

Ambiguous Force of Hospitality:*

The Problem of Being in Derrida's Thoughts on
Otherness, Law and Language

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[ABSTRACT]

This essay examines a problematic tension of being between conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality in Derrida's thoughts on otherness, law and language. I argue that Derrida's thinking of hospitality is grounded in the dual movement of being with others, which contains both the forceful openness toward the other and the determining forces of law and language. Scholarly views of Derrida's conception of hospitality have focused on the logical contradiction (*aporia*) or the meaning of practical impossibility of the absolute welcoming of the other. But a close reading

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of Derrida's approach to the existential problem of hospitality shows significant political questions of being with others lurking behind the antinomy of conditional/unconditional hospitality. For Derrida, the possibility and limit of receiving others implies the questionable ground of language, law, and death in everyday life of human beings. While human beings cannot avoid the other's overflowing movement forcefully entering their own dwelling, they also aspire to determine powerful rules of embracing others based on their own mode of language (*logos*). This situation of hospitality ultimately reveals the persistent problem of being in the *polis*, which is constantly open to others while setting up its own mode of relating to them.

1. Introduction: The Possibility and Limit of Receiving the Other

This essay examines a questionable tension of being between conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality in Derrida's thoughts on otherness, law and language. I argue that Derrida's thinking of hospitality is based on the dual movement of being with others, which contains both the forceful openness toward the other *and* the determining forces of law and language. This twofold possibility of human existence constitutes the actual condition of hospitality as a necessary mode of political coexistence. Derrida's thinking is based on a persistent attempt to overcome the fundamental limit of ontology as such (Derrida. 1984. pp. 23-24, 1999. p. 21,

p. 28, p. 34, Caputo. 2018. p. 151, pp. 160-161, Critchley. 2002. pp. 15-19); thus, it is significant to disclose the recurrent implication of being in Derrida's own approach to the question of otherness and hospitality (Derrida. 1999. pp. 55-57, 2000. p. 9).¹⁾ In everyday life, we are always exposed to the inevitable encounter with the varying, unexpected *being* of others (Heidegger. 1962. p. 154). The daily interaction with others constantly raises a difficult question about the host-guest relationship of hospitality: how can we receive the strangers' unforeseen entering in our own place while coping with the overwhelming possibilities of dangerous encounter with them? (Bell. 2010. p. 251, Benhabib. 2006. p. 27, Honig. 2001. pp. 2-4) Human beings always want to be unreservedly welcomed by others when they become guests, foreigners, or other kinds of strangers in unfamiliar places; on the other hand, the human being as a host inclines to label the unpredictable appearances of others, trying to set a lawful condition of receiving them (McFadyen. 2016. p. 600, Derrida. 1992. p. 22 f.).²⁾ Thus, the dynamic *situation* of hospitality signifies not simply a normative issue of how to treat with guests but an existential concern of the overpowering movement of the other (Levinas. 1969. p. 27, Raffoul. 2008. p. 274, Baker. 2009. p. 110, Winkler. 2017. p. 369).³⁾

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- 1) As Derrida himself suggests, human thinking cannot escape the questionable inscription of being throughout a certain mode of using language or discourse (*logos*). See Derrida's last remarks in his article, "*Differance*" (1984, p. 27): "Such is the question: the alliance of speech and Being in the unique word, in the finally proper name. And such is the question inscribed in the simulated affirmation of *difference* ... 'Being / speaks / always and everywhere / throughout / language.'"
 - 2) For Derrida, the "lawful" always and already implies the enforcement of justice. The infinite potentiality of justice must be actualized through the finite and concrete powers of the laws (*droit*): "there is no law without enforceability, and no applicability or enforceability of the law without force..." (Derrida. 1992. p. 6).

In this light, it is meaningful to investigate how the philosophical questioning of hospitality discloses the problematic ground of everyday existence constantly facing the inevitable encounter with the other. Although Derrida's thoughts on hospitality never simply determine an ontological ground (or groundlessness) of human existence, they still reveal the problematic necessity of seeking a moral or political basis of being with others (Derrida. 1999. pp. 19-21, Critchley. 2002. p. 198). Human beings as hosts have a natural need and capacity to welcome strangers, looking for a peaceful way of living with others; at the same time, the open possibility of hospitality persistently requires them to set the appropriate ways of identifying and monitoring the strangers based on peculiar usages of language and legal discourses (Baban and Rygiel. 2017. p. 113, O'Gorman. 2006. p. 52). For Derrida, this complex situation of human coexistence signifies the ambiguous force of hospitality which allows us to openly embrace other beings while making the suitable conditions of accepting them. There must be an inevitable tension between the two forceful movements of hospitality displaying the constant openness *and* inevitable enclosure of being with others (O'Gorman. 2006. p. 54, Baker. 2009. p. 109). However, scholarly views of Derrida's thoughts on hospitality have mainly focused on a radical ethical problem of unconditional hospitality or practical implication of its impossibility, aporia or antinomy (Ungreanu. 2013, Ross. 2004, Raffoul. 2008, Baker. 2009). But in order to grasp the deeper existential tension inherent in the paradoxical conception of hospitality, it is necessary to disclose the silent, forceful and 'pre-ethical' movements of

3) The self cannot handle the being of the other. The other is always emerging from the outside or limit of the self's own mode of being. The other is superior to the self; it already overpowers us (Levinas. 1969. pp. 48-52).

being inscribed in Derrida's thoughts on otherness (cf. Winkler. 2017. p. 369). Especially, we need to grasp the differentiating power of being that enables the varying modes of language and law in a certain political community.

Focusing on Derrida's *Of Hospitality* and other relevant texts, I will discuss the ambiguous force of hospitality grounded in the indispensable tension of being with others (Derrida. 2000. hereafter OH).⁴⁾ The term "tension" here is not to reduce Derrida's thinking into a certain doctrine of moral or political antinomy; rather, it provides us a significant starting point to approach the deeper problem of human life trembling between an "ethics of hospitality" and a "politics of hospitality" (Derrida. 1999. p. 19, Caputo. 2018. p. 160). Particularly, this study illuminates the doubling movement of human confrontation with the other, which contains both the self's infinite openness to otherness and its political delimitation. For Derrida, the possibility and limit of human existence contain a ceaseless *question* about the varying signification of the other often concealed in the self-sameness of being in the polis (OH. p. 3, p. 15, Heidegger. 1996. p. 55, Winkler. 2017. p. 373). The overflowing movement of the other requires human beings to constantly use the discerning power of language (*logos*) for producing the clearer and well-defined discourses of being with others (OH. pp. 9-11, Derrida. 1984. p. 15, Levinas. 1969. p. 76, Heidegger. 1962. p. 203 f.). The determining languages of the other are engraved in the legal enforcements of a political community necessary to rule the diverging movements of everyday beings (Baker. 2009. p. 121). Derrida's

4) The original text is based on Derrida's lectures conducted in Paris, January 1996. The French version was originally published as *De l'hospitalité* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy. 1997).

thinking explicates how human beings cannot but walk through the necessary but controversial path of unconditional hospitality while engaging in the forceful identification and violent categorization of the other (Derrida. 1978. p. 125). Therefore, his philosophical insight into hospitality is neither simply about the impossibility of the unconditional welcoming of strangers nor about the moral difficulty of securing the alien's socio-economic rights and benefits in a cosmopolitan context; rather, the persistent question of hospitality reveals the possibility and limit of our being in the world, which includes the interrelated movements of life and death. In other words, the deeper problem of hospitality implies the questionable origin and end of human existence, i.e. the fundamental question of being as such.

2. The Enforcement of Hospitality

Derrida's approach to the question of hospitality seeks above all a necessary trace of the other inscribed in the associating movement (*pas*) of human beings (OH. p. 73 f., pp. 3-5, Levinas. 1969. pp. 66-68). As long as human beings coexist in a world, they must be able to embrace and endure the unexpected encounter (*passage*) with others. But in the varying modes of everyday life, human beings hardly retain a stable or fixed mode of being with others (Heidegger. 1962. pp. 153-155). We often digress from the suitable ways of dealing with others, violently transgressing the inner realms of their existence, i.e. the personal boundaries of self-sameness (Baker. 2009. p. 109) For Derrida, this very possibility of transgression constitutes the actual context of the host-guest relationship: multiple types of reception, invitation or welcoming involve the guest's contravening steps

over the established border of the host's dwelling place (Benhabib. 2004. pp. 2-3). Here, the "threshold (*seuil*)" of a door signifies both a marked limit of the master's being at home and its noticeable openness to others' entering motion (OH. p. 75). The self-maintaining mode of human existence cannot wholly separate itself from the others' unpredictable movements.

The inevitable openness of being enforces the human self to constantly seek a secured basis of its own existence facing the infinite intrusion of otherness. Derrida's insight into the actual ground of the self's encounter with the other reveals the two conflicting modes of hospitality (Raffoul. 2008. pp. 287-289). On the one hand, the varying modes of human coexistence already involve the absolute command or law (*loi*) of hospitality that necessitates the self's reception of the different modes of being; on the other hand, this necessity of embracing the other continuously requires the self to arrange noticeable signs and laws (*lois*) to identify its own being (OH. p. 75). The dual movement of being with others signifies the two directions of hospitality: the unlimited necessity of welcoming others persistently enforces us to care about the strangers with any identifiable schemes; at the same time, human beings need to establish and administer determinate guidelines for accepting others in their own dwelling place (OH. p. 77).

This ambiguous tendency of hospitality implies a deeper question about the legal necessity of coexistence. The authentic possibility of being with others always actualizes itself through the determining forces of various legal inscriptions in a political community (Derrida. 1992. p. 21, Benhabib. 2004. pp. 179-180). In this light, Derrida's thoughts on hospitality disclose a dynamic ground of human existence trembling between the unconditional *law* of hospitality and conditional *laws* of hospitality (OH. p. 79).

The infinite command of being to properly receive the other always surpasses the finite powers of laws that determine and assure everyday conditions of beings. Articulating the categorical conception of foreign beings, the delimiting laws of hospitality tend to conceal and forget the problematic condition of their constant enforcement. The enclosed system of everyday beings already invokes the liberating power of the other overflowing their historical conditions of being.⁵⁾ Thus, the changeable laws of everyday hospitality need an ultimate ruling ground of being to justify, maintain and correct themselves on a regular basis. But the guiding power of being often conceals itself amid the ceaseless motion of beings. In this light, Derrida sees that the unqualified command or law of being always raises a persistent question of its original sign or trace engraved in the concrete legal forms of hospitality.

The law of unconditional hospitality must exist as an irremovable, indomitable and indefinable ground to inspire the conditional enforcements of hospitality in a political community maintaining its self-sameness (OH. p. 79). The unconditional and conditional modes of hospitality cannot be disconnected while they keep a distance from each other. The endless possibilities of caring for others cannot be reduced to specific legal conditions of a society trying to secure the universal rights of foreigners, immigrants and other types of strangers (Benhabib. 2006. p. 177). Although the laws of a host can set various modes of welcoming alien beings, these determinate enforcements of hospitality cannot fully represent and control the unexpected and unidentifiable *being* of the strangers (OH. p. 83). The in-

5) Precisely because of its exceeding character, the indeterminate movement of hospitality always expresses itself through the inscribed legal procedures of being in the *polis* (OH. pp. 13-17, p. 39).

determinable movement of being with others always outstrips legal boundaries based on the self's typical notions and discourses of the other, which are customarily formed in a particular community.

The existential problem of hospitality can be found in Derrida's interpretation of a literary context from *Roberte Ce Soir* (Klossowski. 2002). In this novel, the narrator (Antoine) mentions his uncle Octave's strange manuscript that proclaims the unconditional rule of hospitality for the strangers arriving at his house; it declares that "the master of this house ... waits anxiously at the gate for the stranger he will see appear a liberator upon the horizon" (Klossowski. 2002. p. 12). The Uncle Octave's written laws of hospitality ("*Les Lois de l'hospitalité*") inscribes the host's extraordinary way of being open toward the strangers. The host permanently sealed the legal inscription of being with glass, putting it on the upper wall of the guest room. Here, Derrida gives attention to the manuscript's peculiar mode of existence. The sign of absolute hospitality exists there as if it cannot be easily touched or changed by human beings: the supreme rule of hospitality is emblazoned and placed high up on the wall, distancing itself from the ordinary living space of human beings. The permanent inscription of unconditional hospitality shows itself only when a guest tries to gaze up at the higher, untouchable part of the room in which they temporarily stay. Nonetheless, the guest can grasp only a vague trace of the law of unconditional hospitality, which reflects the host's actual mode of being (Raffoul. 2008. p. 289).

Although the guest can easily avoid or miss it, there would be a constant possibility for them to trace the absolute law of hospitality offered by the host. For Derrida, this "inevitable but avoidable [*inevitable mais evitable*]" situation of hospitality implies an above-human, divine possi-

bility of the host's welcoming of the other concealed in everyday life (OH. p. 83). The unconditional law of hospitality *is* always and already there through the self's daily encounter with the other. But the original ground of its necessary movements might be imperceptible or elusive to ordinary human beings who just attempt to see the lower, apparent, and familiar images of beings close to them; it is hard for them to perceive, question and think the vague revelation of absolute hospitality, which is placed high up on the wall of the human beings' resting place. However, even while the visitors are sleeping, the Octave's law of hospitality keeps watching over (*veiller sur*) them silently (OH. p. 85). The engraved command of unconditional hospitality actually exists within a dwelling place of the human beings, whether it is perceived or not, revealing itself beyond the usual way of their existence (Winkler. 2009. p. 378).

3. Hospitality and the End of Being

For Derrida, the unusual, quiet and remote existence of the law of hospitality sealed under the glass is analogous to the undefined trace of an ancient inscription, which cannot be easily deciphered by later generations. The Octave's inscription of hospitality is surely recognizable and readable, evidently showing itself through the glassed frame (*sous verre*) put on the high wall. But the higher existence of the commanding sign itself is hardly tangible, preventing itself from any easy modes of human grasp and amendment (OH. p. 85, Derrida. 1981. pp. 102-103). The everlasting possibility of absolute hospitality persists there as a divine inscription to anticipate the strangers' necessary but unforeseen arrival at the host's own

dwelling (Winkler. 2009. p. 376). In Derrida's view, this sublime implication of hospitality can be found at the ancient story of *Oedipus at Colonus* (Sophocles. 2014, hereafter OC). After realizing that he had unwittingly committed unpardonable crimes of patricide and incest in his own *polis* (Thebes), Oedipus punished himself by stabbing out his own eyes. Then, the blind Oedipus became an exile finally arriving at a foreign city of Athens. Now the dying stranger from Thebes desperately requests hospitality from Athenian strangers (OH. p. 87).

Oedipus' impending death and desire to be welcomed in a foreign city (*polis*) reveals an extraordinary ground of hospitality beyond the mortal limitation of human existence. Here, Derrida's thinking seeks the deeper meaning of life and death inherent in the complicated *situation* of hospitality, which Oedipus is forced to face at the end of his tragic life (OH. p. 87 f., cf. OH. 5. p. 35, Raffoul. 2008. p. 274). Interpreting the later parts of *Oedipus at Colonus*, Derrida examines the irremovable tension of human existence wavering between the determined conditioning of being and its unconditional opening to the other. The suffered Oedipus finally comes to face the moment of death in a foreign land. The Athenian king, Theseus, offers unconditional hospitality to the stranger Oedipus by helping him to be peacefully buried in a secret place.⁶⁾ Preparing for the last ritual of his own life, Oedipus allows Theseus only to be with him, asking the Athenian ruler not to reveal the site of his own tomb to anyone except the king's great successors (OC. 1518-1522). Thereby, Oedipus forcefully

6) Theseus' initial mode of unconditional hospitality, however, will later embrace a conditional hospitality for his own *polis* (Athens) while trying to keep an oath for Oedipus who promises to permanently protect the city of Athens; this dramatic context reveals an ambiguous force of hospitality.

deprives his daughters (Antigone and Ismene) of the last chance to participate in his funeral. His daughters become severely frustrated with this situation not allowing them to see any sign of Oedipus' resting place. For Derrida, however, this final action of Oedipus means his great resoluteness to liberate his daughters from the horrible destiny of his own being in the world. Thus, Oedipus' silent death transcends any eloquent language (*logos*) of mourning for his tragic life (OH. p. 93).

The final situation of Oedipus makes us think about his quiet end of being outside homeland and Theseus' unreserved mode of hospitality. What is behind Oedipus' intention to inform nothing about his ultimate resting place, excepting Theseus who wholeheartedly welcomes the dying outlaw from a foreign city? Based on Theseus' unconditional hospitality, Oedipus can prepare a peaceful end of being in an unfamiliar place. The dying stranger does not want to return to the fatherland (Thebes) as a criminal fugitive, and the kingly host willingly accepts the awful foreigner's last quest to be buried in his *polis* (Athens). Then, Theseus promises to keep the secret of the whereabouts of Oedipus' tomb as a sacred injunction: ordinary powers of human discourse will be not allowed to reveal the eternal resting place of a great foreign outlaw, Oedipus (OH. p. 97). Oedipus asks Theseus to let only the worthiest rulers of Athens know the secret, promising that the city of Athens will have a divine power to protect itself from the destructive forces of human rudeness (OC. 1530-1538, OH. p. 101).

Oedipus' holy promise is deeply related to Theseus' unconditional hospitality toward the stranger who seeks a concealed death outside his own homeland. Theseus himself had been originally from a foreign land before he was received by the city of Athens; the Athenian king knows what it

means to be other from experiencing the difficulty of being a stranger in the *polis* (OC. 560-565). Theseus's serious care of the other enables Oedipus to rest eternally in the unknown place of a foreign city becoming its divine guardian. In this light, it is notable that Oedipus' sole grievance before death is not his tragic end of being without homeland but a fact that his living body cannot feel the gentle warmth of daylight anymore (OH. p. 103, OC. 1548-1550). Theseus' hospitality to Oedipus is analogous to an everlasting power of the sunlight, which tenderly touches and consoles the blind criminal's miserable end of being in the world. Feeling the sunlight's hospitable warmth and Theseus' wholehearted care, Oedipus can keep directing his final steps toward the last dwelling place.

Oedipus calls Theseus as a dear "foreigner" (*xenos*) preparing for the final moment of his own being in a foreign land (OC. 1206, OH. p. 105). In the dramatic context of Theseus' hospitality to Oedipus, there is no clear distinction between native and alien, or between host and guest. Oedipus just declares that the meaning of his tragic life and destiny must not be forgotten by all human beings (OC. 1552-1555). For this purpose, the last trace of Oedipus's being must be kept from an easy appropriation of human speeches and discourses; thus, the stranger makes Theseus be silent about his resting place as a divine secret. The host Theseus becomes a kind of "hostage [*otage*]" who must keep the sacred oath (*orkos*) for the guest Oedipus (OH. p. 107). Being concealed and encrypted in the stranger's *polis*, Oedipus tries to leave an indelible but hardly graspable sign of being for later generation's reflection of human destiny. The permanent questionability of Oedipus' being in the world can be retained by the virtuous king's hospitality and pledge for the stranger. Here, Derrida sees that through this oath, Theseus becomes not only a magnificent host but

as a pitiable hostage subjugated by the divine influence of the guest (OH. p. 109, Derrida. 1999. p. 57, p. 83).

Theseus' being to be determined by the stranger Oedipus reveals the multiple effects of hospitality. The Athenian king's unreserved action of hospitality forcefully leads himself to be kept in the holy promise of the guest, which in turn gives his *polis* an eternal bliss. On the other hand, Theseus's hospitality enforces the two daughters of Oedipus not to participate in the ritual of their father's death against their wish (OH. p. 109). Here, Theseus' hospitality for the stranger Oedipus ironically allows him to exclude other strangers (Oedipus' daughters); his unconditional hospitality comes to be interrelated with the political necessity of conditional hospitality. There is even no possibility for the foreigners to find their father's body and move the last trace of his being to homeland for a funeral. Oedipus' desire for eternal rest in a foreign land and Theseus' unconditional hospitality recklessly deprive the two poor women even of the last communication with the deceased father (OH. p. 111). The eldest daughter, Antigone, cannot but weep in this situation, hopelessly lamenting for her father's concealed death in the unknown place. The tears of Antigone imply a complicated relationship of hospitality, the end of being and otherness. In Derrida's view, Antigone's helpless situation is generated from his father's ending up of being an "absolute" stranger (*l'absolu de son devenir-étranger*) which happens through Theseus' unqualified hospitality (OH. p. 113). For Antigone, the last dwelling place of her father becomes eternally hidden in a secret place: the final trace of her father's existence comes to be permanently ungraspable. Any signs, speeches, or languages cannot be useful for her to address and approach the being of Oedipus. Thus, she desperately wants to talk even with the imagined ghost

of Oedipus, helplessly complaining about her father's being an absolute other (OC. 1697-1715, cf. Derrida. 1999. pp. 111-112).

But Antigone comes to realize that all these events have been engendered from Oedipus' own desire to be eternally welcomed by the other. Oedipus himself sought absolute hospitality of the Athenian foreigner, showing no visible sign of longing for the homeland. On the other hand, the desperate Antigone wants Oedipus' soul to perceive her speech of grief and longing for the father (OC. 1724-1733). For Derrida, Antigone's frustrated monologue reflects her sad awareness about the limited possibility of language (*logos*) to see (*voir*) and comprehend Oedipus's absolute otherness (OH. pp. 115-117). While recognizing the deep sorrow of Antigone, Theseus stubbornly reminds her of the Oedipus' divine enforcement not to reveal the location of his tomb even to his daughters. For Theseus, this oath forever inscribes a sacred command or law of the other that will make an eternal peace of his own *polis* possible. In other words, Theseus' hospitality to Oedipus actualizes itself as a supreme enactment of being in the *polis*, which allows the political master to become a permanent hostage of the godly faith in the other (cf. Levinas. 1998. p. 136, 1969. p. 299). The divine enforcement of hospitality prevents Oedipus' last trace of being from returning to his own *polis* by his children; at the same time, it permits no memorial speeches, languages or discourses to determine the meaning of his complete otherness in a foreign land.

4. Hospitality and Language of the Other

This ancient story of Oedipus reminds us of the strange site of the inscription of hospitality in *Roberte Ce Soir*. Octave as a master of the house wrote “The Laws of Hospitality [*Les Lois de l’hospitalité*],” sealed it under glass, putting it high up on the wall. For Derrida, Octave’s legal inscription of hospitality signifies the master’s desire for happiness from the indiscriminate welcoming of others. Uncle Octave eagerly waits for the strangers’ arrival at his own place; he always wants to meet the unexpected guests, allowing them to enter his home as soon as possible. Octave’s enactment of unconditional hospitality implies the master’s infinite aspiration for the other who can set him free from the limited possibility of his own existence (OH. p. 121). In other words, this story describes an ironical situation of human coexistence in which the guest’s being can liberate (*libère*) the host’s being from the accustomed boundary of his/her self-sameness. For Derrida, the freeing force of hospitality is analogous to the political power of the great lawgivers coming from outside (OH. p. 123). Indeed, there are many historical cases of the strangers who became legendary founders of political regime for a foreign people (Honig. 2001. pp. 17-18, Hahm and Kim. 2015). The novel perspectives of the foreign guest can keep the host’s being from falling into an arrogant prisoner of his own uniformity. The unexpected otherness of guest contains a great power to deconstruct the host’s limited frameworks of existence, constantly opening new constitutional possibilities of coexistence.

The dynamic association of being with others does not simply happen on an arbitrary basis. At the moment of hospitality, the host’s interior mode of being at home is maintained through the guest’s exterior mode

of being from outside (OH. p. 125). The differing movement of being between enclosure and openness continually produce the dual enforcement of hospitality. The constant openness of being with others always requires the host's self to set up its own rules of dealing with the unavoidable encounter with the strangers (Bell. 2010. p. 240). At the same time, the self's necessary interaction with the other makes the host hardly maintain his/her fixed mode of encountering the guest: the determined ways of hospitality always invoke the open possibilities of the other beyond the host's ruling arrangement (OH. p. 127, Bell. 2010. p. 252). This vibrant but ambiguous relationship of being with others is inscribed in the actual experience of hospitality. The finite and enclosed condition of a self-sameness cannot fully contain the infinite overflow of the other, which often leads to the self's ceaseless desiring of otherness (Levinas. 1969. p. 63). But the desiring of the other always needs the delimiting force of the laws to maintain itself through a certain sharing ground of coexistence.

The concrete possibility of law is based on the definite modes of language or discourse (*logos*). In this light, Derrida examines the differentiating power of language as a necessary ground of the laws for dealing with others while sustaining oneself. Particularly, Derrida focuses on the dual function of language (*Langue*), through which the strangers are interrogated, named and categorized by the native speakers of a certain community (OH. p. 131). In a broad sense, language reflects a particular manner of life, which contains specific cultural values of different communities. On the other hand, a narrow meaning of language includes a certain linguistic system of speaking and writing, which does not simply belong to a particular society; the different grammatical structures of foreign languages can be learned and shared by any human beings who can learn

them with habitual practices (*ethos*) (OH. p. 133). This twofold dimension of language produces the possibility and limitation of hospitality as a necessary mode of being with others (Farquhar and Fitzsimons. 2011. pp. 659-660). The human coexistence is constituted by the associating power of language shared by all human beings; however, this common force of language is hardly separated from the varying cultural delimitations of being in the *polis*.

The ordinary mode of hospitality for foreigners is based upon a specific identification and classification of human beings according to their different origins of birth. The original dwelling places of being are already engraved into their own modes of relating to others (OH. pp. 21-23, Heidegger. 1962. pp. 88-89, Winkler. 2017. p. 371). Thus, displaced persons often miss homelands and seek return to native countries where they were originally born. For Derrida, the uprooted human beings tend to strive for a familiar and accustomed ground of being in “immobility,” which can ascertain and secure their own modes of existence (OH. p. 87). In this sense, the human beings often continue to recognize their own language or mother tongue as an invisible homeland that can offer themselves an unbroken basis of their own belongingness to the world. This portable homeland of language never leaves the exiles, becoming a kind of ‘second skin’ that protects their everyday ground of existence (OH. p. 89).⁷⁾

For Derrida, a necessary possibility of hospitality must express itself through the multiple and determinate ways of language and communication (Derrida. 1978. p. 29-30). The self’s daily response to the other is

7) In Derrida’s view, the displaced persons’ bodily organs for speech (mouth and tongue) are crucial for maintaining their self-sameness because these can keep their own root of being with others.

constituted by the varying modes of defining others' being through one's own language. The power of language is always needed to identify others, calling their names and grasping their different ways of being in motion; the everyday modes of being must be based on the differing movement of language, i.e. the politico-cultural determination and general openness of human discourse (Farquhar and Fitzsimons. 2011. p. 653). Derrida sees that the discerning force of language ultimately actualizes itself not simply as a linguistic structure of speech and writing but as the particular laws (*droit*) of a political community defining various types of human beings. The ambiguous force of hospitality implies the twofold movements of language deferring each other: the original signification of human discourse always oscillates between the unconditional openness of being toward the other and the conditional determination of beings for themselves (OH. p. 135). While always differing and deferring each other, the unconditional and conditional modes of human existence produce the everyday tension of being in the polis.

5. Hospitality and The Political Problem of Living with Others

The questionable ground of hospitality signifies the political problem of how to live with others maintaining a certain community of one's own language and laws. The primordial possibility of language is already inherent in the self-sustaining movement of being which must permanently care about others while expressing itself (Heidegger. 1962. pp. 236-238). At the same time, the human beings have their own manner and art of using language to confront others within a *polis*. Thus, the political ques-

tion of human coexistence is connected to the dual movement of language, which imply both the self's natural openness to the other and its cultural determinations against the other (OH. pp. 137-139). In Derrida's view, this necessary happening of being with others is based upon the unnamable and silent movement of *differ^{ance}* (differing and deferring), which cannot be reduced to a mere linguistic phenomenon (Derrida. 1984. p. 27).

One's own way of being cannot be simply represented or defined through the categorical schemes of language, i.e. speaking, writing and other types of human discourse (*logos*). The logical conceptions of human beings cannot enclose and control the infinite occurrence of the other while they tend to establish specific legal categories such as nationality, race and sex. On the other hand, the determining power of language enables human beings to encounter and receive others in a stable way; the open but uncertain possibility of hospitality must be actualized through the abstractive function of languages to identify, conceive and discern the varying faces and actions of others (OH. p. 139). The language of hospitality is formally inscribed as the legal formulations of being to secure the concrete ground of the self's dealing with strangers within a certain political community (McFadyen. 2016. p. 605).

The political problem of language and hospitality can be also grasped from the technological transformation of our contemporary world. Although current global technologies are producing enormous mobility of human beings, the increasing rootlessness of their existence can cause a countering movement to assure a persistent ground of being in everyday life. Seeking the actual boundary of coexistence and discourse (*logos*) with others, the emptied and groundless self tends to feel homesick and struggle against the dislocating force of technological openness (OH. p. 91, pp. 51-53,

Winkler. 2017. p. 367). Here, the natural possibility of language implies not simply a linguistic capacity of speaking with others but an existential force of marking, procuring and upholding one's own way of being in the world. A specific manner of using language constitutes the discernable cultural limit of human self. Thus, Derrida maintains that language provides the "stable but portable condition" of living with others (OH. p. 91). The conditioning force of language expresses the human yearning for establishing the steady foundation of one's own being, i.e. the determined ground of identifying oneself (McFadyen. 2016. p. 602).

Living in this ever-changing world of uncertainty and insecurity, human beings appropriate the determining power of language and law in order to confirm their self-sameness and assure their own modes of being with others. The new information technologies tend to penetrate all the preexisting borders of political communities by powerfully connecting private lives; they seem to expand a possibility of the unconditional mode of hospitality (OH. p. 45 f.). The rigid conception of the host-guest relationship hardly maintains itself in this global world of technology (Winkler. 2017. p. 367). For Derrida, however, the radical openness of the technological networks ironically delimits the genuine ground of hospitality while producing new electronic crimes among strangers encountering online. Then, the new police powers and laws must be established by the contemporary political regimes to protect their own citizens from the technological misconducts of domestic strangers and foreign people (OH. p. 53).

In addition, Derrida sees that the historical relationship of Algeria and France also shows another contemporary example of the political question of hospitality (OH. p. 141). The French laws had forcefully imposed the specific categories of citizenship on the foreign people from Algeria which

had been a colony of France from 1830 to 1962. The legal systems were designed to embrace the strangers from a different culture into the French society, offering them various forms of political rights and duties. But these legal enforcements of hospitality demanded that Algerian Muslims must abandon their unorthodox religion in order to maintain a full status of French citizenship (*citoyenneté française*) (OH. p. 143). For Derrida, the host country's hospitality for foreigners must be inscribed into the specific laws that must assimilate the others' being into its own way of life. But the forceful movement of the host's integration must be delayed or terminated by the opposing reaction of the other, e.g. the Algerian war of independence against France in 1960s. The conditional reception of being always causes the deferring power of the other against the enclosing tendency of self-sameness (Derrida. 1984. pp. 17-18). In other words, the restrictive actualization of hospitality cannot fully control the infinite and countering movements of otherness.

In Derrida's view, therefore, the human beings are never able to formulate a fixed way of coexistence simply choosing between unconditional hospitality and conditional hospitality. Rather, they need to learn how to live through the unavoidable tension between the two tendencies of being with others. Although they show irreducibly different modes of being, the conditional enforcement of hospitality cannot detach itself from the recurrent possibility of unconditional hospitality (OH. p. 147). Human beings always desire an unreserved mode of welcoming from others while constantly suspecting the possible legal exclusions or cultural determinations of their own being. An established system of law cannot evade open questions about different ways of coexistence revealed from the unbounded appearing of the other. On the other hand, the human way of ex-

istence also includes the determining power of securing oneself against the other's unexpected and violent overflow. For example, the Algerian independence from the French laws of assimilation ended up producing another establishment of the Algerian laws to protect themselves and receive others. The human efforts to overcome the conditional enforcement of hospitality constantly reproduce new political settings and legal discourses of citizenship based on their own language and culture (OH. p. 149, Baker. 2009. p. 122). The historical necessity of political existence signifies the mutually deferring interactions between the two forces of relating to the other: the irremovable trace of unconditional hospitality is already inscribed in the delimiting conditions of hospitality, and vice versa.

The fundamental tension of human existence reveals a necessary question of the above-human, i.e. a divine power of the other that makes all differentiating movements of beings possible. Thus, Derrida sees that the problematic situation of hospitality signifies the divine ground of being with others and its traditional inscription, which allows the human beings to set the authoritative rules of welcoming strangers in their own places (Baker. 2009. p. 121). Particularly, the traditional problem of hospitality had been inscribed in the customary power (*puissance*) of father as a god-like master of home: the authoritative host could enforce the divine rule of unconditional hospitality for the guest without the consent of his own family members. This traditional authority of father as a dictatorial host implies the ambiguous force (*pouvoir*) of hospitality, which can cause significant "ethical problem [*problème éthique*]" in his own dwelling place (OH. p. 149). The powerful master of the house was able to command an absolute mode of receiving the other, even sacrificing his family members.

In a famous story of the Bible, for example, Lot offers the criminal men

of Sodom his two virgin daughters in order to guard the guests who came to rest in his home (*Genesis* 19: 1 ff., cf. *Judges* 19: 23-25). According to Derrida, Lot's severe enforcement of hospitality clashes with a significant duty to care about his own daughters (OH. p. 151 f.). In the Biblical story, however, Lot's unconditional hospitality finally arouses the divine power of the guests who finally turns out to be angels sent from God, punishing the violent mob of Sodom. But the undeniable fact is that Lot's holy action of hospitality led him to violently victimize the two innocent women, while dealing with the criminals trying to offend his holy guests. Disclosing the questionable violence lurking behind this divine openness of hospitality, Derrida's thinking shows a problematic ground of being with others: we are destined to face the harsh necessity of hospitality, in which human beings must be open to the uncanny being of the other while establishing the ruling conditions of their own dwelling place.⁸⁾

6. Conclusion: The Question of Being in Hospitality and *Differánce*

Derrida's thoughts on hospitality depicts a perpetual trembling of human life between the two differing ways of coexistence, which always defer each other. The necessary tension between unconditional hospitality and conditional hospitality never signifies a merely logical question of aporia or contradiction (cf. Ungreanu. 2013. p. 727). Rather, this paradoxical situation of hospitality implies the dynamic and convivial movements of our

8) Perhaps, *we-human* beings cannot devise moral, legal or technological solutions to forever remove this *divine* problem of being in the world.

lived experiences, which always contain radical possibilities of both warm receiving of others and violent exclusion of them (Baban and Rygiel. 2017. p. 113). In everyday life, we must encounter the various, unexpected faces of others, grasping and defining their meaning and significance with our own modes of language and discourse (Heidegger. 1962. p. 213). The daily mode of living with others always needs the concrete rules and their constant enforcement based on a determinate way of being in the *polis*. At the same time, the legal systemization of being cannot fully comprehend and control the perpetual overflow of the other entering certain boundaries of human existence.

The human being cannot avoid the unforeseen, divine arrival of guests, foreigners, refugees and other types of strangers at her own place. The irrepressible possibility of human openness to the other reveals itself as a divine force of unconditional hospitality over the determinate rules of conditional hospitality. At the end of life, human beings tend to desire an eternal resting place of being beyond death. As seen above, Theseus' unconditional hospitality allows the dying stranger Oedipus, a great outlaw, not to be unwillingly returned to his own city; the secret death in an unknown place is Oedipus' last yearning for the peaceful end of his own being in the world. In this situation of absolute hospitality, Oedipus asks Theseus no commemorating speech or sign of his final dwelling place. The eternal and perfect actualization of hospitality for Oedipus needs no language or law to recognize and classify his personal identity and citizenship. Nonetheless, this unconditional mode of hospitality cannot be wholly separated from the necessary context of being in the *polis*: Theseus' unqualified receiving of Oedipus leads to the dying stranger's divine promise for assuring a permanent peace of the host country. Here,

the host Theseus is ironically subjugated to the sacred oath for the guest Oedipus.

The divine necessity of unreserved hospitality signifies the superior power of the other, which makes the diverse interactions of beings possible (Levinas. 1969. p. 104). The discerning powers of language and law cannot fully reflect, grasp and control the infinite force of the other overflowing the self-sameness of being in the *polis*. Thus, the constant openness of being with others reveals itself as the resisting power of the human beings, which tend to *defer* the forceful categorization of themselves based on integrative frameworks of law and discourse. However, the specific laws of hospitality based on certain modes of language (*logos*) are also irremovable and necessary for human beings to enforce the appropriate way of receiving others in everyday life. The legal order and cultural discourse often tends to violently impose identifiable names, types and categories on the indeterminate emergence of the other. Thus, Derrida's thinking reveals the dynamic tension of being inscribed in a human destiny of political coexistence, in which unconditional hospitality always defers conditional hospitality, and vice versa. The everyday ground of political coexistence is constituted by these differing and deferring movements (*différance*) of receiving the other, i.e. the ambiguous force of hospitality.

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초 록

환대의 모호한 힘

— 데리다의 타자성, 법 그리고 언어에 관한 사유에 담긴 실존의 문제

이 상 원*

본 논문은 데리다의 사유가 보여주는 조건적 환대와 무조적 환대 간 긴장성이 담은 존재의 의미에 관한 연구이다. 본고는 데리다의 환대 사상이 타자를 향한 필연적 열림 그리고 법과 언어의 한계지음이라는 이중성을 내포한 실존적 문제의식에 기반해 있다고 주장한다. 데리다의 환대 개념에 관한 기존 연구들은 주로 타자에 대한 절대적 맞아들임을 지향하는 무조건적 환대의 (불)가능성이 보여주는 논리적 역설과 그 윤리적 함의에 연구의 초점을 맞추어 왔다. 그러나 데리다의 환대에 관한 사유는 단순한 조건적/무조건적 환대의 표면적 역설 이전에, 타자와의 현실적 공존이 담은 정치적 문제성을 드러낸다. 데리다에 있어서, 환대의 가능성과 한계는 특정 공동체의 일상적 삶에 담긴 언어와 법의 존재 그리고 죽음이라는 실존적 질문들과 연계되어 있다. 인간 존재는 자아의 제한된 영역 너머의 타자의 움직임에 끊임없이 맞이하야 하는 동시에, 자신만의 언어(logos)를 통해 타자에 관한 법적 기준을 수립해야 하는 이중의 숙명에 직면해 있다. 이러한 환대의 실존적 상황은 탄생에서부터 죽음에 이르기까지 타자를 향한 열림과 닫힘이라는 모호한 힘에 직면한 정치적 존재의 문제성을 드러낸다.

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