

Violence and Pardon: From Arendt Through Derrida Toward the Rhetoric of the 21st-century Global Community

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In this paper I would like to argue the invisibility of violence in our time and the possibility of pardon as verbal activities. Violence in the 21st century develops a new phase after 9/11 which is “the event which comes to suspend comprehension” (Derrida). Comprehension, the key term both for Arendt and Derrida, has been threatened where “everything seems to have lost specific value, and has become unrecognizable” (Arendt).

Violence in totalitarian government will be discussed by focusing on Arendt’s notions of “laws of movement,” “ideology,” and “iron band of terror.” Although these discussions seem to be conducted in political and sociological sphere, I will point out that they lead to the themes of human psyche such as loneliness. Being trapped in the coercive power of tyranny of logicity, human beings are isolated each other and dependant, in total terror, on ideology as the only truth for them which is accessible through the ability of reasoning.

To explore the possibility of the pardon—pardoning and being pardoned, we have to reconsider the enigmatic concept of pardon itself. Who pardons whom on which condition and how much? The impossibility of the pardon might be possible when we find ourselves in a situation where no language is necessary to excuse or to be excused.