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This paper examines Derrida’s insistence on the *contretemps* that breaks open time, paying particular attention to *Politics of Friendship* and the way in which this book envisages the ‘untimely’ as both interrupting, and making possible, friendship. Although I suggest that Derrida’s temporal deconstruction of the Aristotelian distinction between utility and ‘perfect’ friendships is convincing, I also argue that Derrida’s own account of friendship is itself touched by time, in the peculiar sense of ‘touched’ that connotes affected and wounded. Derrida’s work instantiates what Husserl might call a transcendental pathology, in that it intermittently instantiates an ethics of non-presentist time (the time which is also the transcendental condition for the event of friendship), and, by contrast, disparages the significance of what we might call an ethics of phronesis, a ‘lived’ friendship of “omni-temporal” dispositions, and embodied and habitual patterns. I end this paper by proposing a dialectic between the disjunctive and conjunctive aspects of time that does not accord any kind of a priori privilege to the one over the other.

Key words: Derrida, time, friendship, inter-subjectivity, mourning, transcendental arguments, Aristotle
Despite the intertwining that Derrida insists obtains between time and space, it is difficult to dispute that vast aspects of his work, both early and late, have been pre-eminently concerned with time. The strategy of deconstruction, of course, borrows from Heidegger’s critique of Western philosophy’s metaphysics of presence: for Heidegger, our philosophical tradition (and culture) has been unable to understand time except as just another present entity, albeit perhaps of a special kind. While Derrida challenges Heidegger’s own purported overcoming of this ‘vulgar’ and metaphysical treatment of time, suggesting in ‘Ousia and Gramme’ that there is no other concept of time that might be opposed to this metaphysical one, it remains the case that his work consistently invokes a time (albeit an ‘untimely time’) that disrupts presentist time. Moreover, as has been widely commented on, this disruptive thought is often associated with the future, which haunts the time of the present and cannot itself be rendered present. Most obviously, we might think here of his recent descriptions of the messianic and the ‘to come’, as Derrida analyses them in regard to justice and innumerable other concepts.

In this particular paper, however, I wish to examine the way in which Derrida’s account of friendship in Politics of Friendship (hereafter PF) deepens his abiding deconstructive insistence on the contretemps that breaks open time but nonetheless pertains to it. Although I will suggest that Derrida’s temporal (and transcendental) deconstruction of the Aristotelian distinction between utility and ‘perfect’ friendships is convincing, I will argue that his reservations about any “omni-temporal” account of friendship, which in a quasi-Aristotelian fashion emphasises the
centrality of stable dispositions and embodied phronesis, is less successful. Derrida’s objections to an understanding of friendship based upon such phenomena revolve around the way in which their recuperative and binding component, based on habitual syntheses of time (e.g. the scar), covers over a certain structure of time that is considered to be both ontologically prior and ethico-politically more important (e.g. the wound of time: the immemorial past that nonetheless subsists; the future that defies our expectations and is the condition for the event). However, in the manner in which Derrida’s position slides between (1) being an argument for this aspect of time as a transcendental condition, and (2) nonetheless constituting an ethical imperative of sorts, I will argue that Derrida’s philosophy is itself touched by time in the peculiar sense of ‘touched’ that connotes affected and wounded. Indeed, Derrida’s work appears to instantiate what Husserl might call a transcendental pathology, in that it intermittently instantiates an ethics of non-presentist time (the time which is simultaneously the transcendental condition for the event), and, by contrast, disparages what we might call an ethics of phronesis, a ‘lived’ friendship of “omni-temporal” dispositions, of embodied and habitual patterns. As well as showing this tendency in his work, I end this paper by proposing a dialectic between these disjunctive and the conjunctive aspects of time (wound and scar) that does not accord any kind of a priori privilege to the one over the other.

UNTIMELY WOUNDS, APORIAS, AND THE (IM)POSSIBLE EVENT

Before turning to the texts and themes that will be our main concern, a few contextualising remarks are required, specifically concerning the motif of the wound that I have employed in the introduction to this essay because it recurs frequently in
Derrida’s work, as it also does in Deleuze’s. There are at least two ways in which Derrida uses the term wound. Firstly, to intimate the separation that obtains between the orders of the possible and the impossible, in his preoccupation with what has come to be termed “possible-impossible” aporias – that is, with themes in which the condition of their possibility is also, and at once, the condition of their impossibility. Derrida’s paradoxical analyses of the gift, forgiveness, hospitality, etc., all obey this logic in which, for example, the aporetic necessity to forgive the unforgivable constitutes a wound that is not susceptible to scarification. In this respect, Derrida speaks of the aporia that obtains between two terms of this kind as itself a wound: “tragically irreconcilable and forever wounding” (PF 22). This is the wound of disjunction between two laws that will not gather, exemplified for Derrida by democracy, which paradoxically seeks to respect singularity (and minorities) but also simply calculates majorities by voting and wherein each person’s vote is theoretically substitutable or exchangeable for any other. As we will see, this refusal to gather, to bind, is very important to his work. It means that a theoretical resolution is not possible, and that there is a constitutive “not knowing where to go”, the very definition that he offers of an aporia in the book of that name. As he says in Aporias, the point is not so much to get out from, or escape an aporetic impasse, but to invent “another thinking of the aporia, one perhaps more enduring”. This philosophy of the aporetic wound constitutes both an ethical priority and a transcendental necessity (for the event, if there is such a thing) that problematises any philosophy of dialectical recuperation or mediation, including pragmatisms and philosophies of the body, both of which he expresses serious misgivings about in all of his work but perhaps especially in one of his final books, On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy.

Secondly, however, the impossible term of the aporia (e.g. absolute,
unconditional hospitality) is itself sometimes explicitly described as a wound that haunts the everyday conditional hospitality that we deploy, wherein we provide hospitality to others but only under certain carefully delineated conditions. On this understanding, the impossible prospect of absolute hospitality (or absolute forgiveness) is a wound that haunts our conditional practises of hospitality, and the systems of calculative exchange and political quid pro quo. Another important example of this second understanding of the wound occurs in Derrida’s recent discussion of the trauma of 9/11 in one of his final books, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Derrida suggests that the trauma that results from an act like the planes targeting the twin towers is not simply an effect that follows from a cause (i.e. the planes hitting the towers and the devastating death-toll). There is this order of causality, of course, but there is also another order of causality that Derrida might follow the Deleuze of *Logic of Sense* and call the quasi-cause. Indeed, Derrida goes on to say that the trauma resides not so much in what actually happened (the order of the empirical cause) but more in:

The undeniable fear or apprehension of a threat that is worse and still to come.

The trauma remains traumatising and incurable because it comes from the future. For the virtual can also traumatis. Trauma takes place when one is *wounded by a wound that has not yet taken place*… its temporalisation proceeds from the to come (my italics). It is important to recognise, however, that this logic and this curious temporality are not distinctive to 9/11. For Derrida, all traumas are of this order. In fact, all events are of this order (including friendship as we will see) in which, to emphasise Derrida’s point, one is “wounded by a wound that has not yet taken place”. We might recall Lewis Carroll’s Alice, who cries before pricking herself, and there is a related sense
in which we are all wounded by the unknowable prospect of the future. Certainly, for Derrida, any event worthy of the name must involve a confounding of linear time, or the time of the present, including both so-called ‘lived time’ (produced through habitual syntheses of anticipation), and the time of calculation and prediction (based on the objective time of clocks). There is a futural synthesis of time that defies both of these attempts to come to grips with it, and which, while it is wounding, is also the transcendental condition of friendship. Indeed, in precisely the same manner in which Derrida argues that we are wounded by a wound that has not yet taken place, so he suggests in friendship “we are plunged before mourning, into mourning” (PF 14). Let us attempt to come to terms with this transcendental anteriority, this “pre-originary mourning”, and what it might involve, via a discussion of his deconstruction of the Aristotelian understanding of friendship.

FRIENDSHIP AND THE MOURNING OF TIME

Derrida’s engagement with Aristotle in Politics of Friendship has been widely discussed. Although it eludes pithy summaries, one major feature of it is to insist that Aristotle’s famous distinction between perfect (or good) friendships and more utility or pleasure-oriented manifestations of friendship is untenable due to temporal factors. As Derrida consistently puts it, “it takes time to do without time”, which is to suggest that the apparent purity of a friendship (e.g. concern for the other for their own sake, uncontaminated by self-interest) must always have been tested over time (PF 17). We can also ascribe to Derrida a related argument against the stability that a friendship develops over a period of time – although this second argument does not follow quite as well as the first – and to any primacy that is accorded to embodied coping within
an environment, in the manner that Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Hubert Dreyfus have all endorsed. For Derrida, any friendship must have experienced this futural recognition that whatever arrangements may now be in place (e.g. meeting for a beer each Friday afternoon, being open and honest with one another, etc.), they must have passed through an ordeal of time – and one never completely passes through this ordeal – in which these arrangements were subject to revision and to contestation. In other words, in order to have a reasonably stable friendship (or achieve something close to an embodied equilibrium through habits, skills, intentional arcs, etc.) one must first have had some kind of experience of the future as unlimited and of nothing dictating that the friendship will continue; this is the trauma of apprenticeship. Moreover, not only does a stable friendship need to traverse this unstable order of time in which this openness towards the future is experienced unabated (PF 16), but Derrida also intimates that even after having endured this trial of friendship, we still ought to think (and to live) friendship with an “open heart” (PF 30), open to the “perhaps” which engages the only possible thought of the event and the future (PF 29). The aporetic and traumatic is hence not only the condition of friendship, normality, etc., but it also serves as an ethico-political injunction that might be formulated as follows: respect the aporetic dimension of friendship, do not cover over the wound. Indeed, Derrida repeatedly describes recognising, rather than covering over the aporia, as a condition of responsibility (A 16)xii.

We will return to this, but contrary to the famous Aristotelian account of friendship in Book 8 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Derrida hence argues that friendship should not be too stable, and should not railroad the future into its habitual expectations, which is to deny not only the difference of the other person, but also the more radical difference that time insinuates into any and every friendship. According
to his quasi-transcendental argument (it is ‘quasi-transcendental’ because it also renders pure friendship of the Aristotelian variety impossible), the apparently stable aspect of what we might call ‘lived friendship’ is always broken open by this radical future, this temporal wound (which we mourn) that paradoxically precedes friendship, firstly in the trial and the test, in the selecting and preferring, in the question and the objection. Without this, there is no friendship but mere robotic acquiescence, and yet, at the same time, this test also interrupts any neat and easy distinction between pure (perfect) friendship and its more utility oriented manifestations. According to Derrida, it even problematises any too-easy friend/enemy distinction, upon which the political philosophy of Carl Schmitt relies, as has the foreign policies of successive US governments in their consistent refrains concerning rogue states and the now famous ‘axis of evil’. Indeed, Derrida suggests that: “The possibility, the meaning and the phenomenon of friendship would never appear unless the figure of the enemy had already called them up in advance, had indeed put to them the question or objection of the friend, a wounding question, a question of wound. No friend without the possible wound” (PF 153).

On what basis might Derrida begin to justify such a claim? Well, if Aristotle is right that we cannot have too many friends (and Derrida thinks he is, because we cannot spend the required amount of time and attention with each), this complicates Aristotle’s own more general claim that genuine friendship involves loving the other person for their own sake, and not just for the utility or pleasure that we might derive from the friendship. After all, friendship takes time to develop, and this time cannot be given to everyone. We cannot be genuine friends, in the Aristotelian sense, with lots of people. For Derrida, there is hence a type of oligarchy at the heart of friendship and it is not the great model for democracy that Aristotle and others have suggested it
is. This is so even without considering those who were overtly excluded from the Athenian fraternal band of friends – women and slaves – because Derrida also shows the subtle privileging of fraternity, brotherhood, and ties of allegiance and filiation that have surrounded the Western history of ruminations on friendship. But to return to Derrida’s key point, despite this oligarchy at the heart of friendship we nonetheless generally want the most and best forms of friendship possible, and we hence must prefer certain friends to others, and make choices between who will, and who will not be, our friends. Among other things, this means that we must calculate with our friends, which is precisely what Aristotle argues that we ought not do with good (or perfect) friends. For Aristotle, we do not, and should not, use them as means to our own ends and try to deduce their worth to us, but, for Derrida, this is inevitable because we must prefer certain friends to others. We must put the chosen one(s) through the test by living with them, and in order to establish who we will try this with, there is always a choice, a decision, and it involves (as well as an undecidable leap) calculating whether or not these prospective friends are good for us personally and give us pleasure. Our focus cannot be restricted to whether or not a friend is good in him or herself, as Aristotle’s position suggests, because even if we imagine ourselves to be a good citizen seeking eudaimonia and the cultivation of our virtues there are nonetheless likely to be plenty of people who we recognise as being good but whom we nevertheless do not want to be friends with. For Derrida then, Aristotle’s distinction is too quick: friendship requires that the friend be good in themselves (and hence loved for their own sake), and also for them to be good for us (and hence give us pleasure and utility), which requires prudential judgment about what is in our interests.

I think that this analysis is largely correct, insofar as time does problematise
any idealistic account of ‘pure’ or ‘perfect’ friendship like Aristotle’s\textsuperscript{xiii}. Whether it equally successfully problematises the virtue that Aristotle associates with a stable friendship (i.e. what Derrida refers to as the ‘omni-temporal’ relationship that we acquire with the world and others through a process of hexis and phronesis), however, is not quite so clear, and even less clear is whether the establishing of any such transcendental priority also legitimates the ethical impetus that Derrida also gives it, in his explicit and implicit suggestions that true friendship ought to be open (recall his phrase an ‘open heart’) to the temporal wound that is its condition.

Less commonly acknowledged but perhaps even more important for my argument that Derrida’s analysis of friendship is ‘touched by time’ in sometimes problematic ways, is the manner in which \textit{Politics of Friendship} also anticipates certain themes that came to prominence in other books like \textit{Adieu To Emmanuel Levinas, Work of Mourning}, and that were already apparent in \textit{Memoires for Paul de Man}\textsuperscript{xiv}. To put it bluntly, for Derrida, friendship is inexorably bound up with mourning. While it might be protested that mourning is merely a structural possibility of friendship rather than a necessity as the above quotation from Derrida seems to suggest – “no friend without the possible wound” (PF 153) – it is important to recognise that this structural possibility contaminates, and is the condition for, anything that happens. As Derrida explicitly suggests:

\begin{quote}
Here again, the difference between the effective and the virtual, between mourning and its possibility, seems fragile and porous… The anguished apprehension of mourning (without which the act of friendship would not spring forth in its very energy) insinuates itself a priori and anticipates itself; it haunts and plunges the friend, before mourning, into mourning (PF 14).
\end{quote}

As we saw with his account of the trauma of 9/11 (“trauma takes place when one is
wounded by a wound that has not yet taken place”), the event of friendship only takes place when (and if) its temporalisation proceeds from, and is wounded by, the future that is still ‘to come’. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition for friendship, in that without this ‘wounding’ or ‘haunting’ we will merely be indifferent towards the other person, never passing beyond a relationship of casual acquaintance (there is hence a minimal sense in which Derrida agrees with Aristotle, even while he points to the way Aristotle’s argument simultaneously undermines itself).

We can also understand this originary mourning in the Levinasian sense that one mourns the death of the other (and is responsible to them) in advance of their actual death. Indeed, like Levinas, Derrida insists that the more fundamental wound is the prospect of the other’s death, rather than one’s own death, as in Heidegger’s famous account of Dasein resolutely confronting its “being-towards-death” in *Being and Time*: the death of the other is the first death, ontologically or metaphysically speaking (A 39). But Derrida also means more than this. He comments in *Aporias* that neither Heidegger, Freud, nor even Levinas, take into account the originary mourning that is his primary concern (A 39) – indeed, he goes as far as to say that *Being and Time* has nothing to say about mourning at all (A 60). Derrida explicitly states that if the feeling of mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) or self-identity is constituted by an originary mourning, as he thinks it is, then “the relation to the other (in itself outside myself, outside myself in myself) will never be distinguishable from a bereaved apprehension” (A 61). The argument here is clearly an expanded one: not only friendship, but any relation to the other involves some kind of bereaved apprehension or originary mourning. The warrant for this extension is not immediately apparent, but for our current purposes it is sufficient to observe that this is a curiously melancholic sentiment. If there is also an ethical impetus bound up with this
wounding aspect of time (the future that haunts), as I have suggested that there is, then it is in this sense that Derrida’s work can be said to institute a transcendental pathology; one aspect of time – its wounding component which we mourn – has both a transcendental priority and an ethical privilege over the time that binds, the omni-temporal time that scars. In fact, this is my key claim in this paper, so it is worth considering in greater detail how this transcendental/ethical obfuscation might take place in Derrida’s work.

It is important to note that these subtly different understandings of ‘originary mourning’xv as peculiar to the event of friendship, or as a condition of any relation to the other at all, correspond to a problem upon which Derrida’s philosophy is avowedly situated, but which nonetheless seems to involve the obfuscation of the transcendental and the normative, and thus, on my view, ultimately makes possible Derrida’s ethics of non-presentist time. For Derrida, any relation to the other must involve a pre-originary mourning, and yet he also argues that friendship, if there is such a thing, is premised on this pre-originary mourning and ought to embrace rather than turn away from this condition: the former claim is Derrida weighing into more traditional transcendental philosophy; the latter claim also more clearly gives this mourning an ethical and normative dimension.

This dual status of his key transcendental claims recurs throughout many of his major concepts. There is an unresolved tension, for example, between whether events are to be understood to necessarily happen all of the time (in the discussions of iterability and difference in his early work this seems to be the case), and yet he is also prone to employing a more genealogical logic which suggests that such and such must be the case for any “event worthy of the name”, often with an added clause such as, “if there is such a thing as an event”. Interestingly, Derrida also seems to suggest
that there is, in fact, a necessary overcoming or confusion of the is/ought divide in any event worthy of the name. This is perhaps clearest in his discussions of the US declaration of independence in ‘Otobiographies’, along with his essay on this same theme in Negotiations. The declaration of independence seeks to describe or ratify an already existing state of affairs, but at the same time its validity is invented through this act of naming, this performance, which also suggests what ought to be the case. Consider the famous passage: “We therefore the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly declare and publish that these United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states”. Manifest in this statement is a description of a state of affairs (the assembled people, even though they are not yet legitimately representatives), and the imperative regarding what ought to be the case (their being representatives of free and independent states), and it is the performative aspect of the declaration that makes possible the transition from the one to the other in a relatively seamless way. This analysis of Derrida’s is insightful, and it bears some relationship to his account of friendship as we will see, but the movement between the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’ that features here also persists in more troubling ways in Derrida’s own work.

Indeed, a similar structure undergirds his work on the decision, yet another example of a concept that is simultaneously impossible within its own internal logic and yet nevertheless necessary. He sometimes suggests things like “the decision, if there is such a thing as a decision” and hence can claim that he is merely analysing the logic of the decision. More commonly, he asserts that the various decisions that we do make must be structured by the experience of the undecidable (which is thus
the transcendental condition of any particular decisions that we do make). Quite frequently, however, he also argues, or implies, that our actual concrete decisions not only ought to be structured by this experience but they ought to embrace, rather than turn away from, this condition\textsuperscript{xix}. This formulation allows for degrees, and an ethico-political orientation that the transcendental argument itself should not admit. In ‘Ethics and Politics Today’, Derrida makes this explicit. He comments that the strategy of deconstruction, and its deployment of transcendental arguments should be considered to be primarily “pre-ethical-political”, but he cannot resist going on to add that it in fact simultaneously is ethico-political, precisely because it prescriptively insists on this preliminary ‘pre’ that must accompany all responsible decision-making\textsuperscript{xx}. Here is where the normative comes in, a normativity that paradoxically grants an ethico-political privilege to a transcendental condition over what we might call the extra-transcendental, or the empirical. The problem then, revolves around whether we understand Derrida primarily as a genealogist of concepts, as an undisguised transcendental philosopher, or as an ethicist, albeit in a highly restricted sense. For me, however, he trades on this ambiguity and it allows him to imbue this transcendental temporal wound with a normative dimension that is never satisfactorily justified. As such, I think he makes almost precisely the same mistake he accuses Heidegger of, when in ‘Ousia and Gramme’ he rejects Heidegger’s quasi-ethical distinction between authentic and vulgar time.

I will continue to try and bring this out in regard to the relationship between time and friendship. What, after all, does Derrida’s paradoxical suggestion that without a certain kind of transcendental mourning (the wound) there is no friendship mean? How might one be plunged before mourning into mourning? What exactly are we mourning in the pre-originary mourning of friendship? As well as the prospect of
the death of the other, it seems that at a more fundamental level what we are mourning is time. Although this cannot be understood to entail a mere lament that time is passing (an attitude of *ressentiment* for Nietzsche), we mourn the future, since it is from the future that death, trauma, loss, come. Moreover, we have already seen how time disrupts and problematises friendship. The time of stable and habitual friendship is the time of confidence and chronology; Derrida’s etymology of the term confidence draws outs its links with fidelity, faithfulness, the sensible duration of time (PF 14). But it takes time to do without time in this manner, it takes trials and tests, and these memorial wounds are always there and never dispensed with (PF 15). Indeed, Derrida emphasises that a condition of stable friendship, of what he calls “cultivated aptitude”, is this *contretemps* that is associated with both the past and the future (PF 16). This condition of (im)possibility of friendship is the time of the irruptive wound, which “gives itself only its withdrawal (PF 14), and disjoins presentist time while it also pertains to it.

In this context, it is also worth reflecting on that famous statement attributed to Aristotle by many since the middle-ages, but always without any concrete referent, and from which Derrida begins each of his chapters in *Politics of Friendship*: ‘O my friends, there is no friend’. This paradoxical statement seems to undermine the tenor of Aristotle’s work on friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and it is also important to Derrida because it is split between two temporal orders and hence not a simple contradiction: the first clause invokes those friends who have been or those friends who will be (its performative element either calls them forth or recalls them – this is the time of the future and the past); the second clause is irremediably of the present in its assertion of the definitive, factual statement that there *is* no friend. There is no good or perfect friend, because friendship is split between these orders, never
unambiguously present and self-contained. It is haunted by the trial with which it developed and began (memorial time), as well by the future (the death of the other). We mourn the split or wound of time, that is to say the way in which friendship is never finally given but must be re-performed and re-invigorated, and also the way in which friendship is never pure but always also compromised, fallible, and liable to transformation, including the possibility of an unforgivable rupture.

At the same time, in a certain sense we must also celebrate this wound, however, for without it no friendship is possible. Why Derrida feels compelled to use loaded terms like ‘mourning’ and ‘wound’ for this aspect of time hence remains an open question, albeit one that is more explicable if one agrees with my argument that Derrida’s philosophy of time instantiates a transcendental pathology, in that a surreptitious ethics (with a melancholic inflection) is derived from a transcendental analysis. On his view, however, this split is also what makes possible the event, the new, and difference, to momentarily treat them as synonyms. As Derrida suggests, “the disposition, the aptitude, even the wish – everything that makes friendship possible and prepares it – does not suffice for friendship, for friendship in act… the analysis of conditions of possibility, even existential ones (e.g. habit), will never suffice in giving an account of the act or the event” (PF 17). Indeed, Derrida’s basic critique of habit, skills and phronesis (as they apply to friendship) in Politics of Friendship is, as we have seen, that they are “omni-temporal” (PF 16, 20) and cover over the gap between two different temporal orders.

And it seems to me that Derrida is right in this respect; corporeal responses to our friends do form habitual patterns, and the ‘transcendental time’ that haunts friendship (the wound that come from both the past and the prospect of an unknown future) is covered over in our typical phenomenological experiences of friendship.
However, it should be noted that these patterns that any friendship partakes in, far from suggesting any kind of mechanistic stagnation, are in fact what allow us to ‘intuitively’ or ‘pre-reflectively’ notice that something is different or amiss with a friend, and thus to transform our relation to the individual in question. This applies to moral considerations pertaining to friendship in a structurally isomorphic way to our general coping with equipment and objects in the world, even though it is also clear that the telos of our relations with others is not ease of use, or getting things done, as might be said to typify our more general coping. Certainly, Aristotle, Merleau-Ponty, Hubert Dreyfus, and many others have shown us that these corporeal adjustments towards others involve a sophisticated feedback loop and are not merely mechanistic and unthinking reactions that pay no attention to the distinctiveness or alterity of the other; in fact, they enable the other’s particularity (and their needs) to come forth. Practical wisdom just is this ability, which can be developed over a period of time, to respond in the appropriate manner to the consistently changing circumstances that one is presented with; it is based on the development of skills, moral virtues, etc., within a community. These embodied and pre-reflective judgments are themselves thus a transcendental condition of friendship of sorts. And while it is true that they take time to develop (that is, it takes time for us to become morally mature and suitably attentive to the specificities of our friend and their situation), it is also the case that such abilities are always already at work in any relation to the other, and in friendship. My point in this regard is a simple one: although this omni-temporal time “does not suffice for friendship”, as Derrida compellingly suggests, it is nonetheless as central and important to friendship as is the split or wound that he more forcefully insists upon.

More critically for my purposes here, it also remains unclear and something
akin to an unjustified point of faith in Derrida’s work as to why the temporal wound in friendship should have a normative and ethico-political impetus (respect the wound; be open to the perhaps, etc.) that is missing from his occasional descriptions of more existential and embodied conditions of possibility. One of Derrida’s interviews published in *A Taste for the Secret* is revelatory in this regard. As well as affirming the importance of Kierkegaard to his own work, he suggests that his intention was never “to draw away from the concern for existence itself, for concrete personal commitment, or from the existential pathos that, in a sense, I have never lost… In some ways, *a philosopher without the ethico-existential pathos does not interest me very much*” (my italics)xxiii. In the case of the major existentialist thinkers, their phenomenological and existential descriptions gave this ‘ethico-existential pathos’ some content, and in the more subtle and nuanced of these thinkers they were always moderated by a recognition of the importance of bodily equilibria, the ready-to-hand, etc. In taking the transcendental turn in the manner that he does, Derrida’s ‘existentialism’ is one without either of these anchorsxxiv. As such, his is an ethical pathos enshrined by a transcendental philosophy (and, tacitly, a hierarchy) of time, or, if we think he remains faithful to his early declaration that there is no concept of time other than the metaphysical one (cf. A 14), it is a hierarchy of the untimely on the one hand, and the metaphysics of presence that it disrupts on the other hand. Of course, that is not to deny that, for Derrida, the two hands must be intertwined, in that the former *contretemps* must always also pertain to time, especially in the manner that the future and past haunt and interrupt any metaphysics of the present. Nonetheless, that does not mitigate the lack of attention that Derrida accords to corporeal phronesis (which is arguably not reducible to a metaphysics of presence in any casexxv), and it does not account for the manner in which his brief references to it always
conspicuously lack the ethical flavour that accompanies his descriptions of the time of the past and the future, which are, for him, the transcendental conditions for the present and for friendship.

In this context, it is worth briefly observing that Deleuze’s philosophy is based upon some rather similar convictions, certainly in his canonical works, *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*. While Deleuze is rather less explicitly concerned with the problem of a metaphysics of presence, Derrida’s view of the temporal split that makes possible friendship bears some important and often overlooked proximities to Deleuze’s understanding of the event and its ties to the future and the past (*Aion*), rather than to the present (*Chronos*) and mere states of affairs. For Deleuze, as for Derrida, both the event and an understanding of the way in which time divides ceaselessly toward the future and the past are accorded a transcendental priority, whereas habit, for example, is to be understood empirically and as part of the field of the possible and hence not directly pertaining to the virtual and the event. Possible questions and objections begin to rear their heads here, which relate to the work of Merleau-Ponty, Dreyfus, and others. For example, do their detailed descriptions of the varia of embodied life, including solicitations to act and the skilful establishment of intentional arcs in a transcendental field, show us something akin to a virtuality of coping? Is there a transcendental corporeality, contrary to what empiricists might maintain?

While these questions cannot be comprehensively pursued here, the failure to consider them is nonetheless further evidence of a pathology of time at work in Derrida, an anti-presentism that eschews the time of Chronos, the orderly succession of presents in linear time and the habitual certitudes of the senses (including commonsense). A certain wound of time that he has given various names operates as
both a transcendental condition and, at times, as a hierarchical and privileged ethical term. While it is difficult to dispute Derrida’s forceful analyses of the co-imbrication and contamination that time institutes, it is far from clear that this justifies an ethical priority to be accorded to but one aspect of time, the disjunctive and the wounding. Derrida’s arguments toward this conclusion too often beg the question and assume the importance of this temporal disruption. But what kind of ethics and politics does this valorisation of the event as rupture (as outside of the order of possibility) have? Is it sufficient? Clearly not, even according to Derrida for any concrete political action, and it is not sufficient for an account of friendship. Indeed, in both of these respects phenomenologies of the body are central: the fact that the body excludes things from our particular horizons of significance is not something that should be ignored, nor should the way in which they involve an omni-temporal binding that covers over gaps and aporias, without suggesting they are not there. Time, it seems, unsurprisingly enough, is complicated. And while it would be difficult to deny that Derrida grasps this complication, I hope to have shown that he nonetheless imports an a priori judgment about which aspects of time are most significant and of the most value.

While time wounds us in the senses enumerated so well by Derrida, lived time also scarifies these wounds, covers them over through an omni-temporal time that conjoins, and this is not unimportant to friendship. In fact, we might even reverse Derrida’s formulations and say that there is no friendship without scarification, without a confused and ambiguous present, something that is occluded and downplayed in Derrida’s temporal and ethical decisions.

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NOTES

1Derrida, J., “Ousia and Gramme: A Note to a Footnote in Being and Time”, Margins of Philosophy, trans. A. Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p 63. Heidegger also seems to have
independently come to this realisation himself, around the same time.

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My use of spatial metaphors to refer to temporal processes is not wholly inappropriate. Derrida also refers to a certain aspect of time as ‘wounding’ and as a ‘cut’ or ‘nick’.


His main worry about what he calls the ‘ideologies of the body’ is a tacit presupposition of the immediacy of carnal touching that consigns the technical, cultural and introjective to a derived and secondary position. This is a fair concern, but it is not clear that it necessarily applies to all philosophies of the body as I discuss below. See Derrida, J., On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy, trans. C. Irizarry, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

Deleuze describes the quasi-cause as the manner in which the ‘virtual’ haunts and at least partly produces the actual. Quasi-causality, however, does not function on the basis of strict causal necessitation and determination, but abides by a logic of expression. See Deleuze, G., Logic of Sense,
Derrida’s reference to the virtual in this context seems to explicitly and deliberately invoke connections with the work of Deleuze. I think this happens more and more frequently in Derrida’s texts, where references to Deleuzian understandings of good and common sense frequently recur. This is not to deny that On Touching is critical about Deleuze and Guattari’s work in a number of places, most notably for the manner in which Derrida suggests that it ultimately perpetuates a certain haptocentric intuitionism (with concepts like the body-without-organs), and thus remains at least partly tied to the Christian onto-theological tradition (see p125).


Likewise Aristotle’s tacit binary opposition between loving and being loved, and the suggestion that the former is on the side of life and the latter on the side of death, is also convincingly deconstructed. I cannot address this in any detail here, however.


Derrida sometimes refers to this mourning as originary, sometimes as pre-originary: in *Aporias* it is originary, perhaps deliberately so on account of his engagement with Heidegger, whereas in *On Touching* it is pre-originary.


In *Gift of Death*, for example, genuine responsibility consists in oscillating between the demands of
that which is wholly other (in Abraham’s case, God, but also any particular other) and the more general
demands of a community, and in enduring this trial of the undecidable decision rather than simply
resolving it (see p70).


At the same time, Derrida’s own descriptions of pre-originary mourning must also contain some
phenomenological or psychoanalytic register.

At least, this is convincingly argued for by Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus. See their essay, ‘The Ethical
Implications of the Five-Stage Skill-Acquisition Model’, *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society*,
Vol. 24, 2004, p251-74, and also Hubert Dreyfus’ website and the essay, ‘What is Moral Maturity? A
Phenomenological Account of the Development of Ethical Expertise’.


this book makes some similar observations on the relationship that obtains between existentialism and
Derrida’s work.

It is omni-temporal rather than presentist, even according to Derrida’s own account. Moreover, for
Merleau-Ponty the habitual action is not based merely in a temporality of the present, and yet nor is it
restricted only to the past. The ‘presence’ of habituality is built upon our past-learned skill that is still
in play, and which, nevertheless, must also open us to slightly different and unanticipated scenarios. So
even the mode of existence in which we unthinkingly react partakes in a previous existence that has
engendered certain results. This is what allows us to anticipate eventual outcomes, and yet it also
necessitates precipitation and the hastening of a coming event, and these two aspects mutually
encroach such that we condition and alter the world, just as the world also conditions and produces us.
The apparent ‘presence’ involved in behaving habitually is hence always internally divergent, requiring
both anticipative and precipitative elements which never resolve themselves into any absolute stability
that might be denigrated as conforming to the metaphysics of presence. See Merleau-Ponty, M.,

Deleuze, G., *Logic of Sense*, p166, 182.

Deleuze, G., *Difference and Repetition*, p89.

Betsy Behnke claims this of Husserl in ‘Husserl’s Phenomenology of Embodiment’, *Internet