

## **Understanding Derridean Deconstruction and Ethics Today in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

The paper explores the relevance of Derrida's Deconstruction and Ethics in the world today. It begins by analyzing how Derrida came about with Deconstruction as his way of understanding reality around him. It then dissects his interpretation of Ethics in all its ambiguity, subjectivity, and contradiction to established thought of his time. It finally tries to comprehend the relevance of his style of thinking in today's world, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its onslaught and potential aftermath.

**Keywords:** Derrida, Deconstruction, Ethics, Morality, COVID-19, Pandemic

### **Introduction**

“Amid increasing awareness of the malaise of rapid modernization and suspicion toward the prevalent forms of radicalism, postmodernism draws an audience seeking a new form of human emancipation and a new theoretical ground for social criticism...” Every aspect of today's society has seen a radical change: economic growth and industrialisation, urbanisation, democratisation, social disintegration, cultural transformation, etc. This has given rise to a situation in which tradition, modernity, and postmodernity have intertwined themselves in a unique hybrid amalgamation which in turn has led to the uncertainty of us having a common human aim and direction. The appeal of deconstruction in such a scenario can be seen even more, as an elegant way of



diagnosing the current pulse of society while charting a worthy course for the future. Postmodernism is a double-edged sword leading to both hope and despair while postmodern ethics is based on the scepticism of the traditional narratives about morality, rules, and a general ethical way of proceeding. This negates any possibility of a positive formulation of ethical principles in contemporary ethical discourse, opening the way to look at the *Other* from a completely different perspective. This other has always been marginalised and suppressed both in thought and practice. How does this come about? It comes from the assumption that idea and reality are inseparable. When we deny existence and reality to the other through our thinking, it automatically makes the jump to its marginalisation and suppression, often through violence in the real world.

In this regard, none cuts a more unique figure on the philosophical horizon than Jacques Derrida. He was one of the most famous, controversial, but also wise figures in not only recent French intellectual life, but also in philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He distanced the various philosophical movements frolicking in the fertile ground of French philosophical thought of the time, like phenomenology, existentialism, and structuralism. He suffered greatly from the antisemitism of Algeria's majority Muslim population and was deeply marked by the experience of having been in an inferior position at the nexus of three different religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – all claiming to speak the Truth without knowing how to treat the others with particular respect. He was a brilliant student, but in an odd position; highly privileged in terms of education, but utterly at the margins in Metropolitan France in his status as an Algerian Jew. It was from the late 1960s onwards that Derrida began to develop the ideas that made his name, through his abstruse and subtle writing style. Behind the high-flown vocabulary, he laid down some crucially important ideas.

### **Deconstruction – Derrida's Weapon of Choice**

Derrida argues that Western philosophical tradition has focussed so much on meaning that it has worked extremely to appropriate and master the other by essentially reducing its plurality to some semblance of sameness. Deconstruction aims to look at the other from an outside perspective, a different way of looking at it that cannot be reduced to a kind of logocentric, philosophical conceptual singularity. Derrida makes it clear that he is not calling for philosophical irrationalism or relativism in the interpretation of philosophical discourse. He rejects the thinking that deconstruction tries to go against the grain of truth or stability of thought. We cannot just reject something and directly look at its opposite without analysing it with precision and rigor. We have to interrogate not just the idea under contention, but also the essence of reason. This is not reducible to technique or science and requires the type of thinking that goes beyond mere setting of goals, rational thought, technology, or even metaphysics.

Derrida founded deconstruction, probably the most famous of his terms, as a way of critiquing, literary and philosophical texts, and political institutions of the day, essentially of the Western philosophical tradition. He used it to describe the way he went about thinking, though when other people started using this term, he quite often felt they had misunderstood what he meant by it. Essentially, deconstruction means pulling apart any kind of excessive loyalty to a particular idea and working to see aspects of the truth that might be buried in its opposite. While deconstruction happens at both the literary and philosophical levels, the latter aspect concerned Derrida more. Philosophical thinking created an element of dualism, which in turn created a dichotomy, where one term of the dichotomy was usually given more importance than the other.

The most common way that deconstruction happens is via analyses of texts. The word 'text' here is anything that carries meaning. It can be an article, a book, a movie, a song, etc. This starts with looking at the literal meaning of a text, followed by its hidden meaning, and diving even further into alternative meanings. For Derrida, a deconstructive reading works best through comparison such that there is a clash of visions. This helps us with finding out different ways in which the texts are speaking to us. When we throw texts through this intellectual wormhole, they inadvertently end up doling out meaning in some form. This happens at once and also separately. Since Derrida held that ideas and reality are inseparable, and the other exists both conceptually and in reality, the goal of deconstruction is to find this point of *otherness*. Deconstruction does not exist in some sort of vacuum or nothingness; it is about an openness to the other. Also, the meaning of a text is not something that is constant, static, or stable. Unlike traditional philosophical thought, deconstruction does not lead to some sort of ultimate truth. It is merely a starting point for further interpretation, which then calls for more discussion, analysis and interpretation, and so on. The opening of the text to that search allows for more analysis, or else everything would be fixed and frozen. "A responsible reading should not be confined by the goal of unearthing the supposed intention of the authorial subject, but should instead take it as its responsibility to open up the otherness of the text. Reading is thus proposed as the locus where/in which the reading subject explores a relation to the other..."

Deconstruction seeks out the similarities and the differences. At first glance, we try to look at what the text says to us through its obvious themes. At the same time, we also try to keep an eye out for alternative and subtly hidden meanings, essentially what the text does not tell us directly. Derrida makes it clear that for this to happen, we need to go beyond the constraints of the syntaxes that conventional language makes us follow. We need to think outside the box, colour outside the lines a little, to get into the marrow of the text. We need to engage in the dualities of the text creatively, successfully swinging between what the text conveys to us directly, and what it does indirectly. Derrida's interpretations of texts make it difficult to pinpoint a clear demarcation between

the obvious meaning and the deconstruction. Derrida believed that deconstruction merely highlights what was already revealed in the text itself. The meaning is already there. We just have to discover it under syntactical and semantic debris.

Thus, it goes without saying that for Derrida the context becomes extremely important. We cannot abandon it even if we wanted to. Once we identify and analyse the context, we can get an idea of a sign that can be further interpreted and delved into. Derrida does stress that no context is entirely determinable, but he also says that this does not mean that it is absolutely indeterminable. But we must remember that even though deconstruction cannot be permanently fixed within a particular context, it is still absolutely responsible for that context. It takes the context's singularity into account and therefore cannot abandon its duty to the context's meaning. "Deconstruction, then, is not only constantly transformed as it becomes different in and through multiple and heterogeneous contexts, but it is also transformed in and by the same context."

Deconstruction contends that the process of writing is a fluid and dynamic one. The meaning of key terms is always changing depending upon the deconstructive process. This even applies to any attempts at trying to define deconstruction itself. It becomes a paradox ignoring even what Derrida himself believed deconstruction to be. The texts dole out meanings through patterns, proto myths, symbols, etc., enough for them to be open to interpretation. The context of the culture, society, group, and other parameters also aid the deconstructive process in its quest for meaning, as the text itself may not have the meaning outright. This, in turn, helps us investigate which things, in particular, were not said overtly in the text and why they were not said. The process tries to shed light on the hidden assumptions, what is the text not saying, why the context is the context in that regard, who it serves, etc. In other words, we not only read the lines but also read between them.

To deconstruct an idea is to show that it is confused and riddled with logical defects. We must keep this messiness constantly in mind. Derrida was criticising our tendency to imagine that behind every problem lies somewhere a good and neat solution. For him, being confused and uncertain about such concepts is not a sign of weakness, but an essential marker of a person's maturity. Confusion and doubt and not embarrassing dead ends in a Derridean worldview. They're simply evidence of the adulthood of the mind. Like many philosophers, Derrida can be valued as a person who opened our eyes to certain extreme attitudes of the time, through his fervent commitment to reason and precision of thought. Derrida didn't want to remove all hierarchies. He knew it was right that kindness should be privileged over cruelty, wit over dullness, and generosity over meanness. But he also understood how often we unwittingly dismiss things, people, and ideas when their opposites bask in what might be considered an arbitrary status. In the highest sense, Derrida can be seen as a voice of modesty and patience, making us aware of the value in ideas we may easily overlook. He urges us to imagine what it

might feel like to be, even if only for a little while, on the other side of any debate. For Derrida, deconstruction exemplifies our thinking so that the appropriation of thought by socio-economic political forces does not take place. Deconstruction is a means of subverting any group's claims to legitimacy because traditional thought is riddled with dominant institutions or practices based on unjustifiable assumptions set up as a gold standard by the power group of that community. Derrida's underlying claim for deconstruction is that history can no longer be given only from the perspective of the victor. There needs to be a healthy respect for the other. His conception of ethics focusses on opening a way for the victimised and marginalised to tell their side of history to us.

### **Derrida's Ethics – Ambiguous, Contradictory, and Subjective**

Whether we believe it or not Derrida is, when all is said and done, an ethical thinker trying to push ethics to reflect on itself and others at a higher level. Funnily enough, he refused to be compartmentalised by the term "ethical" in the traditional sense, while still working to understand the ethical relations of his texts. This stance creates a sort of impasse confronting our need to seek understanding through analysing the dichotomy of reality. Using Derrida's trajectory as a compass, ethical relations can be analysed from a non-ethical viewpoint, which is not necessarily anti-ethical. His ethics are established through the duality of his deconstructive process, and so are usually not presented in a very systematic manner. His philosophy emerges from a discussion of texts by others, an interpretative approach. His style is to keep the original meaning and context on one side, and the ambiguities and contradictions on the other. The themes in Derrida's ethics are always shown to be impossibilities; his ethical thought posits that an absolute ethical position is not possible. Trying to put forth an absolute ethical position destroys the responsibility towards the other individual, and basing our ethics on our response to a particular individual renders the absolute position moot. He also believed that ethics can never not be present. A self will always exist in relation to an 'other'. Dualism will always be there. As long as the other exists, the self's relationship with it will exist, thereby confirming the existence of the self as well. The self cannot claim itself to be absolute because even when defining the self, it would mean recognising a primary relationship with something other than the self. Thus, as much as a contradiction is unavoidable, so is an infinite destructive ethical loop.

One of the most basic requirements in ethical thought is that we must be free and responsible for our actions and decisions. Derrida jumps right in by trying to understand what freedom is. On the one hand, freedom is following the rule. But occasions arise when in our quest for justice we have to rise above following rules. Following the law would be right, not just. In law, there is the letter of the law and the interpretation of it. For any judgement to provide justice, the judge has to interpret the letter of the law in the context of the judgement. In simple terms, the punishment should

not just fit the crime, but also take into account the perpetrator and the victim. The law is both conserved and destroyed simultaneously, because each decision is different, requiring a unique interpretation for which a precedent may or may not exist. For Derrida, this simultaneous upholding and destroying (reinterpretation) of the law is seen as a violent rebellion against already instituted laws, thereby making justice impossible.

Juxtaposed to any ethical decision, we must experience the uniqueness and singularity of each ethical decision we make, understanding that it does not fit the established rules. Therefore, a decision is impossible but still has to be made. We are not just oscillating between two oppositions. We are obligated to make the impossible decision while taking into account the general principles involved. That's what makes a decision prove its mettle. For Derrida, the decision has to go through this ordeal to be a free decision, but not necessarily just. If we follow the rules, we are not taking the context into account making the decision unjust. If we do not follow the rules, we are not using the proper foundation that general ethical principles provide. Derrida also puts forth another issue in making a decision. Since ethical decisions need to be made in a timely fashion, we would not be making an informed decision. We have access to only a limited amount of context and knowledge. The decision is made in a moment of non-knowledge and non-rule. Thus, we can never fully make a just decision, as we are constantly grappling with the deconstructive nature of the decision.

Derrida shows particular interest in the theme of *responsibility to 'the other'*. This other person could be God or a person toward whom we have a responsibility in terms of a set of general principles and behaviour. While being responsible for the other person, we are also always responsible towards others in a very general sense, based on the similarities we share with them. Derrida believes that this accountability and responsibility in all aspects of life are often taken for granted. The difficulties involved in being responsible are much more complex than merely behaving dutifully. The common understanding of responsibility is that we behave according to a set of principles considered rational and valid by society, community, group, etc. Derrida believes that instead of the ethical demand for responsibility by society, the demands of the individual other should drive our sense of responsibility. Ethics tend to depend on general rules and norms binding on a group or community. This attitude is sacrificed constantly in an unconscious manner by us as a whole. We cannot have an attachment to anybody and equal compassion for everybody at the same time. We cannot look at our duties to others from a general principle of humanity that does not exclude anyone. We are always prioritising who the beneficiary of our responsibility will be in everything we do. So, the only way we can be responsible to any one person that needs our help is by failing in our general principle of responsibility to all others as a whole. Thus, we can only be responsible to any particular individual by being irresponsible to other people. We have to make peace with the fact that we may not be able to help everyone

because we just cannot do so.

Deconstruction works from a paradoxical angle. This paradox challenges the binary choice and decision-making ability of ethics while not rejecting it at the same time. Derrida calls this *'irresponsible'*; this constitutes the paradox of ethics. However, this general ethical paradox is brought to the foreground by illustrating it in individual cases of the paradox. The deconstructionist has a responsibility to illustrate these individual paradoxes called the *'absolute responsibility'*, which is something inconceivable and unthinkable, involving the other, and making substitution and repetition an impossibility. When Derrida talks of singularity he means the uniqueness of the other. This does not mean a simple difference between the subject and the other, or between others. It is not something secret or private which can be known but is hidden. The uniqueness that Derrida refers to is that which is irreducible, unrepeatable, heterogeneous, and idiosyncratic. The *'general responsibility'*, on the other hand, is that which we have to the universal nature of ethics and law. This requires substitution and repetition for it to apply to others, and for them to be accountable for it. In other words, to be responsible to an individual other, we have to be irresponsible to the ethics in general applied as a blanket system. But this irresponsibility is not in opposition to ethics or even responsibility. It is very much a part of the binary of responsibility and irresponsibility. This paradox is not about the rejection of the system of universal ethics. "Rather what Derrida demonstrates is that the two equal and imperative duties to which we are required to respond, produce a tension: a paradox... not resolved by a simple decision or choice between the two... that exposes the... inherent violence of, every choice or decision." Thus, the moral is about morality itself. Morality and ethics are paradoxically constituted by the irresponsible, which is our absolute responsibility, and entails an inevitable and unjustifiable sacrifice. We must be irresponsible in order to be absolutely responsible.

While Derrida believes that ethical principles are transcendental, he also recognises the violence of this transcendence and the need to challenge it from an empirical standpoint. His focus is on a system of ethics of good as opposed to one of evil. Derrida is a tad ambiguous about how his system of ethics balances the Kantian ethical absolute and the infinite number of empirical variations based on the context of the ethical situations. Deconstruction is not some kind of alternative ethical system or theory. Derrida holds firm that the deconstructive experience is a responsibility in and of itself. The deconstructionist is able to question ethics, politics, and any other generalising and universalising system of thought, thereby showing not only a responsibility in itself but also making it possible to derive a more renewed understanding of ethics. Thus, we cannot posit deconstruction to be right or wrong from an ethical standpoint. What it does do however is questions the need, desire, and belief in a permanent truth, be it God, or any ethical system that can be believed in and followed



from a perspective of general rules and codes of conduct. There is a very real and plausible need for moral decisions followed by concrete action. But we have to agree and accept that deconstruction can only come about when we believe in the ultimate purity of moral standards, and the need to make such decisions and actions a reality in daily life, and then move on from there.

### **Derridean Relevance in Today's World**

Derrida questions the very essence of morality. What is the ethical nature of ethics itself? What is its responsibility? What is the very question that we are questioning in the case of ethics? While these questions are urgent, they remain unanswered without a general response, other than one which is linked specifically to the answer that is being adhered to at that particular time by the system. What governs Derrida's writings and thoughts on this whole dichotomy of responsibility and irresponsibility is that an ethical relationship is unique and singular each time. We should not simply conform to the dictates of duty. We should be making these decisions uniquely in each singular instance.

For most postmodernists, ethics is viewed as doomed because they look at it as a branch of philosophy that inevitably focuses on logic, metaphysics, ontology, rules, categories, foundations, etc. These are all concepts that they want to deconstruct. But Derrida believes that understanding ethics and morality is essential to any deconstructive reading. Western philosophical tradition has usually been ontological in nature, which consists of reducing, and at times suppressing all forms of otherness so that they can be subsumed into a universal and general concept that is the same for all. This resistance of the other is conceived to be of an ethical nature as the other looks to keep its own unique identity. Postmodernist thinkers believe it to be ethical to resist the defining of the ethical in terms of an idealised system of norms, rules, and laws. There are no theoretical justifications for why these general ethical rules exist. Ethical decisions should be made without the articulation of pre-established criteria. The goal of ethical discourse is to help us understand our social reality as it exists around us, and plan for its future positively. Derrida argues that deconstruction is a quest for openness to the other, from the standpoint of the other as victims of history, in the realms of both social realities and thought.

Thus, when looking at the paradox of general responsibility and absolute responsibility, we have to decide the side we choose. Also, choosing either side will lead to violence against the other, no matter how uncertain or ambiguous the decision is. Derrida believes that we all function and operate in a kind of economy of this violence stemming from the choices guided by responsibility. What does this mean? It means that there can never be a non-violent ethics or responsibility. Choosing one means we

have to tear down the other, either in thought or action. Our decision and response cannot be calculated in advance. This leads to prefabrication, which is how the prescriptive and universalised systems gain applicability over time and across all contexts. Making unique ethical decisions means being accountable, and being absolutely responsible for our responses, something that generalised ethical systems cannot do. Thus, deconstruction is positive. This is its absolute responsibility. It is an ethical relationship with a difference.

Derridean ethics demands that we have something that is outside of us, within us. In this spirit, self-affirmation cannot happen without the affirmation of the other. Ethics cannot be absolute because when we move to that extreme, the hedonism undermines itself by adopting abstract principles. Ethics can function only if it allows the other to be distinct and different from the subject. This happens in a spirit of generosity. The other cannot thrive in an ethical relationship of indebtedness. The ethical act, the absolute responsibility, and the sacrifice does not require an equivalent in return. We have to follow concrete relations with the actual other in ethics. A mere theory does not make it right. Complete fulfilment is not possible without positivity toward the other through hospitality and friendship. Separation of the individuals for Derrida is the end of humanity because ethics is everywhere and moving forward is impossible without acknowledging that responsibility in both thought and action.

An important element to keep in mind when reading Derridean ethics is that his focus isn't on the rules. It isn't about a system of ethics. Derrida takes everyday concepts that affect human life like responsibility, justice, hospitality, friendship, forgiveness, etc., and analyses them through the rose-tinted glasses of deconstruction. The main focus is the relationship with the other. That relationship is studied and dissected through the myriad way in which we interact with our fellow humans, starting from a basic empathetic responsibility towards another person to the concept of mourning the death of a loved one. What is studied is whether or not an ethical relationship is possible. The very act of Derrida's deconstruction is done in the context of themes and aporias, that is, in relationship with the other. Rather than espousing another theory about the nature of the world, deconstruction distorts already existing narratives to reveal the underlying hierarchies and dichotomies. Derrida's entire premise for deconstruction is based on the principle that dualisms are dualisms and dichotomies are undoubtedly present in the works of various philosophers and writers. On its own, it does not stand alone. It always functions in the context of something else. The foundation is not a single unified self but one that is divisible between oneself and oneself as 'the Other'.

The relevance of the Derridean way of looking at things continues even to this day. His work, in its broadest context, pervades our understanding of our present intellectual, cultural, and political situations. It is rigorous and provocative, exact, and experimental. He is relevant to this movement because his work can be read in a way

that supports any central idea to be studied. It is very difficult to read Derrida in the same way his work was read at the height of his popularity. However, his work cannot be reduced to the postmodern relativism for which it has been taken in the past. It has in some way transcended the Husserlian way of looking at things. People have started to read him more and more carefully. His rigorous grounding in the French phenomenological tradition makes him an excellent candidate to teach us about the conflict between transcendentalism and historicism that is visible today, along with the widespread reading of his works through the eyes of relativism today.

Derrida endorses the interpretation of knowledge and understanding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century from the viewpoint of the other, the subaltern way of looking at things. His “context” of philosophical and scientific knowledge lay emphasis on the history of human civilisation, without which we cannot exist. His writings have reshaped how many people think and see the world. Today’s ‘*woke*’ culture is very much an expression of the Derridean style of thinking. Derrida in the modern-day context could be seen as the conscience keeper of society in general. He is like the student in class who keeps asking questions that baffle even the most knowledgeable of teachers. His method of deconstruction can be viewed as a modern-day take on the Socratic Method. While Socrates aimed to get to the absolute truth by dissecting a topic, Derrida focuses on the person and the method. He looks at the answer as a by-product of his process. The aim of engaging in the Derridean style of philosophy is to peel back the way we look at things subjectively. With our lives in disarray from the pandemic, we are looking for answers. Derrida does not provide them, he merely supplies a method that reminds us that rather than looking within for the answer, we can find it by looking within ourselves, in relationship with the other. Our attempt at finding answers is like thinking out loud, or making a list of pros and cons when deciding on something.

Derrida’s deconstruction becomes more focused depending on the topic being dissected. When we look at morality or ethics through his process, we could posit that for him the bigger picture could be achieved by focussing on the smaller one. A lot of the Derridean talk on ethics is focussed on the simultaneity and paradox of themes and not the system of ethics itself. We could claim that by being singular in our focus on doing the right thing concerning a single other, the positive effect of our action increases exponentially with regard to society in general. It is like that attitude of doing something good for a stranger in need, from a completely altruistic point of view, and then asking them to do the same to another person in need, and so forth. By denying that an absolute is possible, Derrida paves the way for it to naturally happen in small ways, having a greater impact. Thus, large absolute concepts like justice, equality, freedom, peace, etc., are never fully attainable. They are attainable when we look at them as singulars in the context of the other person. Each of these singular actions, via their success, leads to a plurality that then gets categorised. The same holds for ethics and morality. Thus,

we are building and destroying ethics at the same time, a task that will never be fully completed on a grand scale but is being achieved in individual cases. None present themselves as to particulars that would essentially communicate with the universal. Each can only be resolved by ignoring the example or the exemplarity of the example. It is a question of the ethics of that particular example, and not of ethics in general.

### **Derrida and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

As we experience the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been going on for over a year, we can deconstruct Derrida's ideas on a wide variety of topics. The management of the pandemic has seen tremendous success among groups, communities, and societies that have understood the context of responsibility of hospitality, law, and justice to the other. It is common in many Asian countries for people to wear masks when they are ill, especially when they have a common cold. So, people did not need to be coaxed or forced to wear masks or follow the protocols to slow the spread of the pandemic. Most Asians complied readily, early, and widely. Taiwan provided close monetary support to patients with Covid-19 and people with whom they had come into contact, making sure health recommendations were being followed. In New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Arden exemplified empathetic and clear communication, which greatly increased the people's willingness to cooperate with the authorities thereby helping the country bring the pandemic under control very early. The Danish government made sure employees in private companies continued to be employed by compensating a large chunk of their salaries from its coffers. Finland focussed on its strong media literate policies to counter fake news, by partnering with social media influencers and using their reach to pass on important information. South Africa also introduced an alert public messaging system to help the government communicate effectively during lockdowns. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel also focussed on effective communication thereby showing patience and discipline in efficiently handling the pandemic.

However, the pandemic has also undermined the distinctions between individuals and the collective. The lines between walls, borders, limits, and individual autonomy have blurred. This can be a problem because these boundaries demarcate our personal responsibilities and freedoms. This crisis also becomes an excuse for the ideological and political discourses to carry out harmful activities such as vilifying certain groups as responsible for the pandemic or even clamping down on freedoms through laws passed without proper procedure, police brutality of vulnerable communities, etc. There appears to be a threat to what we thought we knew about our moral responsibilities to other people. This is not the same in every country. Those with

a deeper social welfare ethos have weathered the pandemic better. But we can detect unconscious demand for freedom along with our responsibility towards the other. Our dependence on others can be highlighted by the fact that our individual actions can make other people sick. The same individual actions can also help save lives, especially with regard to following the protocols put in place and taking the vaccine. Thus, there is all the more need to defend the insistence that we are each not only responsible to ourselves and autonomous but also obligated to do what is potentially good and life-saving for the other. Thus, deconstruction is exactly the analytical tool needed. For Derrida, the onus is on us to be absolutely responsible. We have to be careful by taking into account without relativism the unique, singular historical situation in which we find ourselves. It is at this moment that we can go beyond the interpretation of freedom, or lack thereof, as it is seen during this pandemic as defined by governments. The pandemic opens the door to a different interpretation of freedom, showing us a more plausible and real view of the world around us. Our responsibility is to decide how to strategically orient the deconstruction of the issues we are facing. This analysis makes us aspire to change things insofar as it exposes the excluded other. It also shows us how the interpretation has been naturalized, leaving the rest up to us.

The greater ideal of democracy and the concept of people as a unit has been deconstructed into decentralised units, with a focus on the local and individual contexts. This leads to a better understanding and handling of the situation in real time. Each person has been recognised as the individual unit that needs attention and focus, different from the other. While the laws and resolutions have been passed as generalisations, the implementation is left to interpretation based on the context of the situation. An oversimplification is that the person's need is prioritised and attended to, on a case-by-case basis, which gradually amounts to successful management of the situation as a whole. The same could be applied to any ethico-political movement at any given time at any given place, be it about climate change, people's right to protest, police brutality, draconian laws, etc. From Greta Thunberg's sit-out outside her country's parliament building to raise awareness on climate change, to the wall of shoes built by a Turkish artist to protest the rise in domestic violence deaths in Turkey, to the "A Rapist in Your Path" song, or pink pussy hats or *The Handmaid's Tale*-style scarlet cloaks to protest systemic violence against women – each of these is a context-based issue that is dealt with in an inherent Derridean style of questioning the absolute while building up to the tempo of a mass viral and global movement of gigantic proportion.

"A philosopher is always someone for whom philosophy is not given, someone who in essence must question the self about the essence and destination of philosophy. And who reinvents it." In a similar vein, Derrida attempts to show us how ambiguous ethics and morality are. He views deconstruction which is essentially an interrogation of philosophical texts and re-reading them to understand them more uniquely to be

ethical in nature. His works have been constantly challenged in their ability to explain the significance of ethical thought. This makes us wonder if Derrida's discourse on deconstruction possesses any ethical value. If it does, then in his own language, we can even appraise deconstruction itself from an ethical standpoint. Derrida's main apprehension about ethics has been a collective fervour and generalisation of the theme of ethics. This leads to the danger of ethics becoming a totalising system, an absolute, that vehemently demands adherence and fealty that turns something that is supposed to be a set of flexible guidelines for living our lives into dogma. This dogmatic approach forces all forms of ethical discourse to conform to the language of those in power, marginalising the other. Derrida's work is still misunderstood, misinterpreted, accused, critiqued, and reviled. It is also defended and revered. The beauty of his work is that it branches out into topics as diverse as law, architecture, painting, language, and literature apart from philosophy and ethics. In keeping with the political temper of the age, it is frequently used to support legitimate ideologies that cater to the needs of the oppressed against subversion by political and ideological agendas of both the left and right. "Jacques Derrida is not an "ethical" philosopher. Which is to say, he does not expound a theory of ethics with respect to articulating a "philosophy of action" or a way of being-in-the-world. And yet, Derrida has always been concerned with ethics as the responsibility we bear to recognize the difference of the other."

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