a traditional understanding of ethics, and in fact he even takes issue with ethics as a discipline. But precisely where he takes issue with traditional conceptions of ethics, or where he actually rejects ethics as a discipline in the metaphysical tradition, it is done in the name of a more originary ethics, concealed by metaphysical accounts, which he attempts to retrieve. Heidegger does not propose a system of morality, a series of prescriptive norms or values. Instead he rethinks the site of ethics. A first characteristic of such a site is its factual nature. The critique of traditional ethics is indeed, first of all, a critique of the abstract character of such ethics. Heidegger stresses that no "values," no "ideal norms" float above factual existence. When one considers, for instance, the authenticity/inauthenticity alternative in Being and Time, one sees that it is a matter of an existence coming into its own, the immanent movement of a radically finite and open existence, and not the "application" of rules, from above, to a previously an-ethical realm. Ethics is thus... existence itself, in its specific motion. Existence is ethical through and through and does not need to be "ethicised" from above. This is doubtless the reason why Heidegger has not written an ethics: because he does not need "to add" it on to an ontology that would then itself be

conceived only as a part of philosophy. In a sense, ethics is ontology itself because being displays an intrinsic ethicality.

Recent publications of Heidegger's early lecture courses have also made manifest the development of his own thought through an appropriative reading of practical philosophy and its fundamental categories. Courses from that period testify to the influence of practical-ethical categories in the genesis of Heidegger's thought and vocabulary (for instance his appropriative reading of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics). The structure of the moral law in Kant is understood by Heidegger as the mark of the finitude of existence, assigned to the dissymmetry of the law. Kant's ethical philosophy is then reinterpreted in the perspective of an analytic of finitude. One may also note here Heidegger's ontological appropriation of the motif of freedom in Kant's ethical philosophy in the On the Essence of Human Freedom, where freedom is there reinterpreted as the transcendence of Dasein. One also notes that in Being and Time Dasein is defined as a care or a concern for its own being, that is, not in abstract theoretical terms, as the reflexive subject of the modern tradition, from Descartes to Husserl, but in a "practical" sense. In that respect, it has been argued that all the existentials of Dasein should be understood as ontologico-ethical categories.

This can be seen in Heidegger's characterization of Dasein's authenticity in terms of responsibility. Heidegger describes Dasein's authentic being as a being responsible in the sense of responding authentically to the "call of conscience." A word of clarification first on the sense of responsibility in Heidegger's rethinking of ethics. If there is a notion of responsibility in Heidegger's work, it will not be, and it cannot be, accountability in the classical sense. Accountability – which has defined the traditional concept of responsibility, if exhausted it – rests upon the notions of agency, free will and subjectivity. One is accountable as a subject who is the cause of his or her actions through the freedom of the will. Accountability, as a concept, assumes

the position of a subject-cause, an agent or an author who can be displayed as a subjectum for its actions. Now Heidegger does not think the human being in terms of subject, does not think freedom in terms of free will, and rejects causality as a category applicable to being. There is therefore no ground in his thought for the concept of accountability; but this does not mean that it does not harbour another thought of responsibility. Indeed, Heidegger explains that Dasein -- a being who is neither a subject nor an ego -- is to be thought in terms of responsibility. This is the case in at least three respects: Responsibility defines the essence of Dasein; it constitutes selfhood; and finally, as it represents the relationship to Being, that is, its very essence.

a) The very concept of Dasein means: to be a responsibility of and for oneself. In On The Essence of Human Freedom, Heidegger states that responsibility for oneself represents the very essence of the human being. This "ethical" dimension of the concept of Dasein appears early in Being and Time, when he writes that Dasein designates that entity for whom Being is at issue. Being is given in such a way that I have to take it over and be responsible for it. I have being to be as my own because such a being is addressed to me as a possible way of Being, as a way to be, and not as a "what." "(Having) to be": the being that I am is to be taken on. This determination of Dasein from the outset defines the self as a responsibility of itself.

b) Responsibility is thus not thought as a consequence of a subject "owning" his or her actions, but is instead approached in terms of a response to an event that is also a call, the call of Being. Such a call individuates Dasein, constitutes its selfhood. Responsibility is not based on subjectness but constitutes the self as the called one. Each time, Dasein is called to itself. This is why the call is also that which I have to answer. There lies the hidden source and resource of responsibility: to be responsible means, before anything else, to respond, respondere. Having to be oneself: such is the originary responsibility of Dasein. "Become what you are," cites Heidegger,

which is not to be understood ontically, as “Realize your potential!” but ontologically, that is: What you are, you can only become it, because Dasein’s being is... to-be. In this “to-be” resides the ontological sense of responsibility, and it is thus a responsibility that defines the self.

c) After Being and Time, Dasein will in the later works of Heidegger be referred to more and more as the “called one,” der Gerufene, having to answer for the very openness and givenness of Being and be its “guardian.” The response does not follow the call but is already given in the call, always already corresponding to the address of Being. In fact, Dasein cannot but answer it; it has each time already answered, already said "yes" to this call of Being; it has always-already gained access to itself in such an answer. To be responsible here means to have been struck, always already, by this event. Responsibility refers to that event by which Being “enowns” humans. It represents human beings’ very belonging to Being as well as their essence as humans. Ultimately for Heidegger, ethics cannot be measured in terms of results and reduced to the production of effects on the basis of a theory within the end/means apparatus. Ethics is rather approached in terms of an incalculable finite dwelling of human beings, an authentic inhabiting in the openness of being, and designates humans’ sojourn as mortals in the finite dimensionality of being. Ethics here becomes an ethics of finitude, of finite being.

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With Levinas, ethics is situated in the relationship to the other person, in the “inter-subjective,” and is presented by Levinas as a response to violence and dehumanisation, as witnessed with the Nazi regime and the Holocaust. It is also situated in opposition to traditional ontology and the privilege of knowledge in Western philosophy, which always reduces the other to a principle of

identity, or “the Same.” Levinas aims at reversing the traditional hierarchy in which ethics is reduced to being a branch of ontology and epistemology and seeks to raise ethics to the level of first philosophy. As opposed to the negation of the other human, the ethical experience – however rare it may be – enacts a respect for and a concern for the other. Levinas describes this experience as the face to face with the other, in which I am faced with the destitute and vulnerable nature of the other. Faced with such vulnerability (ultimately the mortality or irremediable exposure to death of the other), I am called to care for the other and to attend to the other as other. Ethics understood in this way represents what is truly human in human beings, a new humanism (which Levinas calls “humanism of the other human”) that breaks with ego-centred philosophies and opens onto the infinite character of the alterity of the other to whom I am responsible.

Levinas thus begins by putting the primacy of epistemology -- and ontology -- into question; that is to say, to be precise, the primacy of epistemology and ontology over ethics. Levinas's thesis, which appears throughout his work and is introduced very early on, can be summarily presented as follows: epistemology and ontology, as they have defined the entirety of Western philosophy from Parmenides to Heidegger, is a thinking of the Same, a thinking which reduces otherness to the Same by the very power of its theoretical com-prehensiveness. Levinas states: "Theory also means intelligence -- logos of being -- that is to say, a manner of approaching the known being in such a way that its otherness in relation to the knowing being vanishes." In the traditional philosophical correlation between Knowledge and Being, knowledge represents, Levinas explains, "an activity which appropriates and com-prehends the alterity of the known." Consequently, western philosophy has most often been an epistemology, "that is to say, a reduction of the Other to the Same." In opposition to the tradition of Western thought, defined as we just saw, Levinas attempts to go "beyond the eleatic notion of Being," to overcome ontology, and to move beyond Being towards the

other (the other is for him the other human). One could in fact approach Levinas's thought as a whole from this effort to exit, or go beyond, towards an other that does not return to a same, that does not come back, and in that sense is infinitized.

In the 1951 article, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" Levinas defines traditional ontology as "the knowledge of Being in general." In such a context, "beings emerge against a background that exceeds them, as the individual cases against the background of the concept." One must therefore say that, just as individual cases fall under their concept, all beings and relations to beings fall within Being, and in particular relations to the other entity fall under Being. But for Levinas, the other entity par excellence is the other person, the "other human." Therein no doubt lies his undeconstructed humanism. But Levinas is not interested in deconstructing humanism; rather, he seeks to give it a new foundation, precisely in the relation and responsibility to the other. His conception of humanism is thus ethical through and through. If the relation to beings takes place within the horizon of Being, then the relation to the other person is included within Being, that is to say, subjected to Being as a neutral essence. Being as conceptual generality thus neutralizes the alterity of the other human. Now it is this dependency or subjection that Levinas vehemently rejects: all entities fall within Being, except for the other. The other is not a possible case of a relation to entities; it escapes the ontological horizon and does not let itself be circumscribed by a thinking of the Same. The relation with the other does not occur against the background of the ontological relation. The comprehension of Being cannot comprehend the relation to the other and "cannot dominate the relation with the other." One must in fact invert the hierarchy: it is the ontic encounter with the other that is first, not a neutral ontological/conceptual horizon. The ontic for Levinas precedes the ontological. The relation to the other is not ontology, it escapes ontology, and it precedes ontology. And since Levinas defines ethics as an encounter with an other, it is then the

relation with the entity -- with the other -- that commands and precedes the relation with Being. We must say that ethics precedes ontology and not the inverse. Ethics becomes first philosophy because the encounter with the other entity precedes any ontological horizon.

On that basis, Levinas also undertakes a radical critique of egoistic philosophies. This egoism would appear in what Heidegger calls the “mineness” (Jemeinigkeit) of Dasein. Ontology as the thinking of the Same would culminate in a solipsistic egology, in the form of mineness. Here sameness and mineness are one and the same; Levinas writes: “The Other becomes the same by becoming mine,” and he would go so far as to claim that the “knowing ego is... the Same par excellence.” What is important in this reading is Levinas's understanding of mineness as the reduction of the other to the ego or to the same -- the terms are now practically synonymous. For if Being is each time delivered over to Dasein, such that it takes it on authentically by projecting itself toward death as its most extreme and proper possibility, that would be at the price, it seems, of a radical exclusion of the other. Isn't the other for Heidegger irrelevant in my authentic assumption of death, since death is only “mine”? The verb “to die,” which for Heidegger defines the being of human beings, is declined exclusively in the first person singular. In this primacy of my death, all relations to others fade.

Now Levinas challenges such an egoistic solipsistic death, and opposes to it a death that would be more primordial, the death of the other. “The death of the other,” he asserts, “is the first death.” Levinas claims that I would be concerned for the other before any self-concern, that the death of the other would matter to me more than my own death, that it would be more authentic than Heideggerian death as solitary solipsistic dying. Levinas opposes to “solitary mineness” a being-for-the-other that would be more authentic. He explains, in “Dying for...” that for him it is a matter of a genuine “alternative between the identical in its authenticity, in its inalterable proper or mine of

human beings, in its authenticity, independence and freedom, and being as human devotion to the other.” I am responsible for the death of the other before I am responsible to my self: “it is for the death of the other that I am responsible, to the point of including myself in death...” In a sense, I am responsible because of the other’s mortality: “I am responsible for the other insofar as he is mortal.” Levinas thus opposes responsibility for the other to the Heideggerian egoistic solitary responsibility for oneself. To be sure, one could object that for Heidegger Dasein is essentially Mit-sein, being-with. But for Levinas the relation to the other is not a togetherness, a “communion.” Being-with reproduces a logic of the same and therefore, for Levinas, the proposition “with” is “unable and inapt to express the original relation with the other.”

The true relation to the other is not a being-together in a shared world but lies in an encounter with the other face to face, the "redoubtable face to face of a relation without intermediary and without mediation.” Seeking to give thought to an experience of alterity that cannot to be reduced to the Same, Levinas defines such a relation in terms of responsibility. This responsibility is a responsibility for the other, non-reciprocal, dissymmetrical, infinite, and non-chosen; it is the experience of a "being devoted to the other" in the guise of a being “hostage” to the other. All concerns for reciprocity, contracts and agreements with others, are seen by Levinas as (egoistic) calculative thinking. Instead, with the experience of responsibility, one is in “a relation to the other as other and not a reduction of the other to the same. It is a transcendence.” Responsibility to the other is opposed to what Levinas calls the immanence of the ego cogito. It is that experience that permits the departure from ontology and from the rule of the Same; it is that experience that gives access to the absolute alterity of the other. Therein lie both the break with ontology and the primacy of ethics. Such a responsibility, Levinas explains in Humanism of the other, "is prior to Being and to beings, is not said in the ontological categories.” In Ethics and Infinity, Levinas would clarify the

meaning of this responsibility. "I speak of responsibility as the essential primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. For it is in ethical terms that I describe subjectivity. Ethics here does not supplement a prior existential basis, it is in ethics understood as responsibility that subjectivity is constituted." By responsibility, we need to hear exclusively a responsibility for the other. It is equivalent to an originary passivity before the infinite obligation to the other. I am, as Levinas will say in Otherwise than Being, "hostage of the other." This being-hostage, this infinite responsibility for the other testifies, as Derrida shows in his homage to Levinas, Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas, to the radical dispossession or ex-propriation of the subject in Levinas's work. The subject is no longer a self-identity, an ego, and a self-consciousness, even an authentic self or Dasein: it is an openness to the other; it is a welcome of the other, in the subjective genitive sense (the other's welcome).

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Derrida problematizes further the question of the site and possibility of ethics in terms of what he calls "aporetic ethics." When speaking of ethics, Derrida does not mean a system of rules, of moral norms, and to that extent he readily concedes that he does not propose an ethics. What interests him in ethics is instead "the aporias of ethics, its limits": not to point to the simple impossibility of ethics, but on the contrary to reveal aporia as the possibility of ethics, what he calls the an-ethical origins of ethics. Derrida indeed sees the locus of the ethical in a certain experience of the aporia, of the impossible, to the extent that for him the impossible is not the mere stopping at a sheer end leading to a sterile incapacity, but constitutes a limit through which "nonetheless something announces itself in an affirmative fashion." Derrida thus stresses the following: "I suggested that a sort of nonpassive endurance of the aporia was the condition of responsibility and of

decision.” The aporia he speak about is not a momentary paralysis before an impasse, but the experience of the undecidable through which alone a decision can take place. Without such an experience, a decision would be nothing more than the application of a program; it would not be a decision but the application of a rule. Ethical decision is based on a not-knowing: In A Taste for the Secret, he maintained that "the moment of decision, and thus the moment of responsibility, supposes a rupture with knowledge, and therefore an opening to the incalculable.” The ethical moment, he would insist, "is independent from knowledge." When I have to decide, I do not have the knowledge of the norm by which to judge. There lies for Derrida the very opening of ethics: "It is when 'I do not know the right rule' that the ethical question arises.” This not-knowing marks the first appearance of the impossible, here identified as the an-ethical origin of the ethical, the an-ethical origin of ethics. Derrida explains: "What I do is thus both an-ethical and ethical. I question the impossible as the possibility of ethics... I try to think the possibility of the impossible."

Responsible decision is thus an openness to the incalculable. If the decision takes place in a leap into the unknown, then alterity is its condition. This is why for Derrida I can never say, I made a decision: when a decision happens, the subject is not there: it rather awaits itself at the reception of the leap: "for a decision to be a decision, it must be made by the other in myself.” Derrida would then speak of a passive decision, a decision of the other... in me. This openness is an exposure to limits that escape the calculability of the subject, as it is the marker of the inappropriable for the subject. Responsibility is a responsiveness to the opening of the incalculable, an incalculable that remains inappropriable for the subject. Derrida, as we saw, stresses that a responsible decision can never be part of a calculable horizon and cannot consist in the application of a rule, a determinable rule. A leap into the incalculable is necessary for any decision to take place. Deciding without knowing, deciding without being able to calculate all the consequences of the decision, here lies the

importance of the motif of the incalculable for Derrida's thinking of responsibility. It is a matter of marking an alterity at the heart of responsible decision, an alterity from which the ethical rises. In his words, "This is what I meant earlier by heteronomy, by a law come from the other, by a responsibility and decision of the other -- of the other in me, an other greater and older than I am."

In order to stress such a heterogeneity of responsible decision to the horizon of calculability of the subject, Derrida underlies what he calls the "im-possibility" of responsibility. Here impossibility does not mean: that which cannot be; but rather: that which happens outside of the conditions of possibility of the egological subject, outside of the horizons of expectation proposed by the subject, outside of transcendental horizons of calculability. "The incalculable happens." The impossible is not what simply cannot be and is therefore null and void. The impossible, which Derrida writes as im-possible in order to mark the excess with respect to the horizon of the conditions of possibility of the subject, is the limit of subjectivity to which subjectivity is exposed. To the establishment of the power of someone, some "I can," "to all this I would oppose, in the first place, everything I placed earlier under the title of the im-possible, of what must remain (in a non-negative fashion) foreign to the order of my possibilities, to the order of the 'I can!'" The im-possible is that which lies outside the subject, what exceeds it, and yet happens to such a subject, happening to it as impossible. In A Taste for the Secret, Derrida speaks of the absolute weakness and disarmament that allows the incalculable to happen. He speaks of the event of "the occasion, chance, the aleatory," which means "exposing ourselves to what we cannot appropriate: it is there, before us, without us -- there is someone, something, that happens, that happens to us, and that has no need of us to happen (to us)." Further, this impossible event -- "there is the impossible" we are told -- marks the alterity of the event, absolutely. Absolutely, that is, abysmally and infinitely foreign to the 'I

can'." Ethics would designate such an openness to the other, an ethics of the other in the subjective genitive sense.

This is how one can understand Derrida's ethical writings on hospitality. When speaking of hospitality as welcome of the other, Derrida shows that a conditional hospitality, one that remains regulated by the pre-existing conditions of a welcoming power, is no hospitality. Tolerance, for instance, i.e., hospitality up to a point, is not hospitality: the other is there "welcomed" on the basis of the conditions laid out by the host, that is, regulated by a welcoming power. One must therefore radicalise hospitality to the point of a genuine welcome of the other, in the subjective genitive. The other arrives, in its own terms: "Whatever happens happens, whoever comes, comes," hospitality registering such an arrival. In contrast to conditional hospitality -- no hospitality but exercise of power by the host over the arriving other -- Derrida proposes the notion of an un-conditional absolute or pure hospitality, that is, a hospitality not relative to the a priori conditions of the subject and therefore absolute in that precise sense: "pure and unconditional hospitality, hospitality itself, opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an absolutely foreign visitor, as a new arrival, non-identifiable and unforeseeable, in short wholly other. Hospitality, as responsiveness to such arrival of the other, is as well incalculable, im-possible, and absolutely "of the other." Ethics represents, in its aporetic structure, the arrival of the other and the obligation of the welcome. The impossible is the very structure, and possibility, of the alterity of the event, and of responsibility as welcome of (subjective genitive) such an event. Ethics becomes the experience of limits, of what remains inappropriable or "impossible" for the subject. This is why aporia represent the very possibility of a way, as "non-way the condition of walking." In Derrida's words: "This impossibility to find one's way is the condition of ethics."