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Tracing the Movement of Itinerant Pilgrim in the Athens Pole: A Levinasian Hermeneutics

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Abstract: In Emmanuel Levinas' essay "Trace of the Other," two figures are used to describe the ethical. The mythological Ulysses is made to represent a self that goes out of itself yet returns once more to itself. While Abraham of the biblical tradition stands for a self that goes out of itself yet does not revert. The usual interpretation of the juxtaposition of would be Levinas favoring the Abrahamic non-return over the Ulyssean reversion. In this paper, I contend that there can be a more nuanced reading of the ethical by extending the Ulyssean and the Abrahamic to stand for the Greek wisdom of love and the biblical love of wisdom. I will do so by introducing a Hermeneutics of the Itinerant Pilgrim. The Itinerant Pilgrim is a descriptive metaphor of the Levinasian account of the subject that maintains within himself a creative tension between the Ulyssean and Abrahamic dynamics. Furthermore, the Itinerant Pilgrim traverses the poles of influences to Levinasian thought: Athens (Philosophy), Jerusalem (Rabbinic commentaries), and Kaunas (literary realism). The analysis of this paper limits itself in the Athens pole. I will show the creative tension in three ethical phases within Levinas' Athens

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pole, namely: Face-ing hospitality, Saying Substitution, and Meeting the Third in Justice.

Keywords: face-ing hospitality, itinerant pilgrim, meeting the third in justice, saying substitution

LEVINAS ON THE EPIPHANY OF THE ETHICAL

Emmanuel Levinas uses Baruch Spinoza's *connatus essendi* as a hinge term that holds together his entire diagnosis of the Western philosophical tradition, from Parmenides to Heidegger, which has centered on the self. Levinas' understanding of Spinoza's *connatus* is that it is "the effort to exist, the aspiration to persevere in being." Commentators might say that Spinoza's notion might simply be a natural tendency akin perhaps to Charles Darwin's understanding of evolution as "survival of the fittest." Nevertheless, Levinas points out that perseverance in overdrive will not spare even the other person. Levinas proposes to break away from the philosophical anthropology that can be drawn out from Spinoza's connatus.[1] Levinas introduces the notion of epiphany as disrupting the effort to exist. When Levinas speaks of an epiphany, it is always in the modality of the face-to-face encounter with another person: "the rupture of the immanent order, of the order that I can embrace, of the order which I can hold in my thought, of the order which can become mine, that is the face of the other."[2] Putting it more simply it is the encounter with the face of the other person that allows the disruption of a man that has no other concern than himself. When Levinas uses the term face it is a metonymy for the entire person. Levinas further expresses that the epiphany of the face is "straightaway ethical" because, despite its vulnerable appearance that can entice someone to kill it, it still utters, "Thou shall not kill." The positive formulation of caring for the other person is the translation of the negative prohibition against murder.[3]While the Divine enters the epiphany of the face-to-face as the very force that makes radical responsibility

[1] "I am trying to imagine an anthropology different from that which starts from the connatus essendi." Emmanuel Levinas, *Is it Righteous to be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. by Jill Robbins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 129.

[2] *Ibid.*, 48.

[3] "But above all, it is no longer simply a matter of going toward the other while he dies, but of responding through one's presence to the mortality of the living. All this is ethical conduct." *Ibid.*, 127-128.

possible: "T*he Illeity in the beyond-being is the fact that it is coming toward me is a departure which lets me accomplish a movement toward a neighbor*. The positive element of this departure, that which makes this departure, this diachrony, be more than a term of negative theology, is my responsibility for others."[4]

The epiphany of the face sustained by the passing gesture of the Divine disrupts conatus essendi. However, it does not mean that conatus essendi, neglect for the Other, and murder is the original state of things. Instead, neglect only makes sense because there is a lack of responsibility, and war is only understood as the absence of an original peace, as Levinas affirms in his two major philosophical works: T*otality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, respectively*.

> The face threatens the eventuality of a struggle, but this threat does not exhaust the epiphany of infinity, does not formulate its first word. *War presupposes peace, the antecedent and non-allergic presence of the Other*; it does not represent the first event of the encounter.[5]

> ***Does not essence revert into its other by peace, in which reason, which suspends the immediate clash of beings, reigns?*** Commerce is better than war, for in peace, the Good has already reigned. And yet we must now ask if even the difference that separates essence in war from essence in **peace does not presuppose that breathlessness of the spirit, or the spirit holding its breath**, in which, since Plato, what is beyond the essence is conceived and expressed? And ask if this breathlessness or

[4] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006), 12-13.

[5] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 199.

> holding back is not the extreme possibility of the Spirit, bearing a sense of what is beyond the essence?[6]

BETWEEN THE ABRAHAMIC AND THE ULYSSEAN: CONTENDING INTERPRETATIONS OF LEVINAS' EPIPHANY OF THE ETHICAL

In a later essay, *Trace of the Other*, Levinas utilizes two figures, the mythological character Ulysses and the biblical personage Abraham, to explain the movement or dynamics of the ethical:

> The Work (L'Euvre) thought radically is indeed a movement from the Same towards the Other which never returns to the Same. To the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we would like to oppose the story of Abraham leaving his homeland forever for a still unknown land and even forbidding his son to be brought back to its point of departure.[7]

Based on this passage, Levinas favors the Abrahamic non-return over and above the Ulyssean. Simon Critchley, schooled in the Derridean deconstructive tradition, supports the said reading: "Levinas thus opposes the nomadic wanderings of Abraham to the well-rounded narrative of the Odyssey. The ethical work must possess a movement which exceeds the circle of the self and goes unto the other without turning back."[8]

The ethical, therefore, for Levinas is not static but a dynamic notion. Roger Burrgraeve supports this observation as he opined that Levinas constantly moves between two poles: Athens and Jerusalem, representing

[6] Levinas*, Otherwise than Being*, 4-5.

[7] Emmanuel Levinas, "La trace de L' Autre," in *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis, (September 1963), 348.

[8] Simon Critchley, "Bois: Derrida's Final Word on Levinas," in *Re-reading Levinas* (Indiana University Press, 1991), 164.

philosophy and prophecy, respectively.[9] Burggraeve's characterization was based on what Levinas himself said: "It is perhaps time to see in hypocrisy not only a base contingent defect of man, but the underlying rending of a world attached to both the *philosophers and the prophets."*[10] Jacques Derrida in *Violence and Metaphysics*, his scathing critique of Levinas' *Totality and Infinity,* contextualizes philosophy and prophecy from the tradition that they are usually associated with, namely, Greek and Jew: Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history."[11] No doubt that philosophy and prophecy can be considered as f*orce majeure* that shaped the Western world. However, construing the said binary as the uniting force of history will be an exaggeration and can be regarded as an utterly Westernized perspective. Furthermore, limiting prophecy and philosophy to the Greek and Judaic can lead to what can be called the over valorization of the respective cultures that the said binary represents. How Derrida understands the Greek-Jew binary as possessing an almost sacral nature is parallel with Levinas' general impression of the thought of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger: "he has a very great sense for everything that is part of the landscape, not the artistic landscape, but the place in which man is enrooted."[12]

I contend that the meaning of the Ulyssean and the Abrahamic dynamic, although it makes sense to contextualize them to the respective cultures that they represent, Greek and Jewish, respectively. However, they cannot be riveted to it. Rather, in my interpretation of Levinas' own philosophy, it goes beyond the landscape and the culture they represent.

[9] Roger Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 21.

[10] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 24.

[11] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge), 191.

[12] Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking of The Other (European Perspectives)*, trans. by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 117.

As Levinas himself affirms in the Talmudic lectures, *The Bible and the Greeks*, where Levinas uses the same words found in the title that I claim can stand for Abraham and Ulysses respectively:

> The Bible requires justice and deliberation! From the heart of love, from the heart of mercy. One must judge, one must reach a conclusion. There must be knowledge, verification, objective science, system. There must be judgments, the state, and political authority. The unique beings recognized by love, which is extrinsic to all genera, must be brought into the community, the world.[13]

To stretch the characterization further, the Abrahamic can stand for what Levinas calls the wisdom of love, while the love of wisdom can represent the Ulyssean:

> But it is always starting out from the Face, from the responsibility for the other that justice appears, which calls for judgment and comparison, a comparison of what is in principle incomparable, for every being is unique; every other is unique. In that necessity of being concerned with justice, that idea of equity appears, on which the idea of objectivity is based. At a certain moment, there is a necessity for a "weighing," a comparison, a pondering, and in this sense philosophy would be the appearance of wisdom from the depths of that initial charity; it would be—and I am not playing on words—the wisdom of that charity, the wisdom of love.[14]

[13] Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations,* trans. by Michael Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1988), 134.

[14] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 104.

In summary, then the Ulyssean dynamic stands for justice and deliberation or the philosophical love of wisdom. While the Abrahamic movement stands for mercy and love or the biblical wisdom of love.

Based on these characterizations, I aim to provide a more nuanced reading of Levinas' apparent favoring of the Abrahamic over and above the Ulyssean. To do so, I introduce a re-reading of the epiphany of the ethical through a Hermeneutics of the Itinerant Pilgrim.

TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICS OF THE ITINERANT PILGRIM

The Hermeneutics of the Itinerant Pilgrim is a metaphor based on my extension of what Levinas said about a moving subject and how this movement contributes to the fullness of human experience: "But he or she who emigrates is fully human: the migration of man does not destroy, does not demolish the meaning of being; "the meaning of a philosophical journey varies, for the traveler, according to the moment or place from which he or she tries to give an account of it.[15]

Although concerned with texts, Levinas' hermeneutics is more concerned with those who embody the text and those who are embodied by the text, i.e., human persons. However, there is an important caveat: any interpretation is lacking when it has not passed through first, the other, and the beyond. Therefore, a possible key to understanding the philosophy of Levinas is through the human person. Given that the human person is a viable hermeneutic key in understanding Levinas, I came up with the Hermeneutics of the Itinerant Pilgrim. The Itinerant Pilgrim is a descriptive metaphor for the human who realizes that he can only know himself through interacting with others and sojourning towards the Divine. Itinerancy means traveling from one place to another. Pilgrimage means a long journey composed of a long distance and directed towards a sacred site. Although the two terms seem to be synonymous, I contend that in combining them in my account of the subject, I can emphasize three

[15] *Ibid*., 117.

descriptive clarifications: (1) As Itinerant, he is not rooted in any tradition of thinking (2) As Pilgrim, he is open to journeying towards the Divine (3) Although open to having an encounter with the Divine, the Itinerant Pilgrim does not relegate sacrality solely to particular places or traditions.

Taking my cue from the first descriptive clarification, I will then describe the first layer of movement of the Itinerant. The Itinerant moves to and from the poles of Levinasian influence, namely Athens, Jerusalem, and Kaunas. [16]Athens represents Levinas' philosophical lineage, Jerusalem represents Levinas' engagement with the Talmudic and Rabbinic commentaries, with which he grappled using his unique way of doing phenomenology. Lastly, the Kaunas pole represents Levinas' literary references, foremost of which was his constant calling upon the literary characters of Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate*. This paper is limited to the Itinerant's sojourn in the Athens pole, where I will trace the movement of the Itinerant throughout the ethical phases of the ethical found in Levinas' philosophical works, particularly in *Totality and Infinity,* and *Otherwise than Being*. While the second layer of movement of the Itinerant Pilgrim is what I will refer to as the creative tension between the Ulyssean and the Abrahamic, i.e., the love of wisdom needs the wisdom of love and vice versa. However, the Abrahamic as the foremost dynamic of the epiphany of the ethical finally needs to subsume the Ulyssean if the ethical is to be sustained.

THE ITINERANT IN THE ATHENS POLE

1. Face-ing Hospitality

The word face appeals foremost in the sense of sight. However, the visual as a mode of knowing tends to be totalitarian as it aims to achieve an

[16] I extend Burggraeve construal of the dual pole of influence by adding the Kaunas pole that in turn represents Levinas' engagement with literary authors.

all-encompassing gaze of all reality. [17] Totalitarian might appear as a strong word, but it is the extreme result of the primacy attributed to vision. It is exhibited in the tyrant's gaze over his subjects to show that he is in control. This can be seen in Adolf Hitler's military theatrics as he constantly allowed the media to film his troops marching while recognizing his presence with a salute and a proclamation of "Heil Hitler!." It is still done in countries where there are dictatorial leaders, such as North Korea. In a more subdued fashion, democratic leaders were being saluted while the entire military, with their armaments, paraded. In a more sober example, we use visual adjectives to declare an understanding of a concept: I see. Levinas sees the tactile as having a "transcendental function," just like vision.[18] The tactile can also describe that a person has already understood an idea: "I now grasp the concept that he is trying to explain." Much like the visual, the tactile can also describe a threat based on someone having power over another: "*Hawak ko ang buhay ng pamilya mo*."("I have a hold over the life of your family.")

Totality, reducing the other to the same or the strange to the familiar, is not in and of itself evil; it is only when it is applied to persons that it becomes 'totalitarian.'[19] The same model of reduction extends to how the West understood "technology planning and objectification,"[20] among other things, which allows us to thrive and innovate. Nevertheless, the face cannot be encapsulated by the visual and the tactile, as both reduce the face to "content."[21] It is because the sense of sight and hearing are tainted by totalizing tendencies that Levinas locates the face in the auditory realm.

[17] John Wild, Foreword to *Totality and Infinity*, 15.

[18] *Ibid*.,188.

[19] Levino Ma. Garcia, "Infinite Responsibility for the Other: The Ethical Basis of a Humane Society," in *Back to the things themselves: selected essays in recent western philosophy originally published in Unitas* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2003), 271.

[20] *Ibid*., 264.

[21] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 194.

Levinas points out that the face and discourse are intertwined.[22] Levinas himself clarifies this unusual pairing:

> The face is not of the order of the seen, it is not an object, but it is he whose appearing preserves an exteriority which is also an appeal or an imperative given to your responsibility: to encounter a face is straightaway to hear a demand and an order. I define the face precisely by these traits beyond vision or confusion with the vision of the face.[23]

There is much to contextualize and unpack in Levinas' interrelated notion of the face and the other. Levinas introduces the face as a 'phenomenon' that is uncontainable. It reminds me of Garcia's culturally-bound imagery. Yet, it drives home the point: "You cannot *garaponate* the other," if translated, you cannot put the other in a box. What Levinas is trying to say is that phenomenology, technically speaking, is an analysis of what appears, yet the face, as mentioned, escapes vision.[24]

The other appears as a face and disrupts the spontaneity of the Itinerant Pilgrim; naturally, this puts him in a state of shock.[25] Hence, the Itinerant transitions from an "egocentric model of relation and society" to an "ethical model of relation and society."[26] Levinas himself attests to this transition as when he declared: "We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the other ethics."[27] Language and its

[22] Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity (Conversations with Philippe Nemo)*, trans. by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 87.
[23] Levinas, *Is it Righteous to be*? 48.
[24] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 194.
[25] *Ibid.,* 194.
[26] Ma. Garcia, *Infinite Responsibility for the Other*, 266.
[27] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 43.

synonyms, discourse, and speech are then elevated as ethical concepts.[28] In this sense, we can understand that the face cannot appear as an aspect of vision or touch, for in those senses, the other is still a theme or a concept that is comprehended and grasped. Only in the realm of (ethical) language does the other become my "interlocutor."[29] A speech's capacity to make the other a partner in conversation from just a theme or a concept is what makes it ethical. Hence, it can announce "the ethical inviolability of the other."[30]

The other is inviolable not because it is omnipotent but quite the contrary; it is in Levinas' description that the other is "like a being's exposure unto death; the without defense, the nudity and misery of the other."[31] The other is prone to be defaced or, much worse, effaced from the very face of the earth, i.e., murder. It is in placing the face of the other in a speech that Levinas can say the primordial commandment proclaimed by it: "You shall not commit murder."[32] Positively constructed, the prohibition becomes a revelation of a willingness to commit: "Here I am. I am here."[33] The law that prohibits murder came from Judeo-Christian tradition, but the same tradition holds that the same law is written in the hearts of men.[34] Levinas does not use the word heart to express the prohibition and its positive formulation; he uses the most exposed, distinguishable, noticeable part of the human: the face.

Unlike Heidegger's *Dasein*, whose foremost description is being towards death as death finally completes its project at being. The Itinerant

[28] Fleurdeliz Altez-Albela, "Epiphany of the Good in the Corporeality of Levinas' Ethical Encounter" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation in Philosophy: University of Santo Tomas, Manila, 2011), 96.

[29] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 195.

[30] *Ibid.,* 195.

[31] Levinas, *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 48.

[32] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 199.

[33] Levinas adapts this from the Jewish concept of Hineni. See Betsy Cohen, "The Trace of the Face of God: Emmanuel Levinas and Depth Psychology," in *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche*, 2 (Spring 2008), 33.

[34] See Jeremiah 31: 33, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it ton their hearts."

Pilgrim begins his journey, if not mission, a few steps away from the site of a prevented murder, where the other proclaims the prohibition not to kill, realizing that one's project at being is not really about the meaning of existence after al,l but about being available for the other.

When Levinas describes the Other, he does not hint at an abstract concept out there or up there in a realm of heavenly ideas. It is a "very concrete someone; the poor, widow, orphan, and foreigner, displaced person, proletarian, nomad."[35] Hence, the Itinerant does not let go of the things that he has but instead gives them away. In turn, presupposing that one's other is met, labor and maintenance of dwelling do not cease; instead, they intensify. After all, "I can only approach the Other with full hands if I cultivate what I have."[36]

2. 'Saying' Substitution

The whole of Western philosophy is considered ontological by Levinas. In this philosophical tradition, the self is considered the source of all cognition and the basis of the validity of comprehension. Ontological thinking has allowed the West to go beyond merely thriving as it allowed innovations and inventions, one after the other, literally changing the face of the earth.

Nevertheless, it has also led to gruesome realities such as slavery, colonization, and racism. All because the self takes center stage. Levinas does not satisfy himself with ambivalence, i.e., ontological thinking's positive contribution can outweigh its negative implications. Levinas cannot simply be satisfied with ambivalence, for he propounds that ontological thinking, performing a one-hundred-eighty-degree shift from Heidegger, has led to the forgetfulness of the other. The previous section discussed that the face intertwined with language allows the other to transition from a theme to an interlocutor. In this way, the other can

[35] Garcia, *Infinite Responsibility for the Other*, 271.
[36] *Ibid*., 271.

disrupt the complacency of the I, i.e., can speak to him the primordial command, "thou shall not kill." Even though the face is introduced as a 'quasi phenomenon'[37] that disrupts the primacy of vision and touch, it still uses terms such as "totality, exteriority, separation"[38] reminiscent of an ontological vocabulary. Levinas wanted to exorcise the last phantoms of ontology. He does this in *Otherwise than Being*. He uses language again, this time providing a deeper understanding of it.

Levinas builds on the established idea of language as a "system of names (*noms*)" that contains terminologies utilized to identify objects and experiences.[39] However, his unique take is coining the terms Saying and the Said. Levinas opines that the Said is the foundation of all meaning: "The Said is not simply a sign or an expression of meaning: it proclaims and establishes this as that."[40] In order to illustrate the founding nature of the Said or to give it an image so that it can be understood, he makes use of the terms *epos* (a Greek word that means speech, word, epic song), *kerygme* (proclamations), fable, doxa (common belief or opinion), narration; understanding them as synonyms.[41] It is noticeable that the synonymous terms are all founding literature through which we become acquainted with the mythology of a country or a founding story of a locality. Even though most of these literatures were usually encountered as written texts codified in textbooks and anthologies of literature, its more ancient form is spoken. History attests to this, as it is agreed that spoken language was developed at least 30,000 - 50,000 years before written language.[42] Might it be in its written or spoken form, pointing to these kinds of literature allows understanding the Said as founding rather than founded. However, even

[37] Alphonso Lingis, Introduction to *Otherwise than Being, xxi.*

[38] Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (Indiana: Purdue Research Foundation, 1993), 212.

[39] *Ibid.*, 215.

[40] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 35.

[41] Peperzak, *To the Other*, 212.

[42] University of Pennsylvania College of Arts and Sciences, "The History of Writing," Department of Linguistics, <https://www.ling.upenn.edu/courses/Fall_1998/ling001/Writinglect.html>.

the founding literature is still established above the Said: "They are not first given and thematized and then receive a meaning; they are given by the meaning they have. However, these rediscoveries by identification occur already in the said."[43] It is even more primordial than Husserl's elucidation of words as signs of meaning, for words prior to such an analysis are already identified.[44] What, then, is the Said that even founding texts and proclamations are based upon? As it were, *Said* is the movement of collection and capturing of being through word[45], whether in spoken proclamation or written texts; even time is not spared but utilized to provide a reckoning of the collection and capturing.

In other words, the movement of the Said is ontological in its attempt to gather upon itself all beings, i.e., what it sees it seizes. In the realm of Said, the being's dynamism evokes an "eternal return of the same," and is then the movement of Western subjectivity and freedom.[46] Therefore, the subject that arises from the Said is Ulyssean, as it only gets out of itself to seize what is outside and make it its own. Memory and recollection then proceed from the modality of the Said as it aims to recapitulate and recall the travels and travails of the subject. Is there then no escaping ontology's all-encompassing embrace? Or is there anything outside our Ulyssean tendencies?

Over and above the Said, Levinas introduces the Saying (*le Dire*). Time in Saying does not witness capturing and seizing, in other words, synchrony. The time in Saying, on the other hand, is diachronous.[47] This is in direct opposition to the time of the Said, when the subject reckons and calculates to have a precise accounting of history. The subject of the Saying is more spontaneous, less rigid, and open to "surprises and adventures,"[48] even opening oneself to shocks and disruptions. His recollection of the

[43] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 36.
[44] *Ibid*., 37.
[45] Peperzak, *To the Other*, 215.
[46] *Ibid*., 216.
[47] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 37-38.
[48] Peperzak, *To the Other*, 217.

event is then not a precise historical account but a spontaneous narration. In saying, there is heteronomy rather than autonomy, for the self ceases to be the center, but the other is preferred and considered. In Said, the primary dynamic present is self-interestedness, and so the Ulyssean subject is also a *conatus essendi,* a being that strives to preserve himself. In the domain of the Saying, the subject is interrupted and exceeded because it is disinterested.[49] The disinterested subject is Abrahamic, as he does not seek to return but seeks to be outside of himself so that it can be available for the other.

In the distinction between the Said and the Saying, Levinas introduces his radicalized concept of responsibility. In *Totality and Infinity*, responsibility arises only when the face of the other comes into the picture, disrupting the complacency of the subject. In OB, "responsibility for another is prior to anything said."[50] It is, therefore, in the domain of saying. In TI, responsibility only arises when the subject encounters the other in misery and weakness. In OB, responsibility is in Saying and so is in the subject before any ethical encounter.[51] As if evoking and intensifying the Abrahamic dynamism, Levinas puts forward: "I am assigned without recourse, without fatherland, already sent back to myself, but without being able to stay there, compelled before commencing."[52]

Levinas even goes deeper still, into the very core of the subject. In TI, separation makes the subject different from the other, i.e., the ego is an individuated and independent self, and the other appearing as a face can only perform a call to action when there is an encounter. In *OB*, the self is already responsible for the other even before the ethical encounter. Levinas uses the evocative term, hostage to describe the disruption of the subject's *conatus essendi* so that it may give way to its deposition or displacement.

[49] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 43.

[50] *Ibid*., 43.

[51] As Levinas himself attests: "My responsibility for the other is the for of the relationship, the very signifyingness of signification, which signifies in saying before showing itself in the said." *Ibid*., 100.

[52] *Ibid*., 103.

Being hostage also rivets me to the other without being another, i.e., I cannot call someone to substitute for my substitution for the other. Hence, separation as a principle of irreducibility in *TI* (the other and the I cannot be irreducible to each other) transforms into substitution in *OB*: "It is through this substitution that I am not 'another." Given the previous, we can make more sense of Dostoyevsky's remark in *Brothers Karamazov*: "Each of us is guilty, before everyone for everyone, and I am more than the others."[53] and why Levinas uses it to elucidate the concept of substitution.

3. Meeting the Third in Justice

The phenomenon of substitution was just discussed between the Itinerant and another person. Substitution makes sense in a face-to-face relationship, as Levinas affirms: "If there are only two of us, then there would be no problem."[54] Nevertheless, a problem remains: what if the other maligns me? Levinas has a pithy retort to such concern: "In pure charity, I know what I owe the other. What the other owes me, that's his business!"[55] However, what will happen when another person comes into the scene of face-to-face responsibility? The Itinerant can no longer just say that he will be engrossed in his responsibility towards the other because what if a third person does not do the same to that other? Will the Itinerant just leave things as they are?

The entrance of the third person gives rise to two concerns: (1) the disruption of face-to-face responsibility and (2) the emergence of the justice problem. The second concern arises from the first and can be understood by posing the question: Will I give the same radical concern towards the third person? To whom should I attend, the hungry or the sick, why not the orphaned? Or perhaps, the person who falls into all these categories? On top of justice, which is giving others their due, the question

[53] *Ibid.*, 146.
[54] Levinas, *Entre Nous,* 106.
[55] Levinas, *Is it Righteous to Be?,* 54.

of who should be given the responsibility first arises. It is in this sense that Levinas can say that alongside the call for justice is a demand for assessing the circumstances:

> Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling, order, thematization, the visibility of faces, and thus intentionality and the intellect, and in intentionality and the intellect, the intelligibility of a system, and thence also a copresence on an equal footing as before a court of justice. Essence as synchrony is togetherness in a place.[56]

When justice is implemented in consideration of other persons, violence arises. Why is this the case? It is because of the tendency to objectify that the other enters the picture, as seen in rural health centers where resources are limited. Medical supplies are distributed according to who needs them first, and others are left behind to wait until the resources are available. To determine who is supposed to receive medical attention, the intensity of the malady, the financial capability, and even family size are considered. Is not this violence, as sick people are categorized based on what they lack? The only way that they will be prioritized is if they check all the said categories. Indeed, "there is an inherent violence upon choosing one over another."[57]

Violence is a form of injustice. To give a possible answer to the dilemma of injustice and violence brought about by the entrance of the third, I would like to go back to the experience of the face-to-face, which is where Levinas locates the foundation of justice.[58] In its basic formulation,

[56] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 157.

[57] Patrick Andrei C. Mencias, "Nonviolence in the Wisdom of Love: The Possibility of Emmanuel Levinas' Ethical Responsibility as Nonviolent Resistance" (Unpublished Master's Thesis in Philosophy: University of Santo Tomas, Manila, 2022), 93.

[58] This interpretation is based on what Burggraeve calls the universality of the face. As well as what he says about the need to be always mindful of the individual responsibility

justice gives the other what is due. Levinas agrees with this basic understanding of justice. However, he intensifies it further: "Justice as the other's due is an absolute and inescapable command."[59] In the usual connotation of justice, it happens between two equal parties; on the other hand, the face-to-face as a site of justice reveals that the other in the encounter is higher: "The other is not my equal but my superior, the one who teaches me and commands from a height which is ethical." The other's superiority does not come by power or stature but comes in the form of deprivation: "like a being's exposure unto death; the without defense, the nudity and misery."[60] Where is the third person in this face-to-face scenario? Levinas points out: "In the appearance of the Other, the third, too, already looks at me."[61] which he affirms at length in *TI*:

> The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other—language is justice. It is not that there first would be the face, and then the being it manifests or expresses would concern himself with justice; the epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity. The face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger; but this poverty and exile which appeal to my powers, address me, do not deliver themselves over to these powers as givens, remain the expression of the face. The poor one, the stranger, presents himself as an equal.[62]

founded in the face-to-face encounter: "The individual responsibility of being one-for-the-Other is not only the constant source of nourishment for socio-political order, but also functions as its constant corrective, and in different ways." See Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love*, 126, 148.

[59] Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, trans. by Sean Hand (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 18.

[60] Levinas, *Is it Righteous to Be?*, 48.

[61] Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. by Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 82.

[62] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 213.

Burggraeve elucidates further:

> Paradoxically enough, this point of uniqueness is also the point at which the Other can be said to appear universally as the expression of all Others: when I meet the naked face of this one Other here and now, thus radically separate and distinct, I am also confronted with all Others, who call to me just humbly and with just as much imperative as does this one Other standing before me. In reality, my relation with the Other is thus never a relation with just one individual person: the third person is present "in" this second person Other from the very beginning.[63]

Injustice can be resolved by returning to where justice is founded, in the face-to-face encounter. In the first place, every action directed to the other is directed to every third other. Every individual face encountered reflects every other face. Even in everyday discourse, we know that there are not only three persons in this world: I, you, and the other person. Instead, there are many others, such as "he or she, that one there, over there."[64] Indeed, this world is shared by many I's and others.[65] The notion of a third person or the third party is extended by Levinas even to those others who are not currently present within the purview of the Itinerant, even those who are yet to be born.[66] In Otherwise than Being, Levinas further reflects on the complex relationship between the other (second person) and the many others (third person) and points out that it is through analysis that we can finally understand the rhetoric of the verse from the Prophet Isiah that declares peace to those who are near and those who are distant:

[63] Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love*, 127.
[64] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 17.
[65] "You and I are not alone together in this world but share it with a great many." Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love*, 127.
[66] *Ibid*., 127.

> The third party is other than the neighbor, but also another neighbor, and also a neighbor of the other, and not simply his fellow. What, then are the other and the third party for one another? What have they done to one another? Which passes before the other? The other stands in a relationship with the third party, for whom I cannot entirely answer, even if I alone answer, before any question, for my neighbor. The other and the third party, my neighbors, contemporaries of one another, put distance between me and the other and the third party. "Peace, peace to the neighbor and the one far-off' (Isaiah 57: 19) - we now understand the point of this apparent rhetoric.[67]

In what form does Justice and the lack of it manifest itself in the context of a society of many others? It manifests itself foremost in the form of economic concerns. Levinas does not concern himself with the intricacies of modern-day economics. When Levinas uses the word economic, what he means is its most basic sense: management of one's material resources. For Levinas, the foremost form of injustice directed against the third other is economic:

> By means of steel and gold, things among things, I wield power over the freedom of the other while recognizing that freedom, qua freedom, precludes any passivity in which another's power might take hold.[68]

It is no wonder that Levinas' foremost description of the other is set in the language of lack of material resources: destitute, orphan, vulnerable, to which the primary response ought not to be 'spiritual' works but corporal

[67] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 157.
[68] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 30.

acts. Hence, for Levinas, any morality that shies away from economic concern and just focuses on abstract goodness should be examined further as "Earthly morality correctly distrusts any form of relationship with beings that has not been first economic."[69]

CONCLUSION

In the phenomenon of 'face to face ', a pivotal concept in Levinas' works, the Abrahamic dynamics find their full expression. The face of the other, appearing poor and vulnerable, compels the Itinerant to transcend his self-interest and attend to the needs of the other. The Concept of the face, as understood by Levinas, primarily appeals through the visual. However, Levinas, recognizing the visual's potential for totalization, situates the face in the realm of hearing. By placing the face as auditory, Levinas can discuss the phenomenon of the face that speaks the prohibition: 'Thou shalt not kill', or its positive interpretation: responsibility for the other's needs.

The phenomenon of substitution radicalizes the responsibility of the face-to-face. As in face-to-face, the other needs to appear first, while in substitution, the responsibility is prior even to the subject's consciousness of himself and the other. This is why Levinas can say that the subject is a hostage by another. Substitution then takes the responsibility of oneself to the other and the place of the other's responsibility for another. The tension between the concept of saying and the said can highlight the radical nature of the substitution. The Said is gathering, accumulating every movement of collection, and capturing, and so is the concept underneath the Western notion of subjectivity and freedom. In short, the Said manifests itself as Ulysses. At the same time, the Saying is something even more primordial than the said. Even in basic grammar, the Saying comes before the Said. The Saying is what makes the Said possible. The Saying manifests as Abrahamic in its openness for adventures and opposition to thematizations, so it is disinterested.

[69] *Ibid*., 30.

The last part of this paper highlights the notion of the third. I provided three clarificatory remarks regarding it: (1) The third person, as it disrupts the intimacy of the face-to-face, can still appear proximately. (2) The third is not a late concept of Levinas; it can be seen in the phenomenon of face-to-face. (3) The third is not only a singular person but is composed of many others. The third disrupts and extends the ethics of face-to-face responsibility. As in the face-to-face, not only is a singular you faced, but other faces are also foreshadowed in such an encounter. Hence, the presence of "third persons" brings about the problem of the institutionalization of justice and the possibility of others exploiting the Itinerant. The institutionalization of justice is probably done in the economic realm. Levinas distrusts any earthly morality that is not foremost economic. Lastly, I argued that besides the institutionalization of justice, the tension between the Saying and the Said can serve as checks and balances so that the Itinerant is not exploited. Such a protection clause for the Itinerant is not for himself per se, but so that the exploitation tendencies do not hinder the institutionalization of justice.

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