

Modern Ex-tension: Recontextualizing Responsibility Through Levinas on Ethics and Technology

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Abstract: This paper explores Emmanuel Levinas' profound concept of responsibility, shedding light on how our existence is inherently oriented towards the Other. It posits that responsibility is a pivotal ethical consideration necessary for discerning a genuine desire for a fulfilling life. Throughout history, the definition of responsibility has evolved, often becoming obscured by the rapid advancements and cultural shifts of modernity, particularly those influenced by technology. In light of this, I aim to recontextualize our understanding of responsibility within the context of contemporary technological developments. While some philosophers saw that modernity and its by-products are forms of decadence, Levinas saw that this [technology] can instead boost one's sense of responsibility and can improve the economy of being or existence. While some philosophers argue that modernity and its technological innovations signify a decline in ethical engagement, Levinas presents an alternative perspective, positing that technology can enhance our sense of responsibility and enrich our existential economy. By asserting that our responsibility to the Other can find expression through modern forms of connection—

even within our increasingly virtual lives—we affirm that Levinas’ insights on responsibility remain relevant. They compel us to engage with our Desire for the Other, inviting encounters that rivet and transcend physical and virtual boundaries. This examination not only revitalizes Levinas’ philosophy but also challenges us to navigate the complexities of ethical existence in an age of rapid innovation.

Keywords: Levinas, ethics, responsibility, technology

INTRODUCTION

The entirety of Levinas' philosophy has set up good foundations for ethical discourses. His philosophy is unique, as its context stems from his personal experiences of the Holocaust and his admiration for philosophers who have underscored phenomena and existence. Even now, his ideas are relevant to the many inquiries concerning responsibility that, for most, give meaning to our existence. One may infer that the Levinasian way of philosophizing is identified with a respect for both individuality and plurality in the sense that the individual comes to understand the world together with others and he comes to understand himself while interacting with others. The concept of the Other then develops the pivoting point for understanding responsibility.

Mentioning the importance of context earlier in the formulation of Levinas' thoughts, it might be compelling to delve into this inquiry by identifying a context relevant to our present human condition. This is the context of the advancement of modernity through technology. Our existence, at present, is bombarded by technology. Although technological advent has been epochs ago, its surge of development nevertheless continues. And from this, a problematic comes into play as we attempt to grasp the parameters of responsibility toward the Other. Can modernity's by-product—technology, widen or misconstrue our sense and practice of responsibility? More so, does technology generally affect our being and existing and our connection to the world or others?

This paper attempts to supply answers to the questions through a survey of the Levinasian stances on responsibility, modernity, and technology. Through this, we can re-align and re-evaluate our thoughts on how responsibility and our whole existence becomes meaningful when there is a welcoming of and responding to the Other. However, this research may not extensively settle on the concept of the Face; but through an understanding of it may contend that beyond a physical responsibility, there must also be careful consideration of a 'virtual' responsibility given

the impetus that most of Levinas' thoughts¹ makes one move from thought to action.

RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICS, AND THE OTHER

Responsibility may be defined in many ways such as accountability, burden, commitment, obligation, or reliability. These synonyms or connotations are in one way the same but would signify or would be dense on different aspects of its etymology. Again, a context must be measured in order to better give meaning to it. Usually, responsibility is associated with the I's relation with his actions. But notwithstanding the context, the first premise that shall be considered here is that to be is already to be responsible. There is a clear-cut interconnectedness amongst being, existing, and responsibility.

The attempting I to break up the 'somnolence of the bourgeois existence' in order to move out of an existence "without windows and doors, the most private in a person"² may be hinted as early as the works *On Escape* and *Totality and Infinity*. With one's solitary confinement and his inescapable burden with oneself, there comes an energy, or desire,³ for the I to move out, despite the riveting, to find consolation and advancement.

¹ "The movement of Levinas' thought is like that of waves, as Derrida was the first to say it, but we must think of the waves as those of an approaching high tide: each wave pushing a bit further than the last, each venturing a more radical interpretation of alterity. Each wave becomes visible discreetly, looms larger and then crashes at the always turbulent forefront of Levinas' thought." Richard Cohen's Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. by Richard A. Cohen (USA: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 3. Hereafter cited as *TO*; Also, from this I would want to contend that almost all the works of Levinas point us to the concept of responsibility. However, the works offer different levels of 'waves' to emphasize another idea that would hedge responsibility as an essential in our existence.

² *Ibid.*, 42.

³ In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas accompanies us in understanding metaphysics and desire as leaned towards the Other. He would say that "desire would characterize a being indigent and incomplete or fallen from its past grandeur." Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 33. Hereafter cited as *TI*.

This *hypostatic* energy is fueled by his Desire⁴ and weariness of the world that urges him to escape to begin a search—a search that will liberate him from an egoist⁵ gravitation.⁶ This search would then reveal that our existence is an existence for the Other⁷ in the same vein that we Desire for the Other. The connection of the I and the other lies in the fact that the other's emergence is an answer to the I's deepest desire and in turn, motivates him.⁸ Consequently, in order to radically breakaway from this solitude, the I must be hospitable to the other. The Desire towards the Other and in living with Other involves limitless responsibilities.

What else is in the Other that we Desire for her? Aside from her mystery and bounty,⁹ there is goodness, and this is the aim of an ethical existing—the good. Desiring the Other can be tantamount to Desiring goodness and Levinas would direct our thoughts on how goodness would also be to consider the goodness of the Other. He writes: “goodness consists in taking up a position in being such that the Other counts more that

⁴ However, on this second usage of the term Desire, there would be a different meaning. This Desire is insatiable as it “desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness—the Desired does not fulfill it but deepens it.” *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵ The egoist character is derived from the consideration of ontology as the first philosophy. Levinas disagrees with this as ontology becomes a “philosophy of injustice” where the other is taken in possession and thus becomes the same—the other is reduced as the same. He then argues that ethics is the first philosophy as it is “where the same takes the irreducible Other into account.” See *Ibid.*, 46-47. The trap of egoism, for Levinas, has been a central problem in Western philosophy and thus he proposes that ethics is rather the first philosophy because of the ethical relation between the I and the Other.

⁶ See *Ibid.*, 236.

⁷ Levinas explains, in the preface of *Time and the Other*, the significance of spelling the term Other with a capital O. He says: “I have always translated *autrui* as the “Other,” with an uppercase “O,” and *autre* as “other,” with a lowercase “o.” *Autrui* refers to the personal other, the other person; *autre* refers to otherness in general, to alterity. Levinas, *TO*, 30.

⁸ Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993), 22.

⁹ “To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows that idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity.” Levinas, *TI*, 51.

myself.”¹⁰ The goodness in the being of the Other induces the I’s ‘love’ for the other without interests—disinterestedness. Finding the good in the other is beyond self-interest and self-preservation as it veers away from the traps of egoism. The disinterestedness that the ‘love’ for the other brings is a kind of awakening of the presence of the other.

The shift of the spontaneous egoist positions of the I becomes first for-the-other before a being-for-itself. This is a radical turn away. “The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into the question of my spontaneity, as ethics.”¹¹ From this, we can denote that for Levinas, responsibility is a kind of ex-tension by the I or the Self for the Other. With this, Levinas maintains a claim on responsibility as an ethical responsibility, “a metaphysical responsibility, an exorbitant and infinite responsibility for other human beings, to care not for being, for the unravelling of its plot, but for what is beyond and against being, the alterity¹² of the other person.”¹³ Responsibility for the other, according to Levinas, originates from the alterity of the other.

How can we come to an awareness of the presence of the other or alterity? If this other would be a stranger, how can I possibly be responsible to her? We can only recognize this alterity from an interior to an exterior movement [transcendence], from a going out of the self since “alterity is possible only starting from *me*.”¹⁴ The other is recognized since it is not the Same and should not be reduced as Same since this would be violence.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹² Richard Cohen, in his introduction of a translation of *Time and the Other*, would emphasize that Levinas would imply that alterity is the driving force of ethics. It is a positive force. “The irreducible alterity beyond the identifications of both epistemology and ontology, thus beyond truth and reality, the non-in-difference of one to another, he realizes, is an ethical alterity, the alterity of the good encountered in the face of the Other.” Levinas, *TO*, 14.

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 3. Hereafter cited as *EI*.

¹⁴ Levinas, *TI*, 40.

Hence, the exterior movement is both a gaining and losing of the I in order to meet the other. And, quite understandably, there is a possibility that my relationship with and responsibility for and to the other may lead one to understand more closely his I; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain:

The *I* is responsible not only to know the Other, or to share an understanding of the world which the Other also shares, but is responsible to respond to the very alterity of the Other, to an alterity which is always on the verge of presence but never comes to presence.¹⁵

However, this may seem to be abstract since, at this point, there is no embodiment of this Other whom the I should welcome and be responsible of. It is in this regard that Levinas allows us to understand in a concrete manner responsibility towards the other through the Face of the other. The Face can be considered a nude façade of the other both bursting and devoid of embellishments and concealments. This visage is proving that the other referred to by Levinas is not the alter ego but rather a human other. And from this, he beautifully philosophizes on it as it evokes and compels the I to respond to a kind of saying that the Face does. Complex as it may be, the concept of the Face lets us to further “‘experience’ or ‘realize’ what we see, feel, ‘know’ when another, by looking at me, ‘touches’ me: *autrui me vise*; the other’s visage looks at me, ‘regards’ me”¹⁶ so that we may respond to it fittingly. The Face becomes the I’s access point for the fruition of an ethical action. Levinas clearly states:

I understand responsibility as responsibility for the Other, thus as responsibility for what is not my deed, or for what

¹⁵ Cohen, Introduction to *TO*, 18.

¹⁶ Peperzak, *To the Other*, 19.

does not even matter to me; or which precisely does matter to me, is met by me as face.¹⁷

Following this thought trail, from the physical seeing of the Face, we may also see the interplay of subjectivity in the concept of responsibility. Levinas affirms this: “Responsibility is the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity.”¹⁸ However, this does not mean that there should be a knowledge of the I of that Face in order to be responsible for him or her. This ethical relation of the I toward the other is asymmetrical. It is never reducible to the phenomenality of the face. Yet, with the I being a sub-ject,¹⁹ it is not demanded by the other and it does not guarantee nor require that my responsibility for the other will require her to do the same in return (reciprocity):

Responsibility in fact is not a simple attribute of subjectivity, as if the latter already existed, before the ethical relationship. Subjectivity is not for itself; it is, once again, initially for the other ... The proximity of the Other is presented as the fact that the Other is not simply close to me in space, or close like a parent, but he approaches me essentially insofar as I feel myself—insofar as I am—responsible for him.²⁰

This asymmetrical ethical relationship is rather by the I’s ordination—“the *I* elected to its responsibilities is elected subject to the Other. It is forced into itself, morally singularized, made responsible, not by itself but despite-itself, an-archically, by the Other.”²¹ This is avowed in

¹⁷ Levinas, *EI*, 95.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ At this point of discussing responsibility, the Filipino equivalent of the term responsibility (which are *pananagutan* and *pag-ako*) is better contextualized or is given light.

²⁰ Levinas, *EI*, 96.

²¹ Cohen, Introduction to *TO*, 17.

Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence as there is a continuity of the progression of Levinas' exposition of the priority of responsibility as an existent: "Responsibility, the signification of which is non-indifference, goes one way, from me to the other. In the saying of responsibility, which is an exposure to an obligation for which no one could replace me, I am unique."²² The I is ordained and that he is the only one capable to a kind of responding because of his uniqueness. No one can take this responsibility from the I because this I is irreplaceable. Uniqueness in responsibility levels up in its context as Levinas would introduce to us that responsibility is about response-ability: a "here I am." It is a form of recognition and from recognizing, we respond. It is a "summons to arise to be and to present oneself. It involves a recognition not of the form but of the force—vocative and imperative and not causal, information or even indicative force—of the other, of alterity itself."²³

Our responsibility to and for the other takes place in a physical world where implements in our dwelling might affect how we respond to this Other. It is worthwhile to consider how responsibility is contextualized in modernity and all the implements it has created for the service of the existents. Modernity has brought about a lot of resituating in the human condition and truth. Does this epoch also bring a shift to how responsibility and the relation to the other is achieved?

MODERNITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND RESPONSIBILITY: POINTS OF TENSION

Modernity, a temporal orientation in the here and now, centers on the problem of consciousness and subjectivity, contrary to theocentrism and dogmatism. This is achieved through the radicalization of the epistemological project of critique, where reason, reflection, and the

²² Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 138-39. Hereafter cited as *OBBE*.

²³ Alphonso Lingis, Introduction to *OBBE*, xiii.

pursuit of historical progress are placed at the forefront of human inquiry. It was a decisive turning point for this era to become anthropocentric; the flourishing of art, humanities, and science was a clear manifestation of this radical shift toward humanity as the center of both thought and thought. It is also the age when free thinking was held in high esteem, with philosophy giving careful attention to the plurality of perspectives emerging across diverse disciplines. With modernity also came the advent of technological advancements, each aimed at providing convenience for human life while simultaneously altering the very structures of existence.

Many philosophers would be famed because of their thoughts about modernity and its byproducts. Among which, Levinas is one of them. In his attempt to resuscitate the vitality of ethics as the relationship and responsibility of the I to the Other, he would be opposing how other thinkers would argue that technology isn't in service to man's ethical life and progression. Notably, his divergence from Martin Heidegger marks a critical juncture. While Heidegger remains one of the most penetrating diagnosticians of modernity, his suspicion of technology as a mode of revealing profoundly contrasts with Levinas' conviction that technology can serve, rather than undermine, ethical life. Beyond Heidegger's problematic political affiliations with National Socialism, the deeper philosophical rupture between the two lies in the question of priority: for Levinas, ethics precedes ontology, whereas Heidegger's project remains ontological, even when it is critical of modern *enframing*. In Levinas' view, Western metaphysics has been guilty of a totalizing tendency to reduce the Other as the same through ontology making no room for "not allowing itself to be alienated by the other"²⁴ or more so a non-welcoming of the other because of the over glorifying of the Self. The glorification of the Self occludes responsibility, making it impossible to encounter the Other as Other.

²⁴ Levinas, *TI*, 42.

In defense of ontology, of *Dasein* particularly, Heidegger opposes the role of technology in the life of man. He would assert that the essence of technology is *enframing*—“the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.”²⁵ It is with this that man efforts to put up a ‘framework’ upon the natural to enforce a production of a consumable material. Thus, from a ‘standing-reserve’, technology produces objects that is at the mercy of man the consumer; the object then lacks a dignity of being an ‘object’ since man becomes non-autonomous in relation to it.

Technology, in Heidegger’s perspective, is an attack to egoism—that it signals a danger effected in technological dehumanization. Man comes to a “precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve.”²⁶ The chance for man to ‘lord over the earth’ becomes impossible as, Cohen interprets, “the life of the philosopher/ poet is most needful, the greatest imperative, especially in these ‘most dangerous’ times when Be-ing is being silenced by ‘technology’.”²⁷ There is a decline, a decadence so to speak, in man’s existence because of a ‘failure’ of staying with the unity of things in dwelling. It is a decline of his autonomous ‘revelation’ and a move to the primacy of technology.

Against Heidegger’s fear of technological enframing, Levinas proposes that responsibility for the Other is not negated but can even be intensified through the new modes of encounter made possible by technological mediation. Where Heidegger discerns only danger, Levinas discerns a possibility—the ethical call that transcends ontology, refusing reduction to the Same. The ethical summons of the Other does not fall

²⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁷ Richard A. Cohen, *Ethics, Exegesis, and Philosophy: Interpretations after Levinas* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 125.

silent in modernity; it continues to resound, even, and perhaps especially, within technological life.

LEVINAS RECONSIDERED IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL ERA

Levinas optimistically sees technology as an implement in man's dwelling in the world. He would have thought, in this claim, that Heidegger probably focused on the activity of technologization and not the real essence of technology as an implement. Heidegger might have been worried with the ontological presence of the truth of Being—a kind of ontological presence blended with “obedience that would be accomplished in existing as builder and cultivator, effecting the unity of the site which sustains space.”²⁸ This worry of the negation of “I can”²⁹ is, in the Heideggerian world, an exploitation of reality. Whilst it is true that “we must urgently defend man against this century's technology since eventually, man will lose his identity and become a cog in a vast machine that chews up both things and beings.”³⁰ Levinas admits that the I is a sojourner in the world- the Earth. From this world, this dwelling, we identify ourselves with it as it is a Tamarisk,³¹ one that offers nourishment, sustenance, and implements.

To understand technology as an implement in the context of dwelling is to be reminded of its characteristic of an intimacy and familiarity with a human welcome. This welcoming is a move from the interior to the exterior: an uncovering of mysteries. Implements, besides seeing them as a means in view of an end, “admit of an immediate interest

²⁸ Levinas, *TI*, 46.

²⁹ The assertion “I can” can be understood as the ontological supremacy and insistence of the freedom of the self - power. This is why Levinas regards ontology as a philosophy of power.

³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom—Essays on Judaism*, trans. by Sean Hand (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 231. Hereafter quoted as *DFEJ*.

³¹ “Tamarisk is an acronym; the three letters needed to write the word in Hebrew are the initials used for Food, Drink, and Shelter, three things necessary to man which man offers to man.” *Ibid.*, 233.

... which *fill* or nourish a life.”³² In this regard, implements are not only tools but can also be associated with the nourishing of life³³ by surprising us with ‘privileged experiences’ and likewise, in our responsibility towards the Other. Levinas sees in Heidegger, who would deem technology as a barrier to *enrootedness*, a kind of *paganism*—the worship of nature in which one's placement in the world permits an identifying of the self as a detached and powerful person that brings apparent vandalism to dwelling. Enrootedness to the dwelling as a *Place* promotes the “the very splitting of humanity into natives and strangers” into which technology will be understood as:

Technology does away with the privileges of this *enrootedness* and the related sense of exile. It wrenches us out of the Heideggerian world and the superstitions surrounding *Place*. From this point on, an opportunity appears to us: to perceive men outside the situation in which they are placed and let the human face shine in all its nudity. Socrates preferred the town, in which one meets people, to the countryside and trees. Judaism is the brother of the Socratic message.³⁴

Technology is not evil per se. It does allow us to lend ourselves to be more ethically responsible towards the Other, as it allows us to see the face in all its nudity. Upon its demystifying of the world³⁵ for us, including the other, our ordination to be responsible is sustained. This dwelling provides a space for us that refer to as “co-existence, the conjunction of all points, being together at all points with any privilege.”³⁶ From this understanding

³² Levinas, *TI*, 152.

³³ This is in contrary to Dasein's non-hunger. “Da-sein is never hungry. Food can be interpreted as an implement only in the world of exploitation.” *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁴ Levinas, *DFEI*, 232-33.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 234.

³⁶ Levinas, *OBBE*, 81.

arises the understanding that the world consists of a linkage of social arrangements for us to discover the wonders of it. And technology is positively connected to this, when divested from Heidegger's concepts of *enframing* and *paganism*, enables man to grapple with the expansion and betterment of the dwelling. By technology's removal of the false notions of the I and its space, the violation of nature in order to demystify things, it brings us face to face with the other to whom the I is responsible.

Technology is too often dismissed as a barrier to authentic human connection, accused of fostering detachment, anonymity, and superficiality.³⁷ Yet such a view risks overlooking its deeper ethical potential. From a Levinasian standpoint, responsibility for the Other precedes every form of mediation—it is not extinguished by distance or digital presence.³⁸ What if, instead of concealing the face of the Other, technology amplifies it, placing before us cries for justice, stories of vulnerability, and appeals for solidarity that we might never have encountered otherwise?

Far from severing human bonds, technology expands the horizons of responsibility. The “face” of the Other now reaches us not only in physical proximity but also through virtual encounters: the suffering refugee glimpsed in a newsfeed, the marginalized voice shared on social platforms, the call for action that transcends borders. These mediated encounters still summon us, demanding a response. They extend Levinas' ethical relation into realms where the face-to-face encounter cannot always reach, multiplying both the urgency and scope of responsibility.

To redescribe technology is to see it not as a hindrance but as a potent medium of meeting. This vision resists the dominant story in much contemporary philosophy of technology, wherein digital mediation comes to be universally identified with alienation, dehumanization, or loss of genuine ethical life. True, immediacy is sometimes hidden by technology;

³⁷ See Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 9-12.

³⁸ Levinas, *TI*, 197.

yet true also is that it creates unheralded potentialities for relation, making the Other present to us in a way that widens the very horizon of Levinas' ethics. For Levinas, the ethical call is unlimited—it is not tied to proximity or situation but emerges from the irreducible otherness of the Other (Levinas, 1969). Therefore, when technological mediation allows us to listen to voices from distant continents, see agony on a global scale, or stumble upon cultural tales outside our immediate locality, it becomes not a displacement of responsibility but an intensification of the same.

The virtual world, rather than being morally neutral, heightens the call of the Other by bringing us closer and diminishing distances that previously shielded us from responsibility. The refugee whose suffering we would otherwise never see, the victim of structural injustice whose words go viral, or the othered community made visible through networked relations—all illustrate how technology brings the Other into our ethical circle or moral dimension. Such mediated interactions do not dispense with face-to-face interactions but amplify them, which makes responsible relations depend less on spatial presence. And as Levinas maintains, responsibility is not a function of the politics of presence but a necessary one written into the very fabric of subjectivity.³⁹ Technology, then, is a site where that responsibility resonates with renewed force, compelling us to respond in ways that bridge geographies, cultures, and bodies.

Here, technology ought not to be perceived as a mere tool or a medium that is neutral, but as an ethical space in itself. It generates what one could refer to as an extended field of encounter, wherein the summons of the Other is not diminished but multiplied. The challenge, then, is not whether responsibility can survive in an age of technology, but how we, as ethical subjects, can rise to the intensified demands that technological mediation places before us. Levinas' insights compel us to affirm that responsibility knows no limits—not of distance, not of medium, not of time. If anything, the technological status makes this truth more tangible, daily

³⁹ Levinas, *OBBE*, 121.

confronting us with the incontrovertible fact of the Other in ways that tie us into an increasingly expanding circle of responsibility.

TOWARDS AN ETHICAL ECONOMY OF TECHNOLOGY

Responsibility occupies a central and foundational role in Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy, for it implies that all human activity must be grounded in ethics. For Levinas, the self (*le moi*) cannot remain enclosed within itself in search of meaning; it discovers itself only in relation to the Other. Subjectivity is not constituted through interiority alone but emerges in the movement of transcendence—through losing itself in order to gain itself in response to the Other. The turning of the self back toward itself is, paradoxically, also a movement outward, toward alterity. In this sense, responsibility is not an escape from the existential burden of the self but the very mode of its fulfillment. The ethical moment inaugurated by the encounter with the Other thus becomes the condition of possibility for all human discourse and relations. Interconnectedness, for Levinas, is sustained not through fusion or sameness but through the asymmetrical responsibility of one for the Other. Here, we are compelled to ask: how do we experience our sense of self as shaped, not by isolation, but by responsibility to others?

The epoch of modernity, however, places this responsibility under pressure. Modern advancements—technological, social, and cultural—have provided extraordinary conveniences and heightened human productivity. Yet these developments raise the pressing question of whether they also cultivate, or instead obscure, our intuition of responsibility. The challenge of modernity is precisely this: do its innovations foster the ex-tension of the self toward the Other, or do they confine the self within an increasingly complacent and egoistic solitude? Technology, in particular, constitutes both the risk and the possibility of ethical relations. For Levinas, implements are not neutral tools but elements of our dwelling in the world; as such, technology can serve as a site for ethical engagement. It can

enhance responsibility by uprooting us from the comforts of self-enclosure and compelling us to act in response to the Other, potentially cultivating deeper human interconnectedness rather than estrangement. In light of this, we might ask: in what ways does modern technology challenge us to move beyond our comfort zones and truly respond to the needs of others?

Nevertheless, Levinas' notion of the Face does not lose its relevance in the digital age. For Levinas, the Face is not merely a physical visage but a transcendental signifier of the Other's infinite demand: "The face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation."⁴⁰ Thus, even in virtual interactions, the ethical weight of responsibility can be rearticulated. The Face, understood as the manifestation of the Other's vulnerability and demand, can be extended into the digital sphere as "virtual responsibility." To encounter the Other online is not to encounter "less" of their humanity, but rather to be summoned differently—to respond across mediation, distance, and technological boundaries. The Levinasian ethic reminds us that even in the virtual, the Other cannot be reduced to data points, avatars, or mere representations; they remain an infinite call to responsibility.

While responsibility in the physical or "offline" sense may appear more immediate—grounded in the face-to-face encounter—digital responsibility invites a broader rethinking of ethical life. Technology should be recognized not merely as an instrument of efficiency but as an implement capable of nourishing our sense of responsibility. The virtual encounter, though mediated, still discloses the vulnerability and alterity of the Other, summoning us to respond. It creates a new "place" for ethics, demanding that we extend Levinas' call beyond physical proximity to the context of mediated presence. This requires renewed attentiveness to the ethics of digital interaction, particularly in spaces such as social media, where responsibility can be both cultivated and betrayed. Does our engagement in online spaces reflect authentic responsibility, or do our

⁴⁰ Levinas, *TI*, 197-199.

digital encounters risk remaining superficial exchanges devoid of ethical depth?

Practically implementing Levinas' philosophy of responsibility in a technological society requires a conscious refusal to let mediation erase alterity. This means cultivating practices of attentiveness in digital communication: resisting dehumanizing discourse, recognizing the dignity of those we encounter online, and refusing to collapse difference into sameness through algorithms or stereotypes. At a structural level, it entails designing technologies that prioritize dialogue, care, and justice rather than efficiency, profit, or manipulation. In educational contexts, this could mean teaching digital ethics that foreground responsibility before freedom or utility. In social and political contexts, it demands policies that protect human dignity in technological spaces, especially for marginalized voices often silenced online. The central insight remains Levinasian: responsibility is infinite and asymmetrical, and the mediation of technology cannot suspend it. Instead, technology can become a medium through which responsibility is both tested and expanded, challenging us to enact an ethical life in new and complex terrains.

Responsibility, in all its connotations, only gains meaning when contextualized within human interaction. It is not reducible to abstract obligation but emerges in proximity, in the recognition of the Other who calls forth the "Here I am." Although grounded in human freedom, responsibility is not chosen; it arises as a demand that precedes autonomy, an appeal that makes ethics the "first philosophy." Even in an era of technological mediation, responsibility remains the source and foundation of subjectivity: to exist is to exist for the Other before existing for oneself. Ultimately, our encounter with the human other becomes more meaningful when in this space and time, we make it always a point to exist with and for them in this existential plight. In this light, we must ask: what does it mean, in this moment of history shaped by rapid technological change, to exist for the Other before existing for ourselves?

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