

¿Triunfo mesiánico de la ética? Emmanuel Lévinas y la aporía en el pensamiento del Otro¹

*Messianic Triumph of Ethics?
Emmanuel Lévinas and the aporia in the thinking of
the Other*

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Resumen

Hoy en día sólo existen tres ideas filosóficas de “ética magna”:

- a) La idea de Aristóteles de una justicia distributiva en una comunidad (*polis*) determinada por las limitaciones “naturales” y la reducibilidad étnica de los ciudadanos con la virtud fundamental de la prudencia (*phronesis*).
- b) La idea de Kant de una ley moral establecida por la acción de un sujeto autónomo dentro un imperativo categórico dentro del mundo concebido como cosmópolis.
- c) La idea de Lévinas de la compasión con el sufrimiento de los Otros en un encuentro directo, más allá de la “naturaleza” y la “cultura”, como acontecimiento de la sacralidad de la vida.

La experiencia griega y moderna siempre ha supuesto la existencia de una comunidad política. Para los griegos se trata de un mundo-ciudad-Estado restringido (*polis*). Para la época moderna se trata de un orden político estatal, con una idea reguladora del orden mundial basado en principios espirituales. En ambos casos, originalmente griego y moderno, la ética tiene su hogar, lugar, su topología; tiene su “mundo”. En el caso de la época contemporánea, tras la experiencia del infernal mal del Holocausto y el “fin de la teodicea”, la idea de tierra natal, de hogar, de morada del hombre, ya no existe o está destruida. Ni la ciudad-Estado ni el Estado-nación son ya las moradas del hombre contemporáneo. Él es un vagabundo y un nómada, un exiliado y un apátrida en un mundo convertido en una red de estructuras y funciones. El hombre no es solo un nómada planetario en la era de la tecnociencia, sino que sin una patria se convierte, como en la leyenda tibetana que menciona Cioran, en *un campamento en el desierto*. La ética del Otro de Lévinas señala la búsqueda de la morada del hombre al final de su trágico drama histórico de vagabundeo y del “sufrimiento inútil” de los pueblos y de los individuos. Tal búsqueda es la fuente de esta ética metafísica de la sacralidad de la vida del Otro. Es terrible, y de ahí que en su desamparo se exalte como un mal absoluto. Frente a ella, la sacralidad de la vida parece ser el último misterio de ese encuentro con el rostro del Otro que cambia radicalmente toda la historia habida hasta ahora. La ética sin mundo requiere necesariamente del insólito acontecimiento de la creación del mundo, cuando todo es solamente esta o aquella violencia en nombre de la libertad, la igualdad y la justicia.

Palabras clave: mesiánica, ética, Lévinas, nomadismo, Otro.

Abstract

There are only three philosophical ideas of “great ethics” to nowadays:

- a) Aristotle’s idea of distributive justice in a community (*polis*) determined by the “natural” limitations and ethnic reducibility of citizens with the fundamental virtue of prudence (*phronesis*);
- b) Kant’s idea of a moral Law established by the action of an autonomous subject in a categorical imperative within the world as a cosmopolis;
- c) Lévinas’ idea of compassion with the sufferings of Others in a direct encounter beyond “nature” and “culture” as an event of the sanctity of life.

Greek and modern experience has always presupposed the existence of a political community. For the Greeks, it is a limited world-city-state (*polis*), and for the modern age, it is a nation-state political order with a regulatory idea of a world order based on mental principles. In both cases, originally Greek and modern, ethics has its homeland, place, topology, it has its “world”. In the case of the modern age, after the experience of the diabolical evil of the Holocaust and the “end of theodicy”, the idea of homeland, home, the abode of man no longer exists or is destroyed. Neither the city-state nor the nation-state is any longer the abodes of modern man. He is a wanderer and a nomad, an exiled and stateless person in a world that becomes a network of structures and functions. Man is not only a planetary nomad in the age of technoscience, but he is without a homeland that becomes like in Tibetan legend that Cioran mentions *camping in the desert*. Lévinas’ ethics of the Other denotes the search for the abode of a man at the end of his tragic historical drama of wandering and the “useless suffering” of peoples and individuals. It is the source of this metaphysical ethic of the sanctity of the life of the Other. It is terrible, and hence in its homelessness exalted as an absolute evil. In the face of it, the sanctity of life seems to be the last mystery of that encounter with the face of the Other, which radically changes all history so far. Ethics without a world necessarily requires the uncanny event of the creation of the world when everything is just either this or that violence in the name of freedom, equality and justice.

Keywords: messianic, ethics, Lévinas, nomadism, Other.

Inhuman and the end of theodicy: From the autonomy of the subject to the heteronomy of the Other

When the world is confronted with immeasurable attacks of violence, cruelty and destruction of life that had its foundation in the mental order of common Being, the only answer should be to try to overcome the source of the very foundation of what is a condition of evil. But what if the answer to the phenomenon of evil in the modern world is impossible from any traditional metaphysical perspective that has emerged throughout Western history by the thought of theodicy? The term was used by Leibniz. Divine presence in history refers to the notion of providence (*providentia*). On the other side of human potential knowledge carried out that plane. Theodicy denotes that which is peculiar to God concerning human history. The plane of realizing the truth, justice and freedom at the end of historical time separate God and man after all that sins and evil. At the end of history, human suffering, cruelty and the apparent power of evil turn into the infinite rule of good beyond human finitude. With the help of theodicy, God “theologically” concludes what has been the aporia of human history from the very beginning: that finitude is in infinity and that every crossing of the boundaries of Being and simultaneously marking the end of Being and beings in a new beginning. In the notion of theodicy, rational theology reaches its peak. By expressing the *cunning of the mind*, Hegel “lowered” the theological content of theodicy to the level of the philosophical activity of the absolute spirit.

But the difference in identity becomes different when man’s unconditional responsibility for his neighbour/Other appears. The previous requirement for that is radicalized to change the whole metaphysical structure of Western thought. Agamben in an image of the *Last Judgment*, which we not without irony in contemporary popular apocalyptic Hollywood renamed in “The Day After”, talks about the experience of Messiah with community-based Benjamin settings of historic and Messianic time. The difference between the profane and the sacred should be abolished by the messianic event of the coming community. *Everything will be the same, but different* (Agamben, 2007, pp. 23-28). The problem is that the experience of messianic time already presupposes this “empty” time of fulfilment of expectations and hope. It is different from the Same because it is different as such. Theodicy, unlike the messianic time, cannot be only the difference between the rational and the intuitive but also the difference between philosophy and theology. Furthermore, this difference cannot be just the difference between the

experience of the wisdom of love and love for God, which Lévinas determines by absolute metaphysical desire. The “day after” the end of theodicy points to a problem: what after the *messianic triumph of ethics*? What, then, after the realization that ethical action is completed in the very essence of theodicy at all by the revelation of God to the man in the coming time of absolute community? The aporia of ethical action becomes apparent only when a distinction should be established between a theocratic state and a profane modern society. The sovereignty and autonomy of modern politics either exclude the ethical from its horizon of action as a remnant of the theological that it politically occupies as its centres, or the ethical must rediscover its “foundation” outside the former service of divine providence and its sacred goals. It will be no coincidence that today the ethical-political turn of contemporary philosophy is connected with the problem of establishing a new difference between theological and political in the understanding of the coming community. God and politics are in a state of permanent suspension of action. The sovereignty that determines the power of the modern age brings politics to the position of divine power by other means. In other words, the event of messianic politics requires a new rethinking of the event of the divine in history after the end of theodicy. The phenomenon of the return of religion in secular society and the West after the end of communism in Eastern Europe opens the problem of the relationship of faith and reason in technoscientific time. Where and how ethical finds its place between the two types of reduction: religious fundamentalism and total policy of democracy in neo-imperial global order? (Derrida and Vattimo, 2001; Critchley, 2012) Lévinas himself, in a paradigmatic text on the relationship between politics and religion, uses an extremely interpretively demanding and at the same time precise expression for this problem –*political monotheism* (Lévinas, 1994, p. 186).

Hegel’s absolute science of spirit was a kind of rational theodicy. At the end of history, it comes as the overcoming (*Aufhebung*) of all historically reshaped forms of subjective and objective spirit. Marx’s communism denotes a realized technopolitical theodicy of the transformation of man from the dialectic of the history of the Master-Slave into the universal producer of the world in the event of the “empire of freedom”. It is not, therefore, merely the rational core of the philosophical reading of the Bible from *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*. It is always inevitable and necessary structure of onto-theological thought. With it, the power of history is established. The Other, however, always derives from me, therefore differences are possible only as differences within the

‘logic’ of the Same. If God is not thought of in any other way than starting from ontological principles (*arché*, substance, the highest being), then the issue of the meaning of theodicy remain tautological. History ends with the messianic triumph of infinite justice. But the question is, why did it take a history of immeasurable and “useless suffering” to reveal everything in the end as the eternal presence of the same in differences? Is not history, then, from the perspective of theodicy, always the result only of God’s plan for setting limits and tempting man not to exceed what is given to him by the necessity of his freedom, as Spinoza and Hegel determine the essence of freedom? Is not God, then, in his omnipotence and all presence, even in his withdrawal from the emptiness of silence after the uncanny evil of history –the Holocaust and the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz– just the one who intervenes in world history like an indifferent observer? Are sacrificed victims both necessary and useless at the same time? Well, the paradox is that victims are useless because they are necessary. It was in this way that Lévinas sharpened the relationship between the evil in the world and the end of theodicy. If the ethics of the Other arises from the response to the sufferings of the Other, then it might be obvious that the notion of suffering as belonging to the feeling of enduring pain on the body of the Other differs from any metaphysical foundation of ethics as the rational foundation of obligation in Kant’s categorical imperative. Structure of Lévinas’ argument for ethical perspective views and parts to in the modern world, as it is presented in a short essay entitled “Useless suffering” (1982), represents a simple call to action starting from the feeling, but not from the rational (metaphysical) foundation of morality (1988a, pp. 156-167).

Diabolic terror itself outrageous evil belongs to the area of inhuman in our time. The end of theodicy, therefore, marks the end of thinking the idea of divine providence in understanding world history as a rational plan of Being. This goes beyond the possibility of realizing what the appearance of history itself is in the horrific genocide of nations and the extermination of races. When asked how God could have allowed Auschwitz and how he justified his absence in the act of triumph of radical evil, Lévinas’ answer, based on dialogue with Emil Fackenheim, a Canadian philosopher and theologian, was that the Nazi horror of the Holocaust against Jews in the Nazi plan extermination cannot be explained by any metaphysical reasons or reference to theodicy. Moreover, the end of theodicy is the only justifiable way of thinking, which no longer postulates the end of history from the perspective of the infinite right of the subject (God), but history itself radically leads to realization in the

event of an encounter with the Other and different from the Same. The issue of the possibility of believing in God after Auschwitz signifies, therefore, the necessity of radically overcoming the entire metaphysical legacy of the West. The answer that seems binding from the very structure of this conceptual architecture comes from Heidegger's assemblage of thought. In analogy with Heidegger's thought of the end of metaphysics as onto-theology, Lévinas speaks of the *end of theodicy*. It is the outcome of just such a history of salvation. It finds its meaning in the idea of God's providence/plan, another name for *logos*, mind, spirit. The deconstruction of such a way of establishing history means the openness of situation which cannot be only radically different from the foundations of the West in general but also different from the 'different' as Same. The end of theodicy opens up the possibility of the dignity of faith even after the end of history. God, on the other hand, is not on the other side of history. He is absolutely the Other. Infinite and unconditional love for the Other man forms a metaphysical desire in nearness and with his face in the very act of corporeality. Ethics, therefore, starts with a desire for justice. It has its place in the human world of encountering the body of the Other (Burggraeve, 1999, pp. 29-45).

Lévinas hence opens the possibility of the liberation of the divine in the openness of God beyond the Being as an idea of good. This "deconstructive turn" (Chritchley, 2004, pp. 1-32) directions to double emancipation: 1) faith is freed from the tyranny of theodicy, 2) thinking is deprived of the ontological Law (foundation, *arché*). This opens the possibility of metaphysical transcendence towards the Other and the different, which is older than the old and newer than the new. This is what he calls *an-arché*, particularly in his early writings, and what appears as the openness of "sacred history" (Lévinas, 1996, pp. 129-148). Ethics enters into human action in contrast to politics, which from the moment of the modern 'social contract' already belongs to the realm of 'nature' and 'society'. The ethical, therefore, lies before that distinction. However, if the ethical is what precedes any possible political foundation of the community, the metaphysical way of creating the world inevitably has to fall into the 'abyss' of theodicy. Why ethics if the end of theodicy as the end of history should be predetermined? The meaning of suffering and the experience of sacrifice transcends historical-epochal boundaries. And that is why *indifference* denotes another name for the source of ethical turn in contemporary post-metaphysical thinking. While it is easy to agree with the view that the thinking of Emmanuel Lévinas represents a response to the horrors of the 20th century, from Nazism, Stalinism, colonialism, from

Auschwitz, Kolyma to Rwanda and beyond (Bernstein, 2004, pp. 252-267) his paradigmatic ethic of unconditional love and responsibility towards the Other seems to be the answer to the most uncanny crimes and at the same time completely ‘understandable’ in modern times without community, where life becomes a biopolitical commodity and its production a matter of technological realization of the posthuman body.

His ethics becomes a response to indifference to evil, violence, cruelty. So, the ethics in the post-metaphysical age derives from feelings towards the suffering of the Other, and its preceding negative stimulus beyond the Being, in general, is *indifference*. How is indifference manifested in modern times? If the maxim of Kant’s categorical imperative should be contained in the rigour of the norm which, as an anonymous voice (conscience), commands: “You must do good unconditionally!”, and the ethics of unconditional devotion to the Other starts from the prohibition in the form of the command: “You must not kill!” –the end of theodicy of which speaks Lévinas cannot be solidarity with others as evidenced by an egocentric subject: “Others do not concern me”. It is at first glance similar to Sartre’s view that hell is always the Other, which means that the intersubjective relationship to the outside world (as Being) already doomed in advance to the discomfort and nausea of encountering another *ego*. But this is the opposite of existentialist Being-in-the-world structure that the Other is nothing but an “empty object”. Indifference, therefore, denotes another name for the negative projection of the infinite right of the subject in his self-love and selfishness (narcissism and egoism). These are all phenomena of what Lévinas calls the “egology of the ontology of the West” (Lévinas, 1987a, pp. 25-46). We can call that the result of the social apathy in neoliberal global capitalism. The ethics of feelings are caused by a sudden event of interruption with the existential state of general indifference. What should be happening with the logic of the synchrony of Being, Lévinas see in the event of the encounter with the Other as an absolute diachronic moment in time. But is such an interruption something effective does it exists in changing the real state of the world like excess and evil? There is no doubt that ethics denotes a feeling of bodily excess because caring for the Other inevitably appears as the self-sacrifice of one’s subject and his right to pleasure. It should not be forgotten that the whole phenomenology of the body by Lévinas in the work *Totality and Infinity* enchanting praise of the body and its existential pleasures. Love cannot be just a spiritual encounter

with the Other in the realm of ideality. It is 'objectified' in eros and the expression of pure corporeality (Altez-Albela, 2011).

In connection with Heidegger's existential, which has developed in the *Being and Time*, we can determine indifference as the way of mood (*Befindlichkeit*). In place of anxiety in indifference reigns utter boredom towards the Being in a state of presence. 'We' do no matter what happens to the Other because it is not 'my' problem, but a problem of Other that must be technically solved by the institutions of the Third (political state and civil society). Violence within the Being-in-the-world horizon becomes an event of reconciliation with the external, which is manifested in the very 'essence' of violence. It will already obvious from this that the phenomenological origin of ethics in Lévinas and its successors are nothing more than an issue of the source of evil and violence in the world. The ethics of the Other reversed the theodicy. In the place of resolving the question of the relationship between God and man at the end of history, ethics as the 'first philosophy' begins as the 'sacred history' of the Other. Who is this Other who opens up in his irreducibility as a face and as a telling of absolute transcendence? Is he/she even still a man in human-too-human relationships? Or perhaps it should be radically said that Lévinas' 'humanism' in the posthumanist era represents just another remnant of the theology of a messianic event without a 'subject', an ethic without an *ethos* (community), a futile attempt to save what man has so generously given to the afterlife, to the very event of the emergence of Being, God and man in the immediate presence of this singular assembly? (Lévinas, 1987b; Eagleton, 2009, pp. 223-272).

In his lectures on Leibniz's metaphysics, Heidegger suggests that theodicy does not appear as an accidental addition to his philosophical rationalism. A credible plan of the metaphysical formation of the world in theodicy finds a reason to justify the phenomenon of evil. The distinction between the two kinds of cognition –rational and intuitive– corresponds to the metaphysical distinction between man and God. Rational cognition is based on the principles of mathematics and logic, and intuitive cognition precedes and transcends the evidentiary process of the pure mind. *Intuitus praesens* signifies the way of existence of God as substance and subject in his Being (Heidegger, 2007). A presence beyond the mind as reason cannot be, therefore, present in the form of feeling. However, without feeling should be impossible to reach the last puzzle of God's plan in world history. In its end, it becomes a history of

the “useless suffering” of man to establish the endless and infinite *messianic triumph of ethics*³.

The feeling does not belong only to manifestations of being a man, who traditionally are at the lower rank of intellect and mind. Suffering as the elevation of pain to the point of the sublimity of the very offering of the sacrifice for the Other evokes precisely this feeling of compassion for the Other in a non-reciprocal relationship. An ethical feeling is always between compassion and anger. Therefore, the origin of ethics in the sense of compassion must develop only when *ethos* does not arise from the essence of a metaphysically established community originating in the idea of good (Plato’s *Politeia*) nor when good in the community is politically understood by distributive justice based on equality (Aristotle in *Nicomachean ethics*). Ethics cannot appear at all outside the horizon of the idea of well-directed by people in the community. Politics denotes for the original Greek conception of the world only as of the fulfilment *ethos*. Different models of government from democracy to aristocracy and monarchy are just different ways of realization of the idea of good, freedom and justice. Hence politics in Plato and Aristotle does not precede ethics in either a logical or a historical sense. If it is at all possible to say that the Greeks distinguish it politically from the ethical in the narrower sense, then such a distinction can only be justified by the metaphysical way of shaping the relationship between the divine and the world, human and natural (*physis*), and what makes the basis of the whole structure of Western thought. And that is the division of the theory, practice and ethical action. When Lévinas takes for such a distinction a pictorial parable to point to the identities and differences of Greek and Jewish origins of Western metaphysics, it is always about Odysseus and Abraham. Odysseus

³ Sloterdijk in his analysis of the end of theodicy in the history of modern thought, after the terrible destruction in the First World War and particularly after the Holocaust and World War II replace the concept of theodicy with that concept that perfectly suits the period post-humanism and technological utopia –*algodicy*. The strategy boils down to alleviating and eliminating pain as the first stage in the quantitative and qualitative determination of suffering. The profanity of this strategy shows that suffering is associated only with the obsolescence of “nature” in the human body. Physical pain becomes only a manifestation of a psychic structure of an unconscious nature. It goes through the evolutionary path of transforming the organic into the living as technically artificial. Pain is alleviated and overcome by the technologies of algodicy, and the feeling that forms the foundation of a universal ethic in the posthuman era ceases to be a “matter” of the irreducible nature of the human species in contact with the Other. The only real question of what is to come should be the question of perfecting the structure of the posthuman body as a link between the cyborg, machine, and the living corporeality of man (Sloterdijk, 1986).

represents a metaphor for returning from a foreign land to the vicinity of the homeland, and Abraham for consciously leaving the original homeland and searching for the Promised Land⁴. Ethics, therefore, arises from the experience of destroying one's home and homeland. It is grounded as a protest against what is deeply inhuman, traumatic and uncanny. It cannot be some pre-ontologically determined idea of good as Being. On the other side of the Being, what happens in the encounter with the Other as the riddle of the person who comes from on high and leaves the mark of God, stand an act of absolute transcendence (Lévinas, 1989; Paperzak, 1993).

Can feelings be grounded by something terrifying? It seems they precede every metaphysical idea of man and his world. It is about the pre-ontological and the experience of the innocence of man. All that has been done by Heidegger's thinking in his famous *Letter on Humanism* (Heidegger, 1978, pp. 311-360). However, uncanny (*Unheimlich*) is always ambiguous. On the one hand, it denotes an experience of closeness and rootedness in the ground, and on the other, of abandonment and wandering the Earth in search of a new abode. *Ethos* in Greek was a word stored within itself the experience of community life (*polis*), forming all relationships among people based on the idea of freedom and justice. Ethical cannot become independent as long as the community denotes the Law of everything real. If

⁴ (Lévinas, 1961, pp. 75-102). Two notions of the world and life that make up the dual structure of the history of metaphysics of the West can be here identified as: 1) The Greek tragic wandering from lack of homeland of the world, with origins or *arché* to return of country, and 2) Jewish Messianic experience wandering in search of the promised land as another (primordial) homeland. In both cases, we have an experience of homelessness: Greek denotes the future as the proximity of the past and strives to re-establish itself, and Jewish refers to a different experience of transcendence of the future as irreducible to the past and present. Odysseus denotes, therefore, a figure of the ontological difference of Being and beings, and Abraham a figure of anticipation of the different and the Other in the horizon of the messianic future. In his essay on Lévinas, Derrida made the best attempt to approximate the Greek-Jewish structure of metaphysics as ontology, the thinking of Being, and prophetic legacy, when at the end of his essay "Violence and Metaphysics" he called Lévinas Greek-Jewish. He defined the whole post-metaphysical adventure of thought after Heidegger, to which he undoubtedly belongs himself with his thinking of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, on the horizon for the new connections of Judaism and Hellenism as encounters and reconciliations of extreme differences. But the question is what we mean by reconciliation? In the logos or the transcendence of the logos (letter?). In the thought of finitude, or the medium of absolute infinity? If reconciliation is only what arises from overcoming the "violence of metaphysics" as logocentrism, then the adventure of future thought lies beyond thinkers and prophets, beyond such radically separated ontologies and ethics as the 'first philosophies' that Lévinas insists on. Reconciliation is a paradoxical figure of something that requires thinking outside the "tyranny" of the logos and outside the "dictatorship" of faith (Derrida, 1978, pp. 79-153).

the community (*polis*) is founded in the *ethos* as the very abode of the idea of good, politics becomes the democratic activity of the people, and ethics the virtue of the prudent citizen of the community. Such a high understanding of the community (*polis*) was a reason why Heidegger's 'nostalgia' for the primordial world of the Greeks rejects the independence of the ethical as one way or another derivative of the modern subject and its (evil) conscience (Derrida, 1987; Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990). Undoubtedly, to question the end of theodicy without simultaneously questioning the end of history within the very metaphysical structure of its history from Greek philosophy and the Jewish faith to contemporary thought seems a failed attempt. Is such an attempt one that marks the *aporia* in the thinking of the Other by Emmanuel Lévinas? And what is much more important for the modern notion of the phenomenon of destroying the metaphysical image of the world from the new Era to technoscience seems the issue of whether evil can be overcome by establishing an ethics of unconditional and absolute transcendence of responsibility for the Other (neighbour). Does not the idea of infinite justice and responsibility start from the formation of the coming community as an event of overcoming the end of theodicy? In other words, can the true answer to the event of evil in world history be thought of in any other way than from a new ethical perspective?

All these questions are not just Lévinas' "matter of thinking". These are crucial questions for our age of "darkness of the mind" in which we witness something paradoxical. Instead of radically freeing space for the particular political in its essential dimension of the determination to change the world from the state of "dehumanized desert", as Jacques Derrida in the footsteps of Carl Schmitt determines the state of the global order of devastation and the crisis of democracy, everything happens by the ethical-aesthetic turn of metaphysics at the end of history. Ethics, namely, in the form of bioethics serves the techno-scientific picture of the world as the last consolation of humanism, and aesthetics generates the posthuman world of technology as the second nature of man (Paić, 2011). Therefore, the question of ethics today cannot be a question of the possibilities of a good life in the community, but a question of the end of theodicy and the demands of infinite justice in the world of techno-scientific "dehumanized desert". This is not about a positive foundation of the ethical itself. Nor is it about the negativity of the phenomenon of evil and violence to which ethical action should be directed in changing the Being of an epochal historical situation. Negativity can only be another face of the positivity of Being in a Western ontology.

Adorno's *negative dialectic* only distorts Hegel's idea of totality, but it does not radically overcome or transcend with the assumption that truth is not a whole. That is a reason why evil and violence in a diabolical horror can no longer be seen from the perspective of theodicy as a justification of negativity by the final blow of God's hand, which will eventually elevate all that was unjust to eternal truth and justice. In the encounter with the ethical self, we encounter that uncanny, foreign, disturbing, strange. The ethical only come into encounter with the face of the Other and his irreducible world beyond the Being which Lévinas determined in the totality of his reflections from the writings of *Totality and Infinite* to *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*.

The talk of the end of theodicy is not provoked by the naive or romantic idea of the disappearance of evil from history. Lévinas thinks in his ethical turn of this rift between the Same (ontology) and the Other (metaphysics) starting from the infinity and transcendence of the Other. Is this way of thinking Platonism in another form? Yes, because Lévinas in his explanations calls on Plato's *Politeia* and Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, finding examples to make what is beyond the Being. In Plato, we have the idea of good, and in Descartes, it is the idea of God and infinity. In the phenomena of violence that determine the modern age –totalitarian political orders, the ideology of racism and nationalism– the inhuman appears in its pure form. Walter Benjamin, following in the footsteps of Carl Schmidt, called *divine violence* that violence which cannot be explained by any logic of historical time and by any reference to the action of causality and teleology (cause-purpose). Of course, messianic violence is nothing but the hand of divine justice. It is so much beyond the binary oppositions of war and peace, activity and passivity (Agamben, 1998). Astonishingly, Lévinas seeks to radically reverse the entire history of Western thought, assuming that the very structure of thought should be the power of the violence of the ontological foundation of the world. The discourse on ethics as the first philosophy marks the direction of a radical change not only in the rank of ontology but above all in the way of thinking from the horizon of metaphysics. The coming of the Other does not belong in the realm of Being. The Other is an irreducible encounter with the infinite that transcends the realm of understanding and conceptualization. Therefore, the discourse on the Other represents at the same time uncanny, human and non-human, because the Other is another man and the Other denotes the absolute transcendence of the Being itself-God (Lévinas, 1989, pp. 75-87).

Let's try to clarify why only Lévinas' ethical turn of Western thought is based in what century metaphysics of transcendence and why the lack of homeland and indifference towards the suffering of the Other beginning of discoveries of new ethical attitude at all on the other side of the modern order of normativity of action is beyond the rational structure of moral acting following the Law. If only Lévinas' ethical turn reversed theodicy, he intends that instead of metaphysical justification of evil on the way towards the absolute Good (the idea of God as a subject-substance of history), establishing a speech about the "sacred history" of the infinite in the finite, enter transcendent in the immanence. Other thereby shows the orientational turning point. Evil cannot be thematized explicitly in his works because ontology and phenomenology are no area of pure violence and evil. They are only forms of thinking and the appearance of a Being in modalities and possibilities, reality and necessity. Of course, objections to Lévinas' ethics argue that it is unrealistic and metaphysically inappropriate in the face of the Third as institutionalized violence and the diabolical horror of 20th-century political totalitarianism. Moreover, as Slavoj Žižek emphasizes in his critique of Adorno and Lévinas, the paradox is that without the self-determination of the *inhuman* one cannot speak of the human in the face of absolute evil (Žižek, 2006, pp. 111-113).

Criticism of Lévinas' metaphysics of Other comes from the ontology of events, best summarized by Alain Badiou. He defined Lévinas' riddle of the Other as a "religious axiom". Here, however, philosophy does not serve to theology. But there is no ethics without God as there is no ethical experience without feelings with the Other (Badiou, 2001, p. 22). Theodicy denotes always the justification of evil in history as a necessity for the intervention of good in the final messianic triumph. Since the only theodicy at the end of theodicy itself (Leibniz to Hegel) represents the idea of history as the final fulfilment of purpose, then it must be proved that the justification unconditional commitment of Other should be always an impossible requirement concerning the position of the man to society, politics, culture. Such impossibility leads to the necessary possibility of the commandment of infinite justice, which the subject of the ethical act must take upon himself as a kind of hostage and sacrifice. If the Other constitutes the subject with his view, then ethical action should be always related to the corporeality of the subject. We may ask ourselves: when the demand for the subject becomes a demand for eternal hostage and victim of the Other? Isn't this something that turns the ethical perspective of the modern age into the masochism of the subject? In place of self-love and narcissism entity now suddenly has to become a foster parent

hospitable Other without concerning to the possible consequences for safety and the everyday life of his own life? When ethics arises from a feeling of compassion for the Other, and not as a mental response to the autonomy of the subject, the consequences are unexpected. It is, of course, ‘logical’ that Lévinas must oppose the modern law of the subject to the modern experience of the otherness of the Other. Kant’s ethics rests on the *autonomy of the subject*. Lévinas’ ethical perspective postulates the *heteronomy of the Other*. Freedom in Kant’s case precedes parts strengthening in the name of the moral law, while in Lévinas fairness and wisdom of love precedes freedom (Derrida, 1997).

Ethics as the ‘first philosophy’ radically changes the way of discourse and the order of categories of traditional ontology (Being, being, subject, substance). Instead of talking about what ‘is’ Being, it has always been spoken (a trace in the letter), Lévinas, in the footsteps of Plato of the *Sophists*, advocates speaking a living encounter with the Other. It represents a kind of onto-chronic and epiphanic transcendence. The dialogue between the two Others is shown by it as an alternative to the written text. Incidentally, it may be the thinking of the late Lévinas composed in part *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* explicitly retrieve the difference between the two ways to access the Being (finality) and what it exceeds (infinity) (Lévinas, 2011, pp. 31-60). Living speech as speaking (*Le dire*) goes beyond what is spoken (*Le dit*). Former denotes a singularity, while latter goes beyond ontology, in the field of an ethical relationship with Other. In this respect, Lévinas stand in the opposite position from the early Derrida in *Of Grammatology*. There, namely, Derrida argues that letter precedes speech by introducing the concept of *difference* (Derrida, 1967). How does Lévinas face the most difficult issue of losing the faith in God after experiencing diabolical evil such as the Holocaust/Shoah? This question seems decisive for any further ethical-political turn of contemporary philosophy and theology. His position shows that we live in the “age of the end of theodicy”. This simply means that faith cannot be subject to any law that justifies the “useless suffering” of the people in history. Although feelings are the source of the ethics of the Other, it is only a sublime transcendence of pain and its qualitative ascension to an encounter with the absolute Other. That is why theodicy cannot be for Lévinas a Christian rational theology about the path from original sin to redemption in the realm of infinite truth and justice. The Jewish reading of the theodicy based on the *Talmud* instead of truth at the end of history introduces messianic justice. Instead of human sin, this is the sin of Israel. And that sin

can be redeemed only by searching for another land, promised by God. With that, the suffering of people seems almost necessary and legitimate.

But the theodicy in a secular age, as it shows by Lévinas, appears as the immanent transcendence of the world itself. Wars, sickness, misery, despair, injustice frame the negative picture of the world. In this way, theodicy gains its turn in atheistic thinking as a worldview. It can be either pessimistic or optimistic (negative and positive utopias). In both cases, the justification of suffering that exceeds the measure of expectation becomes an inner turn toward the hope of the coming of happiness and justice. Lévinas thinks beyond the Christian and Jewish interpretation of theodicy. But with the difference that he sees in it the ontological-metaphysical framework of eschatology. The end of the history of Being must necessarily reach absolute event quite different whose history starting from the Other as the ideas of good and justice (Taubes, 2009). In this respect, God is innocent of the diabolical horror of Nazi evil. On the other hand, God is at the same time the creator of suffering, because the way of his presence lies on the other side of 'Being and beings'. God, therefore, signifies absolute transcendence and infinity. In contrast to the notion of totality from the work *Totality and the Infinite*, where the emphasis is on the notion of the infinity of the Other, in the work *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* Lévinas deals with the thematization of the subject of ethical responsibility. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish two: 1) The infinite responsibility and demand of the subject for the Other, and 2) Infinity of absolute transcendence.

Infinity refers to the linearity of space, and to its label of the time. Both space and time are not determined by the categories of traditional ontology and cannot be the activities of the modern subject. It infinitely extends into the infinite which transcends the space-time boundaries given by the topology of Being. Lévinas' reversal of metaphysics based on the inner turn from the structure of Heidegger's thought refers to the fact that instead of the notion of ontology, totality occurs here, and instead of the notion of transcendence, Being occurs infinitely. Heidegger's thought of the destruction of traditional ontology in book *Being and Time* was the release of epochal finally arrive Being in the historical event as opposed to the requirements of the infinity of Being as God or Being as the highest beings. Lévinas seeks to cross beyond the power and boundaries of ontology. So, it turns to the idea beyond the Being. Where Heidegger seeks to overcome metaphysics by thinking of the events of Being and time, Lévinas seeks to overcome ontology precisely by

an ethical turn. For this purpose, he retains the name of metaphysics for the irreducibility of God and transcendence for the infinity from which the Other comes (Morgan, 2011).

What is Lévinas' ethical response to evil? At the time of the end of theodicy, ethics was not only methodically the reversal of 'first philosophy'. It is, moreover, an internal stimulus to the reversal of the Third itself (the political order of modern liberal democracy as the only alternative to a totalitarian understanding of community). The reversal from the an-archaic ethic of the infinite responsibility of the Other in the transcendence of Being proceeds from a radical change, but not among human relations. Which is arithmetically determined in Aristotle distribution of justice, and the order in institutional market capitalism determined unequal exchange of goods on the market, in the ethical turn shows as 1) asymmetric, and 2) nonreciprocal responsibility of the subject (*ego*) for the Other. The answer to the sufferings of the Other as my neighbour lies in total devotion to the Other. Derrida will in his late thinking, which also marks the attempt of ethical-political articulation of messianic justice, use the adjective *unconditional* just as Lévinas from heteronomy of Other to justify an act of ethical-political hospitality to foreigners, displaced and stateless persons in the age of global entropy of the contemporary world (Critchley, 1999).

Lévinas, namely, in the text "Transcendence and Evil", in close connection with the assumptions of the philosopher and theologian Philippe Nemo, who discusses the issue of temptation and evil in the *Book of Job*, concludes that evil appears in three modes: 1) as excess, 2) as intention, and 3) as hatred or horror itself in its "pure" form (Lévinas, 1987b, pp. 175-186).

The excessive "nature" of evil shows that it is nothing natural. On the one hand, the intention in the action of the subject is to subdue the One and to destroy him by force, and on the other hand, the feeling of hatred that belongs to the psychopathological case of negative confirmation of the subject. Excess denotes what is diachronic in time, a break with the continuity of history and. Evil, therefore, appears as an event that has in itself not only the significance of Being but above all the possibility of perverting the face of the Other. What does this mean –the transcendence of evil? For Lévinas, evil cannot be included in the order of mental categories. And for Kant, it was clear that "pure evil" does not belong to the categories of either reason or mind. Evil, furthermore, cannot be the negativity of the idea of good, because the ethical answer would, in that case, be a mere reversal within the ontological

structure of the Same, an *incoherent negative dialectic of evil*. If the realm of ethics and transcendence should be heteronomous, not autonomous, then evil in its ‘being’ becomes an event of heterogeneity. It cannot be included in the mental order not because evil is non-mental, but because it lies beyond the logic of Being. Evil, then, lies beyond Being just as good, and the only answer to that arises from the ethical perspective.

The argument for the ethical turn performed by Lévinas is both Kantian and anti-Kantian. Just as Kant in his aesthetics (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*) introduces the notion of the sublime as a qualitative and dynamic notion concerning the notion of the beautiful, a notion that the subject possesses for what is unspeakable and therefore infinitely unpredictable in its appearance, so does Lévinas determine the sublime as the diabolical “nature” of evil. Transcendence, therefore, has a dual role:

1. To enable theodicy to transcend its end as thinking that fails concerning the very “nature” of evil and its negativity beyond negativity;
2. To enable only evil to prevail over where the source of this transcendence comes from.

Both ways denote an ethical act of original Judaism and Christianity. The prophetic bequest of salvation marks the path of overcoming evil. It is at the same time a religious response to diabolical evil and transcends religious iconoclasm. It is, of course, that instead of including-excluding evil from history, it sublimely leads to the principle of the infinity of the very responsibility for the sufferings of the Other. Only Lévinas for corroboration of these impossible ethical imperatives states words of Aljosa Karamazov from the novel by Fyodor M. Dostoevsky’s *Brother Karamazov*: “We are all responsible for each Other, and individual, and I more than others” (2011, p. 81). If the ontological difference between Being and beings preceded by the difference between good and evil, then the ethical response to evil should be nothing afterwards, nothing after the act of evil itself, but infinite mercy and devotion to the Other, the pure transcendence of evil from the depths and heights from which comes what enables encounter between people. Once again: the paradox of ethics lies in feelings as the ethics of love with the devotion of the Other (neighbour) in that it loses its effective subject. Who is this man, we may ask ourselves as Primo Levi did after Auschwitz, who can at all fulfil the endless demand of absolute transcendence towards the Other? Everyone and no one or, better saying, a subject without a name, a

nameless member of the human race, a universal Self whom the Other holds as its hostage and victim. Lévinas, namely, leaves unresolved the issue of the heteronomy of the Other. Hence we can detect all the further difficulties. They simply consist of the fact that ethics should be necessarily just only one response to evil.

At a symposium in Capri in 1994 on the return of religion to the secular societies of the West, Derrida set the following aporia: Religion? Not a question, but an answer (Derrida and Vattimo, 2001, pp. 9-106). In the case of Lévinas' critique of ontology and theodicy as its rational foundation of eschatology, the problem of the answer itself as a question arises. Where is the place for ethics after the end of theodicy? If religion cannot be longer an ethical question, but an answer to the question of the meaning of faith at the end of theodicy, does not ethical metaphysics replace the emptied essence of faith? Absolute evil in history has affected not only ethics but above all what ethics unconditionally enables –faith in God. That is why Lévinas necessarily had to assume in his metaphysical turn that the transcendence of evil denotes at the same time something preceding the ontological difference of Being and beings, that is, that it is a time preceding the difference between good and evil in which man has freedom of choice between two faces of the ethical. What makes a man a human being, that which is especially human, belong to the closeness of the Other and the unconditional devotion to the Other in the act of the “wisdom of love”. The irreducibility of this transcendence to the *conatus essendi* of Being, as Lévinas takes from Spinoza's above statement, opens the possibility of accessing the infinite in the idea of good without return. Asymmetry and non-reciprocity are the main principles of the ethics of the Other. In a world ruled by the evil and violence of world wars and all other phenomena of the inhuman in history, justice must establish its power by completely different means than the principles of the logic of the Same (Davies, 2004, pp. 161-187).

The heteronomy of ethics signifies that it is beyond the principles and categories of reason and mind. “Crazy paradox” of Other shows that with ethics as ‘first philosophy’ subject only regains its autonomy as another condition which may be the first. The subject, therefore, is constituted not from reason and mind, but the bodily situation of the exterior of the encounter with the Other. This significantly changes the position of the subject. He is not only decentralized and, of course, freed from the power of the ontological violence of the mind itself. ‘Irrationality’ denotes the ethics of one's neighbour

that requires total devotion to transcendence for the existence of man and his world to be possible at all. It is not Heidegger's Being-to-death structure in the future. Lévinas places the Being-for-the Other in the self-displaced from the centre of the world to issue the meaning of individual existence by the existence of the Other. Without the Other, even a subject in a state of *ego* cannot be constituted by what makes the crucial marks of humanity. Ethical therefore does not mean being autonomous, but heteronomous. In this way, Kant's *categorical imperative* is replaced by Lévinas' *ethical imperative*. The difference is that now the ethical no longer presupposes nature as the subject of moral consciousness, but must inevitably establish a moral Law. Instead of this nature and that inhuman, uncanny strange and essence of man, the value of life itself as holiness emerges (Badiou, 2001, pp. 18-23). In a total and theological turn, Lévinas reached the same moment of the resurrection of the divine from holiness as well as Heidegger in the writings and lectures of the late 1930s. What Heidegger calls sacred refers to the place (abode of the Being in the event) from which the divine can arise outside the onto-theological way of occurrence of metaphysics as such (Heidegger, 1978; 1989; 1997). Lévinas, by contrast, derives the sacred from the ethical transcendence of Being. *Ethics presupposes the sanctity of life starting from feelings towards the Other*. This is the fundamental thought of any future ethics in the age of the end of theodicy or the age of technoscience and posthumanism. Where Heidegger seeks to show that humanism is always a metaphysically determined way of thinking that elevates man to the rank of being or the highest being (God) and thus actually "humiliates" his dignity in the vicinity of Being, Lévinas demands a reversal of the ontology (of power) that presupposes violence and the very possibility of diabolical evil. The sanctity of life lies in the space-time of the metaphysical humanism of man as that Other to whom we unconditionally open ourselves in infinite justice and love (Lévinas, 1987a, pp. 127-140). Metaphysical Humanism denotes, therefore, the ethical perspective of the turn of all previous relations of violence in the perspective of Western civilization. Lévinas' response to diabolical evil in world history denotes also a true reckoning with Heidegger concerning the issue of the meaning of Being and concerning Heidegger's "case" of companionship with National Socialism 1933-1934. What in Heidegger remained obscured by the riddle of silence or, moreover, almost un-thematized, in Lévinas becomes the point of reversal of orientation –the question of the Other or, in Heideggerian terms, the question of Being-with (*Mit-Sein*). Did this confrontation with Heidegger yield a radically different

way of thinking about what is the fundamental problem of modernity, or is it a “colossal ethical failure” concerning the Real? Lévinas’ ethical metaphysics of the otherness of the Other passes its test of credibility through the question of how diabolical evil occurs and responds to it. This way of occurrence reveals as *transcendental and/or ontological violence* (Derrida, 1978, pp. 118-153).

Violence and the sanctity of life: The politics of ethical deconstruction

We have noticed a fundamental difficulty in Lévinas’ metaphysical ethics which encompasses the dual nature:

1. It is a response to evil and violence in the external world in which the logic of the Same reigns;
2. It cannot be grounded in either theoretical or practical mind, but must assert its “essence” outside the human, in what belongs to *inhuman*, but enables the human in its absolute transcendence.

The paradox of the impossibility of establishing the ethics of the Other in the ontological framework of understanding Western thought strangely connects Lévinas with Heidegger. Namely, Heidegger does not consider in his thinking ethically as well as the body, either the first phase within the environment of the writing of *Being and Time* or in the second phase of “turning” thought from the meaning of Being (*die Kehre*) to event (*Ereignis*). For Heidegger, the ethical cannot appear as an issue within onto-theology or the thinking of event because the ethical denotes to what belongs to the realm of Being-with (*Mit-Sein*) in which the political also appears. Likewise, the corporeality of the body belongs to the Being-in-the-world, and the world is already always the horizon of speaking language. The body cannot be a “thing”, just as it is not an object in the surrounding world. Leaving behind any phenomenology of consciousness, Heidegger does not take the body as an object of reflection (*Besinnung*) until the world reveals itself in its worldliness as the surrounding world (*Umwelt*) (Heidegger, 2004). The ethical-political turn, therefore, does not affect Heidegger’s thought of the second phase. Instead, some interpreters of the late Heidegger tried to take the path of thinking of openness to the “ethical self” as a sense of compassion (*Mitleid*) with the Other in the life world (Marx, 1986). The late Heidegger deals with the question of turn in the essence of the event itself. In the flash of events, art becomes the last possibility of overcoming technology as enframing (*Gestell*). But with art, there is something in interpreting Heidegger: his thoughts about the event

and upcoming God that “only a God can save us” to read that mysterious place in the testamentary interview for the weekly magazine ‘Der Spiegel’ in 1966. Thinking which is determined by Heidegger and the phenomenology, what is exactly the case in Lévinas’ thinking and Derrida’s too, in the case of so-called the late phase of Lévinas after *Totality and the Infinite*, and Derrida after the 1990s in a book *The Politics of Friendship* where both approach the problematics of the Other and the field of ethical-political as a radical turn of the issue within their fundamental thought orientation. That is why we cannot determine this matter of facts with the term “conversion of thoughts”. On the contrary, in both cases, particularly in Lévinas, the issue of the *messianic triumph of ethics* arises from a reckoning with what Heidegger posed as an overcoming and the openness of metaphysics. The difficulties of Lévinas’ ethics of the Other can be summed up as follows: philosophy and theology as the foundations of ontology cannot answer the question of the irreducibility of the Other. Religion in its original meaning of the union of God and man cannot be the solution to the question of transcendence. The relations of finitude and infinity as binary oppositions within the same religion does not open a new horizon in its Otherness as un-reducibility.

The ethical must, therefore, be the absolute transcendence of the infinite beyond philosophy and religion. For this to be possible Lévinas must think ethics beyond the Law. In other words, ethics precedes morality. It is, therefore “immoral” because it does not prescribe rules and serve the Law (Third). This might be exactly what Derrida calls the “ethics of ethics” beyond all Laws (Derrida, 1978, p. 111). Ethics cannot be grounded in the logos/mind, neither theoretical nor practical as in Kant. It arises from the deep experience of the transcendence of the Other, coming from the height and closeness of the face in the encounter, which makes the human truly inhuman, and transforms the world from indifference to evil and violence to gentleness and compassion of devotion to the Other. Lévinas is not just attempting to reverse and “turn” Heidegger’s view of Being and time. There is much more at stake. Lévinas within categorical assemblage by Heidegger, Husserl’s phenomenology, Jewish heritage, philosophy and religion, is trying to cross the border of a metaphysical way of thinking history so that the very metaphysics freed historic “violence” rule of reason as a foundation. The temptations of grounding cannot be applied to ethics. The reason is that, like freedom, the ethical no longer has its foundation in the rational (*ratio, ground*). Other and different from the Being on dilate, it ‘is’ as a sign of substance and Being. Ethics denotes the feeling with the Other, and event of communion in what is

human too human –the pain and suffering of the human body as a spiritual place of encounter with the divine. At the same time, Lévinas does not come close to faith as another way of understanding the relationship between being, God and man. In the text “God and Philosophy”, he tried to summarize his view of ethics as the ‘first philosophy’, starting from the aporia of thinking itself beyond the Being. In other words, he saw the difficulties of his way of thinking “between” philosophy as an ontology and ethics as metaphysics (faith). This “in-between” two sources of Western thought, the relationship of Being and God is decisive for any future thinking of Ethics “justified” in the bodily are feeling the Other as so paradoxically characterizes contemporary age after the end of theodicy. Why, then, should be necessary to be “in-between” philosophy and faith to pass from the violence of metaphysics to the openness of the Other and the different? How do avoid an attack of *divine violence* of Other in the thinking of *the messianic triumph of ethics*?

Lévinas’ metaphysical ethics of the Other seemingly has the structure of a Manichean struggle between Good and Evil, so it may seem that he has established a new post-metaphysical dualism of Being and values (*Sein/Wollen*). Unlike Scheler’ philosophical anthropology, which has this structure of splitting Being and value, we encounter apparent binary oppositions: mind and faith, ontology and metaphysics, finite and infinite, etc. Lévinas seeks to think of God concerning philosophy not as “the god of philosophers” which Pascal had already criticized, but as the openness of God in transcendence, as the openness of the irreducibly Other, whose fundamental temporal dimension might be contained in authentic infinity. This means that the dignity of God does not exist in all Western metaphysics. God is thought of either as the highest being and the foundation of all beings or as a reduction to what is specifically Being (‘is’ substance and essence). That is why the opposition of philosophy and faith in Western metaphysics is exactly what Heidegger rightly says in *Identity and Difference*: the result of the onto-theological structure of Western metaphysics and forgetting the ontological differences between Being and beings (Heidegger, 2006, pp. 51-80). On the other hand, the God of the Jewish forefathers, revealed in the Old Testament by prohibiting the display and expression of his true “nature” in the form of speech of man –religious iconoclasm– transcends the marks of Being, beings, and the supreme being. To be outside ontological designation of *esse* signifies the “essence” of God which rational theology cannot comprehend in its discourse. Therefore, it is *esse* in presence of the same ontology throughout Western history only differently pronounced and perceived but is essentially

the same: thematization and conceptualization or first theoretical approach to the phenomenon of something as something.

Lévinas is consistently on the side of Heidegger's critique of Husserl's phenomenology of intentional consciousness, which, when thinking of the object of consciousness and *ego cogito*, always thinks of the object as something I always feel. But the thinking of Being for Heidegger cannot be an opinion of something, because Being cannot be an intentional object of consciousness, but a condition of the possibility of consciousness. In this way, the primacy of ontology over Other appears necessary steps to establish God to transcendence in immanence. God in an ontological way has a possible option only as a "first mover", as Aristotle said. On the other side of the Being lies an area that Lévinas defines by traditional terms of metaphysics, but gives them the opposite than Heidegger "positive" meaning as radical Otherness. It transcends the power and "violence of metaphysics" as the foundations of history. The Other is *an-arché* in its infinite appearance of the Other and the Other denotes the absolute transcendence of Being. Accordingly, one cannot ask 'what' the Other is because this would mean in advance its reduction to the position of an *ego cogito* or a Cartesian subject for whom the other is an object or from the outside. Instead of 'what', the real question is 'who' is the Other and how can one think of his irreducibility if one does not think of the place of his coming (infinity) and the time of his diachrony (infinity). Only in this respect should it be understood why Lévinas also proclaims faith in God, which has the structure of the Same, as an ontology of the Same. Such faith represents only another account in the philosophy of mind or rational theology, and peaks in theodicy (Lévinas, 1996, p. 131). It is now clear why only after the end of theodicy can be thought and faith in liberation from the 'power' and 'violence' of Western metaphysics (ontology and religion) open the horizon of the future humbly and without attacking the ultimate truth. Ethics in its "crazy paradox" become more than 'the first philosophy' and different from the belief in the absolute Other. The Greek-Jewish tradition of thinking seems impossible to request penetration beyond the Being and Other.

In contrast to the classical identification of Being and God with the spirituality, a spirit of knowledge, which has a peak in Hegel's Science of absolute mind as the realization of the philosophy of its prevalence in the world history, Lévinas calls into question such matters. Knowledge denotes always the reduction and determination, delimitation (*horismos*) of something: for

example, the knowledge of God presupposes consciousness or reflection on his attributes such as the transcendentalities of St. Anselmo –*unum, bonum verum, ens, pulchrum*. Identity is determined by the presence of Being and cannot be preceded by difference, just as the heteronomy of feeling cannot precede the autonomy of the mental and moral subject in Kant’s perspective. The same in its ontology throughout the history of the West becomes the “tyranny of the Same” as logos, spirit, principle, rationality, spirituality, science. Same all that is incomprehensibly and different comes down to what is understood only as different from the Same. In other words, Lévinas in his “ontology” must introduce the notion of multiplicity and the difference in the notion of the Other to be able to set up a massive metaphysical postulate of a radical change of ontology into ‘ethics as the first philosophy’. Strange notions such as dreaming (*insomnia*) appear in the text, which is not the opposite of the waking state, but a different state in which the infinity and transcendence of the Other “*reject the obedience of vigilance*” (Lévinas, 1996, p. 132). In opposition to Hegel and the dialectic of the absolute spirit, Lévinas is in the *Totality and Infinity* used “the same” philosophical categories from the history of Western thought as well as a category of totality.

In Hegel, totality denotes the unity of disjointed opposites. The result of the triumph of the absolute spirit appears when history is a system of absolute knowledge of the self-consciousness itself in its substance and subject. Then the system appears as the truth of the whole or, as Hegel’s famous proposition states: truth is the whole in such a way that real is rational, and rational is real at the same time. For Lévinas, this position of Hegel represents the beginning of the disintegration of the totality of Western ontology. At the same time, and even a different history of thought begins to emerge. The Other is ethically “grounded” and not derived from the logic of the absolute mind as knowledge of an already existing Being. On the other side of totality, we encounter the eschatological vision of a different history. Hegel’s idea of world history as a history of the development of the mind from a state of self-to-self for Lévinas is necessarily wrong because it mixes the rationalization of history with that which belongs to eschatology. In other words, the question of God in Hegel denotes the issue of the ontological proof of its existence concerning finitude and infinity, and for Lévinas this issue cannot be solved in “this” history either eschatologically, much less with the help of rational theology as theodicy. It is, therefore, necessary to make a difference and distinction from the ontological one undertaken by Heidegger to open the possibility of a second beginning of history beyond the reduction of Being to the ontic

level, and God to the highest being. This difference may be one that Lévinas will pursue with increasing intensity until the end of his life. It is an ethical perspective or a *politics of ethical deconstruction* of the totality of Western history (Lévinas, 1961). The meaning of Being is revealed in its concealment as the truth of Being, and the Other is encountered in its irreducibility by the transcendence of the infinity and difference. This would be the fundamental difference between the notions of identity and the difference in Heidegger and Lévinas. Heidegger thinks of Being as the Same in the difference between Being and God, and Lévinas neutralizes this difference with the difference that precedes to the difference between Being, beings and God. The relationship between infinity and finitude now becomes a dramatic question of understanding the ethical turn in Western thought. Namely, it is about elevating and overcoming the idea of presence as a fundamental way in which Being is revealed. From the ethical turn, Lévinas raises the question of whether God can be defined substantially differently, and that means beyond philosophy and religion, both of which proceed from the way of presence and immanence of consciousness of the infinite? Taking as a support Descartes's position from the *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, the idea of God as an idea of infinity irreducible to the finitude, Lévinas takes the position of an incoherent pre-and-post historical eschatology of Being as it is preceded by "something" more original and therefore "older". In all texts it will be appointed by the word *an-arché*. It is a sign of Being and time in their historical primordial beginning. Of course, this primordial beginning must not be understood by logical originality. Before the 'first' (cause) and the 'beginning' as a foundation, what enables the human belongs to what is beyond the Being. The transcendence of Being is more temporally and 'logically' original than any possible presence of object consciousness. *An-arché* stipulates that the ethics of the Other must be understood outside the order of foundation and the causal-teleological model of thought. The ethics of the heteronomous Other transcends relations that are based on the notions of means/purpose within the order of Being. That is why the "crazy paradox" of Lévinas' ethics might be "immoral", completely beyond the real and the very subject of ethical action.

In the discussion so far, we have already shown that the question of the transcendence of evil denotes Lévinas' answer to the fundamental question of the end of theodicy. After Auschwitz, not only can poetry not be written (Adorno), but any ethics that invokes the humanity of man as a transcendence of evil (Primo Levi) is below the dignity of 'man' himself. Both versions

of the radical doubt in the sense of aesthetics and ethics after the events of absolute evil in history, however, should lead even more to the endpoint of the destruction of the spiritual in general. The real truth about Auschwitz is only this: it is about the realization of absolute evil as the technical-technological “nature” of the ideological-political order of Nazism in the extermination of the Jews (Agamben, 2002). Without ideology and politics as the “spirit” of a total state based on anti-Semitism, there is no possibility of absolute evil being realized in the real world at all. This should be a turn of Hannah Arendt’s assumption about the banality of evil. Evil cannot be banal, but the way it is realized in the technical-technological order of the extermination of Jews might be definitely ‘banal’. This is what constitutes the “nature” of diabolical or absolute evil in history. Therefore, after Auschwitz, there is no possibility of only one thing: *forgetting the Other as the universal victims of history*. The universality of the victim does not undermine the particularity of religious-ethnic identity. The Jews, mentioned just there in Lévinas, are synonymous with “useless suffering” and the impossibility of justifying evil in history by any renewal of theodicy in the new guise of philosophy or theology. Lévinas in this atmosphere, because the spirit of the times is not appropriate to the state of affairs, tends to think beyond the suffering and sacrifice of the Other, aware in advance that ethical turn without radical politics directed against the source of totalitarianism represents only an insufficient project of transcendence of evil.

Well, that would possibly go over and beyond the “violence of metaphysics” in its onto-theological order marking the world need is something that *an arché –deconstructing* the elevation of love to the Other from ethical imperatives. Lévinas calls such “crazy love” without foundation and purposes the nobility of pure giving, the motherly care for the Other without any kind of reciprocating. Not the reciprocity of the relationship between the subject and the Other as well as the asymmetry in the notion of universal brotherhood among men as presuppositions of messianic justice now come into the place of the categories of Being and beings. Such inability possibilities of ethics are already in *anarché* relationship between the citizen of the political community as establishing a political and legal system. Ethics arise from transcendence, and its form of this non-reciprocal and asymmetric relationship represents an infinite responsibility for the Other. Infinite responsibility denotes at the same time an infinitely demanding act of fulfilling the ethical imperative (Critchley, 2008). The obligation to accept the Other as a gift without borders in the real political order of the global world appears as a problem of

unconditional hospitality towards foreigners/Others, who come from other nation-states as exiles and stateless people in this homeland. Derrida's ethical perspective debt to Lévinas to complement and radicalized ethical-political turn a single deconstruction of Western ideas of modern politics (Derrida, 2000).

Who represents the model for Lévinas' metaphysical ethics of the Other –the citizen of the *polis* (community) or the private person? Regarding from the standpoint of real policy, the ethical deconstruction should be fragile and with no potentiality in terms of power. First of all, ethics as the 'first philosophy' requires infinite responsibility for the Other and an infinite transcendence of Being because it is anarchic in its demand for the establishment of "Humanism". In other words, ethics historically precedes the establishment of a community based on an already politically synchronic order of 'social contract' between people. The stranger cannot be a model for Lévinas' ethics are feelings with the Other as endless obligations and responsibilities for the Other. If there exist any model at all for such an impossible possibility of an ethical relationship in modern times, then it should be the face of the nameless victim, the companion and my neighbour, and my love for him/her stems from the universal nobility of the "wisdom of love" itself. Before the political order of the "Caesar's and David's state" appears at all, an encounter must take place between the Other and the subject, who only in the encounter with the face of the Other becomes the "subject". This symbolic moment of the subject's origin cannot be, therefore, a constitutive act of autonomy of consciousness of action following the (moral) Law, but a heteronomous act of feelings with the Other as my neighbour, which radically changes the way the subject is founded. In this separation between the power of the subject as the autonomy of freedom and the non-power of the subject as the heteronomy of justice, a *messianic triumph of ethics* arises. But only then do insurmountable difficulties arise. These are two types of violence that occur with each other in the face of the finitude of the subject and the infinity of the ethical requirement. First, violence is one that Derrida calls the "transcendental and ontological" and refers to the whole of Western metaphysics, and the other is marked by which Schmitt and Benjamin otherwise appointed as *divine violence*. The problem, then, should be how to justify the ethical in a time of conflict between two paradigms of violence:

1. Structural and systematic within the very order of global neoliberal capitalism; and

2. Alternative and ethical violence which, under the name of messianic politics, requires the unconditional sacrifice of the subject for the fulfilment of infinite justice in the infinite transcendence of the world.

Within the second paradigm of violence, we will distinguish between the messianic: 1) religious violence of fundamentalism, and 2) the revolutionary violence of radical politics. Both are the same with different ideological signs of the Other.

Due to the heteronomous ethics of Lévinas, it is based on the principles of the anarchy of the Other and messianic justice. Both concepts are important for the politics of ethical deconstruction. The first is a deconstruction of the original Western ontology, and the second belongs to the original Jewish religion. In the first principle, the idea of the foundation and the reason by which the *logos*, the mind, the spirit reduces everything to the derivatives of the substantial-subjective logic of the Same is at work. In this set of opinions, God cannot be Other, but only the highest being whose “essence” lies in his omnipresence and eternity. Justice in the Messianic way of understanding points to the *Last Judgment*. History, therefore, ends as a history of the “alienation” of truth and justice and becomes an indistinguishable realm of eternal justice. Divine justice signifies the beginning of another or “sacred history”, and its fundamental notions are transcendence and infinity. But messianic justice, without deconstructing the meaning of its Otherness, remains confined to what is allegorically visible in all the symbolic depictions of the goddess of justice: that it is, in fact, blind in its realization. Lévinas, therefore, deconstructs what simultaneously holds these two principles together. Totality, with its philosophical tradition up to Hegel, is still the name for the term that rules the entire metaphysics of presence. The only thing that can oppose it is the radical otherness of the Other beyond totality. With the face of the Other, an event of transcending totality occurs. It must be significant to keep in mind that in the game of *revealing* a Being and *meeting* the Other, dramatic history of ethical turn takes place. *An-arché* in its deconstruction needs messianic justice. But in a different way than the religious tradition of Judaism and Christianity managed to open. On the other hand, there is no possibility of deconstructing the Blind (retaliatory) justice in a way of *divine violence* without deconstructing the idea of beginning, foundation, a reason. Lévinas’ deconstruction of Western ontology in a critical dialogue with Heidegger begins and ends as the impossibility of a positive politics of ethical deconstruction. The reason is simply the fact that such heteronomous ethics

in the far left with only the sanctity and value of life based on the feeling and the suffering of Other. Ethics without political “foundation” in the idea of the coming community as possible, real and necessary creation of the meaning of the Being in the event remains a pure illusion of human action within the already untrue and unjust world. Marx’s expression for this aporetic situation of the ethical in the world of the rule of law of the alienated and perverted history of global capitalism, which Badiou takes in his thought, is *ideology*. Ethics as an ideology means just what Lévinas attempts to remove these when he says that the end of the traditional ethics came simultaneously with the critique of ideology in the thinking of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

What do ethics and violence have to do with each other? There is no doubt that Lévinas’ ethics of the Other denotes an attempt to build a nonviolent relationship to the invulnerability of his Being to the narcissistic and egoistic subject of the real world of interests in capitalist society. As an ethical ideal, messianic justice belongs to what is beyond a Being. In the metaphysical tradition from Kant to Scheler, the realm of the ethical belongs to values in the material and formal sense. Thus set heteronomous ethics unlike Kant cannot establish the notion of value in the principles of pure and practical reason. Where, then, does the ‘foundation’ of the ethical ideal as the value that governs our lives come from? For Lévinas, it is an irreducible area of the riddle of humanity in general, something beyond Being and at the same time something that belongs to him in particular. It is about the sanctity of life itself in its inexplicability by any notion of ontology as logic (Jonas, 1998). God says in the Old Testament, “You must not kill!” The sanctity of life connects man with the infinite in the transcendence of the Other. Transcendence and immanence –life in its physical existence– show compassion with Other. Where, then, lies the gap between the two types of violence we have indicated –transcendental and/or ontological and religious and/or revolutionary?

To show this, Derrida’s fundamental objections to Lévinas should be summarized concerning two things: 1) the deconstruction of Western metaphysics as metaphysics of violence, and 2) the derivation of an ethical turn from the transcendence of the Other. I will argue that the most significant critique and interpretation of Lévinas’ thinking, in general, is contained in the basic postulates of Derrida in his famous essay “Violence and Metaphysics”. There is a beautiful metaphor for style and to act Lévinas thought such as wave which constantly hitting the coast, but each new shock thought increasingly strengthens and becomes more powerful. One such thought of the force of

the shock wave is that the whole of Western metaphysics, as Derrida puts it, denotes “the totalitarianism of the Same” (Derrida, 1978, p. 91). The tautology of this view seems undeniable. But is there totalitarianism of the Other? Can we imagine a totalitarian order that would respect differences and demand the unconditional commitment to the Other? Of course, it is possible to imagine such a situation only as a cynical perversion of the ideology of the Other: the justification of camps and secret police that spy on citizens in the name of democracy and human rights. The picture is familiar. It directly points us to our reality of the suspension of civil rights due to the threat of global terrorism. It would be not difficult to conclude that Derrida made the same premise in his book *Of Grammatology* when he spoke of the rule of *logocentrism*. The problem cannot be that Lévinas goes so far as to derive the political rule of that order from the rule of one principle in ontology, but that the Other is heteronomous, plural, irreducible as a riddle of encounter with the unknown and foreign, and only indefinitely and in its aporia can be nothing but messianic or “divine violence” of transcendence. The ethics of “holiness”, even with the best of intentions, cannot omit the mystery of just violence as the eschatological vision of the *Last Judgment*.

Derrida shows that the deconstruction of metaphysics at the same time is deploying the history of its category. To disempower Hegel means to create a language of thought beyond the conceptual thematization of the Other. In *Totality and the Infinite*, Lévinas still uses the notion of phenomenology, which is deeply soaked in what he wants to abandon. But the discourse on the face of the Other and the riddle that cannot be solved other than by reference to the infinite and irreducible, which is the mark of God’s transcendence, does not immediately open the other shore. Thus, religion opens the realm of the ethical, and ontology neutralizes the Other. Contrary to Marx who declares philosophy as an ontology-ideology because it justifies the world of non-truth and non-justice of capitalist social relations, the real as such in a state of inversion of the very essence of the world, Lévinas rejects in the same way idealism and philosophy of subjectivity. But his “atheism” is ethical-metaphysical. In advocacy in deities without deities, such thinking transcends religion as well. Once again, as Derrida shows, Heidegger’s influence against Lévinas’ will seems more than obvious. Heidegger in the age of thinking dedicated to the event by the late 1930s tries to think of divinity without the God of traditional metaphysics. The dignity of a man denotes a dignity beyond humanism as metaphysics and the sanctity of the divine beyond theology as metaphysics. There is Derrida’s testimony that

in a conversation with him near the end of his life, Lévinas himself said that he did not care about ethics, but holiness (the sacred)⁵.

The problem, then, is that any ontology of multiplicity and metaphysical ethics of the Other fails already in the assumption of Being in general, whether it reduces it to becoming (*Werden*) or to what is contrary to God and infinity. Heidegger showed that already in the primordials of Western metaphysics, in Heraclitus and Parmenides, the One that opens in the All occurs as purity in the encounter within the horizon of finitude-infinity. That is why Derrida's critique of Lévinas' view of the nearness of the Other is necessarily Heideggerian in direction. The closeness of the Other might be nothing but the distance from the Other because only in a difference and distance from the Other can the Other preserve in me (like God) his irreducible, heteronomous identity. The same concerning the Other acquires its sameness in the pre-established relation of the Same. The question of the relationship between the two arises from the relationship between difference and the eschatology of Being (Derrida, 1997, p. 112). The Other, therefore, cannot be infinite Other except infinitude and mortality, which means that it is the body as the zero points of the rift, that Being-between finitude and infinity, the Same and the Other. Violence cannot be neither in the negativity of the same order nor in what Derrida sharply defined by the "totalitarianism of the same". It is present in the very essence of the relationship between the two, totality and the infinite, the subject and the Other. The riddle of evil as absolute violence lies in what may be called the genealogy of relations, and what Marx called in *Capital* as the ideological illusion of replacing the ideal with the real, capital with reality itself in the form of a fetishism of commodities. The violence of metaphysics and the *triumph of messianic ethics* that invokes the thinking of Lévinas lies in the structurality of structure or the pre-ontological way of the relationship between Being and value (the Other). When Derrida says that violence does not exist before the possibility of speech, then in that statement the essence of the events of the reversal of the very metaphysical structure of ethical action is hidden. Speech cannot be a mere relationship in the process of communication, but the essence of communication itself. The face speaks before the speech, and the Other suddenly comes to the horizon of communication as a violent interruption of the synchronic order of things.

⁵ "You know, they often talk about ethics to describe what I do, but in the end, I'm not interested in ethics, not just ethics, but the sacred, the sanctity of the sacred (*la saint, la sainteté du saint*)" (Derrida, 1997, p. 4).

If the essence of violence lies in that Being-between what allows the very relationship of the Being and the Other to take place, then transcendental and/or ontological violence encompasses the totality of history. It is violence as such, necessary and real, because in the inversion of the category of modality, what is possible allows only an ethical turn. The Other becomes, therefore, possible as a riddle and as an uncertainty in the face of the future. Derrida defines Lévinas' thinking by a strange turn against Lévinas himself by eschatology. But it is the eschatology of the Other, which acquires its Otherness only from the transcendence of the totality of history, and not from the reality and necessity of the violence of history itself (Derrida, 1978, pp. 122-123). In the strict sense of the word, there is no history beyond totality. As we have shown, Lévinas presupposes something different –the possibility of “sacred history” beyond “this” history in the sign of the work of negativity, violence and evil. Messianic justice must, therefore, remain either an ideal or a postulate. But to be an ideal or a postulate, this history must be idealized or postulated in the Kantian sense by a pure or practical mind. Since the mind acts according to the principles of subject autonomy for which each Other is either an object or another subject, which means that everything is reduced to the logic of articulating Being in the way of thematization and conceptualization, then messianic justice in time denotes the event of the coming. This is not Heidegger's *second beginning* of post-metaphysical thinking of history, but “sacred history” carried by the pathos of infinity.

The aporia, then, is that the Other cannot be absolutely the Other as the riddle of the encounter if it is not at the same time the same as the Self. The violence produced by the metaphysics of the *logos*, the mind, the spirit in its historical course towards the future of the same cannot be neutralized in any other way than by *other* violence. It is only by this violence of the Other that the relation of history should be reduced to possible non-violence in the sense of passivity itself. This is what can be called victimless violence. Egoism disappears in it, and the ethical fulfils its mission in the disappearance of the “reason” for the survival of ethics itself. When we translate this thought operation into notions of the anti-dialectical game within the network of relations of history, we obtain two possible relations between the fundamental notions of politics and ethics from the origins of Greek democracy to the present day. The *idea of freedom* belongs to totality as transcendental and/or ontological violence, and the *idea of justice* belongs to the metaphysical ethics of the Other as religious and/or revolutionary violence. In the name of freedom, paradoxically, the violence of the Other against the subject who surrenders

to the Other unconditionally arises from a pure ethical imperative. The French Revolution in the age of Jacobin terror represents the best example of this structural perversion of the same. It will be no coincidence that Kant and Lévinas refer to what goes beyond the notions of mind and reason to establish ethics. The sublime sense of justice denotes the purpose of freedom as the autonomy of the mind (Kant), and compassion with the sufferings of Others elevates the sanctity of life to sublimity. The transcendence of the Other comes from the heights and the deepest feeling that transcends the metaphysical boundaries of language. Freedom, therefore, requires nameless sacrifices, and justice the fury of vengeful wraith.

In the name of justice, violence arises as non-reciprocal and asymmetric, just like the violence of the modern religious movements of fundamentalism in the world. How can violence be reciprocal and asymmetric? So violence is not a response to absolute evil in its diabolical horror, as it was the case concerning the Allies (US and USSR) striking Germany in World War II. On the contrary, violence represents a structure, a relationship in which even the so-called a preventive or “just war” that is ideologically and politically justified by the sacred goals of world security, freedom and human rights becomes nothing more than a grotesque caricature of Lévinas’ metaphysical ethics of the Other. Recall that the hawks of the Bush administration were Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld after the al-Qaeda attack on September 11, 2001, to America have just begun a military-police action against terrorism, calling it just that –*Infinite Justice*. The cynicism of the ethical-political turn is that Lévinas thus became the “brand” of the Pentagon’s ethical fundamentalism as the forerunner of the neo-imperial global order. In the name of “God’s justice” anything could be allowed. This is the case to the extermination of Others, who do not belong to the political community of the same in religion and ethnic origin, but also to something much more important today –culture as a new ideology. Islamic fundamentalism represents a paradigmatic case of this “ethical-political turn”. There is nothing essentially different for the Revolutionary violence of communist regimes in the 20th century. In this way, in revolutionary violence, the negative eschatology is completed, because that who believes in the meaning of the future as the infinite transcendence of the Other (communism) becomes a victim of its ideals. The difference between “divine violence” carried out in the name of messianic justice for eschatological faith or, for the political order of universal equality and brotherhood, is only the difference within the Same in the Other (Žižek, 2008).

What about this enigmatically irreducible Other? Whatever one tries to determine it, the ethics of heteronomous compassion must necessarily be grounded in “sacred history” beyond the real. The messianic blow of the last light of justice presupposes the political formation of liberal democracy or a quite different regime, beyond the idea of the freedom of the egoistic and narcissistic subject in the social relations of global capitalism. The latter can be only two: either the totalitarianism of the Other in various forms of revolutionary violence or the religious fundamentalism of “sacred history”. Lévinas, paradoxically, defends the political heritage of liberal democracy with the arguments of universal brotherhood and equality, which are the fundamental ideas of communism and religious fundamentalism. In his politics of ethical deconstruction, his endless demand for justice that precedes freedom denotes an unsolvable aporetic case insofar as the ontology of multiplicity and the ethics of unconditional Otherness are possible only if it is humanly opened in the essential dimension of the sanctity of life, in immeasurable compassion for the sufferings of Others. In this way, we come to the last “crazy paradox” of this impossible possibility of ethics for the age after the “end of history”. To maintain the order of apparent *untruth*, injustice, and structural violence of the global capitalist order, it is not enough to say with Churchill’s argument as a political *credo* of secular negative theology that democracy represents the worst form of government, except for all the others. Is it necessary a lot of “more” and “sublime”: politically justified in its structural violence (transcendental and/or ontological) with a *messianic triumph of ethics* that in the future as absolutely different versions of salvation from the history leads concerning of infinite justice. It, therefore, seems justified to establish three notions of the political that Lévinas constantly has in mind in his ethical messianism. These are: 1) politics as religious messianic, 2) politics as ethical messianism, and 3) politics as utopian messianism (Lévinas, 1998).

In all three cases, it is an attempt to realize the idea of infinite justice in its practical effectiveness as what makes politics a deconstruction of power and violence as shown in various forms of government since the new century. The utopian in messianism is first and foremost that which belongs to “divine violence”. The world may fail, but justice must be done! (*Fiat iustitia, pereat mundus!*). And so at the end of the “crazy paradox” of utopian messianic politics, the ethics of the Other as the “last consolation” of humanism is before the wall of its impossibility. What else can she have left but the same thing that Heidegger said so enigmatically in a controversial testament to ‘Der Spiegel’ in 1966: “Only a God can save us”?

Ethics without a world?

There are only three philosophical ideas of “great ethics” to nowadays:

- a. Aristotle’s idea of distributive justice in a community (*polis*) determined by the “natural” limitations and ethnic reducibility of citizens with the fundamental virtue of prudence (*phronesis*).
- b. Kant’s idea of a moral Law established by the action of an autonomous mental subject in a categorical imperative within the world as a cosmopolis.
- c. Lévinas’ idea of compassion with the sufferings of Others in a direct encounter beyond ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ as an event of the sanctity of life.

Greek and modern experience has always presupposed the existence of a political community. For the Greeks, it is a limited world-city-state (*polis*), and for the modern age, it is a nation-state political order with a regulatory idea of a world order based on mental principles. In both cases, originally Greek and modern, ethics has its homeland, place, topology, it has its “world”. In the case of the modern age, after the experience of the diabolical evil of the Holocaust and the “end of theodicy”, the idea of homeland, home, the abode of man no longer exists or is destroyed. Neither the city-state nor the nation-state is any longer the abodes of modern man. He is a wanderer and a nomad, an exile and stateless person in a world that becomes a network of structures and functions. Man is not only a planetary nomad in the age of technoscience, but he is essential without a homeland that becomes like in Tibetan legend that Cioran mentions *camping in the desert*. Lévinas’ ethics of the Other denotes the search for the abode of a man at the end of his tragic historical drama of wandering and the “useless suffering” of peoples and individuals. It is the source of this metaphysical ethic of the sanctity of the life of the Other in that of the selfless. It is terrible, and hence in its homelessness exalted as an absolute evil. In the face of it, the sanctity of life seems to be the last mystery of that encounter with the face of the Other, which radically changes all history so far. Ethics without a world necessarily requires the uncanny event of the creation of the world when everything is just either this or that violence in the name of freedom, equality and justice. Is it even possible to create a new world if the most uncanny of all should be something that does not belong to the thought horizon of Lévinas, but its only true teacher and companion in thought.

This is the most wonderful thing that Heidegger says in “Overcoming of Metaphysics” about the nihilism of Western history. At its end man as *ratio*

and animal as instinct become identical. The same in the difference between man and animal comes from the relation of the setting of the very essence of technology. When a man is used for other purposes as a material, then the technical establishment of the unconditional possibility of his Being has become a void, and homelessness that is shown by world-historical destiny. The world in immortality falls down into the abyss.

The desolation of the earth begins as a process which is willed, but not known in its being, and also not knowable at the time when the being of truth defines itself as certainty in which human representational thinking and producing first becomes sure of themselves. Hegel conceives this moment of the history of metaphysics as the moment in which absolute self-consciousness becomes the principle of thinking (Heidegger, 1973, p. 110).

What about ethics when the world after the “end of history” cannot be longer the place and abode of the human-but-human, when inhuman life itself forces rebellion, no longer out of “actualism and moralism of history”, but out of a sense of intolerance towards the threatening indifference displace the meaning of freedom and justice in favour of the technological efficiency of ‘nature’ and ‘spirit’? Indeed, what about ethics in an age of absolute worldlessness? Without the illusion that the problem can be solved by divine or revolutionary violence, the fundamental problem remains that any ethical response to the monstrous power of the technosphere is only what is clear to everyone in advance –the last consolation and nothing more. On the other side of the Earth, in its wanderings, completely different thinking is required, which does not begin with ethics as the ‘first philosophy’ and does not end with the absolute Other as the messianic infinite justice. Lévinas, however, opened up what is only significant –the question of the limits of the violence of metaphysics and the time of filled infinity.

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