

DIALOGING WITH THE OTHER LEVINAS ON ETHICS AS THE FIRST PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Levinas holds that philosophy has been in oblivion of ethics as the most fundamental and primary structure of philosophy. He situates the idea of ethics as the first philosophy in relation to the Western metaphysical, epistemological and ontotheological claims of philosophy. Philosophy, hence, has to give utmost priority to ethics instead of prioritizing cognition, intentionality, and ontology. Having profited from the phenomenological method of Husserl, by taking inspiration, and by dissenting with the ideas of Heidegger, Levinas developed his philosophy of the other and ethics in order to highlight the human dignity. Ethics, for Levinas, does not objectify the other. Levinasian contention of ethics as the first philosophy gets its significance in the pre-thematic moment of the inter-personal ethical context. This paper asks, therefore, a very significant question: what is the ground for Levinas to hold the idea that ethics is the first philosophy making possible inter-personal dialogue? This paper, in order to address the aforementioned question, adopts phenomenological hermeneutical and comparative method with sufficient analysis of Levinas' significant works and other important secondary literature.

KEY TERMS

Ethics, mystery, revelation, alterity, servitude, vulnerability.

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZING LEVINAS' IDEA OF PRIMACY OF ETHICS

Levinas contends that it is responsibility that falls before the origin of any moment of knowing. The self or *le même*¹ is responsible to encounter the other or *l'autrui*² in its otherness or alterity. It is known to those who have familiarity with Levinas that one of the immediate contexts of the emergence and insightful shaping of the Levinasian idea of the other is the terrible context of the world war. People became victims, homeless, tortured, looted, starved, murdered, and the human life was considered an object for exploitation. The uniqueness or the otherness of the other was

¹ *Le Même* is the French word for the 'self,' 'same,' 'subject,' 'I,' etc. The classical translators of Levinas like Alphonso Lingis sticks to 'the Same' as the translation for *le Même*.

² *L'Autrui* or *l'autrui* is the French word for 'the Other' or 'the other.'

compromised for enforcing the Nazi regime and ideology. The dehumanizing movements were supported by the main stream ontological consideration of the other as one among many beings.

The Holocaust and Nazi persecution propelled the profundity of Levinasian ethical sensibility to make a radical claim of ethics as the first philosophy. The self is unconditionally obliged to respond to the other in a responsible manner. The other gets priority over the self and compels the self to be responsible for the other. Levinas also claimed that responsibility for the other is of pivotal concern unlike to search after the 'question of being,' which Heidegger himself has mentioned as the most fundamental quest and aim of philosophy. Heidegger had already mentioned that philosophical history has been in forgetfulness of the question of being. Heidegger did not intent to refer to 'being' not an entity, instead, his interest was to deal with the 'being of being,' regarding 'what makes a being *being*, or, a search for that which makes a being *is*. Levinas' first major work *Totality and Infinity* is a philosophical critique of the Heideggerian hermeneutics of *Sein und Zeit*. Levinas contends that the Heideggerian emphasis of ontology and its ultimate concern of the being of Dasein have left the world in the horror of ontology, that in every sense, considered the Other as one of the many beings at the cost the uniqueness and particularity of each person.³ If Heidegger had emphasized the otherness of the other, he would not have supported the Nazi regime in any manner, believes Levinas. Levinas contends that the ethical moment precedes any rational moment of conceptualization and thematization. It is not the being that utters the first word. It is the other who utters the first word about the responsibility for the other. This ethical utterance of the other is the first word that originates before the origin of consciousness and freedom. According to Levinas, the other is my master, and the priority in the inter-personal discourse is the privilege of the other.

THE SELF IS INESCAPABLY ETHICAL IN ITS PRIMORDIALITY

The self has to consider the other as if one relates to his/her master. The self is bound to be in a disposition of servitude in relation to the other.⁴ For Levinas, ethics is the first philosophy that originates before every moment of intentionality and ontology. The subjective disposition of servitude to the other is not a disposition that is chosen by the self; rather it is an inescapable vocation of the self to be subjective to the other, or to be responsible for the other. The idea of the servitude of the self implies the primacy of ethics. It is because the ethical moment is the first moment in relation to the fundamental structural disposition of the self, that is, the self is already awakened to be responsible for the other, before 'consciousness and freedom' choose to be

³ For example, before the awakening of consciousness and understanding one acts for a hungry child.

⁴ Gans, "Ethics or Ontology: Levinas and Heidegger," 118.

responsible. The aforementioned structural composition of the subjectivity makes the self to be in a disposition-of-servitude. The self finds itself in an ethical servitude that makes the primacy of ethics. It does not imply that the self chooses the servant attitude to the other. Instead, it means that the subjective disposition to consider the other as the master occurs before any moment of subjective cognition. The other orders and commands the self to take upon itself all the burdens of the other.⁵ It orders the self to be a servant to the other and to consider the other as its master.

The ethical encounter with the other gets significance in Levinas as it denies every cognitive approach to the other in the sense that the self has to approach the other not as an equal person in the inter-personal encounter. The inter-personal discourse is the context wherein the self relates to the other in a non rational manner. Any involvement of rational approach to the other makes the other as an object or *noema* of my reason. The other always calls the subject to responsibility and questions and compels it to relate to the other without denying the alterity of the other. The other as the master, hence, obliges the self to take responsibility for the other. The 'ought to' relate to the other and to consider the other as the master is ever dynamic in the discourse before 'being becomes aware of its own being.' Before the being 'discloses' its being, the subject/self is ethically awakened. Besides, before the self becomes aware of itself or of any other object, be it "ideal or real,"⁶ the self is ethically awakened to respond to the invitation and order of the other. The primacy of ethics underlines the primacy and privilege of the other over the self. Levinas' phenomenological movement has radically put the self under the unfathomable horizon of responsibility for the other. The priority of self knowledge and self understanding are the obstructions to give a responsible response to the other. The primacy of ethics signifies the primacy of responsibility over the truth and certainty.

The Levinasian philosophical contentions become a remedial critique of the supremacy of rational philosophy. But, his perspective is not an obstruction to philosophy.⁷ Because, Levinas conceives that the real philosophy is neither constructed upon existence or being nor upon consciousness and intentionality, but upon the ethical 'ought.' The ethical 'ought' has primacy over being, consciousness and intentionality. However, the Levinasian contention of ethics as the first philosophy that originates before consciousness, freedom, and intentionality, appears to be a polemic. But a philosophical retrospection will find some justifications for the Levinasian position. One of the significant advantages of Levinas' thought is that it has made a reversal of the philosophical order in the history by questioning the philosophical tradition of highlighting 'know

⁵ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 98.

⁶ Husserl develops the idea of intentionality in reference to 'ideal objects,' and Brentano, on the other hand, refers to the 'real objects' in the empirical world.

⁷ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 48.

thymself,' in the highest place either at the expense of the other or by placing the other at a comparable negligible position.

LEVINAS ETHICS AS A RESTRUCTURING OF PHILOSOPHICAL PRIORITY

Levinasian contention of philosophy has replaced the 'know thymself' with 'be responsible.' *Be responsible* cannot be understood as an ontological situation of the self, but it refers to the ethical disposition of the self. It is not a way of being. 'To be responsible' is to be understood as 'otherwise than being.' It is totally different from the ontological structure of the subjectivity. One may tend to ask about the possibility of maintaining the 'height' of the other in the inter-personal relationship as: how is it possible for the self to consider the other as having infinity or height over the self in the discourse? Is it possible for the other to be encountered by the self with the demand from the other to consider it with infinity? Is it possible for the self to consider the other as revealing from a 'height' if the subjectivity is not capable for such recognition? These aforementioned queries become meaningful in connection to the ethical structure of the subjectivity as something within the subject to respond to the other.⁸ According to Levinas, it refers to the ethical structure of subjectivity that takes its role in the an-archy of time. The ethical election of the subjectivity is the primary election of the self, and ontology or epistemology has only a secondary moment in reference to philosophy.⁹

The 'primacy of ethics and ethical subjectivity' is self evident in self's state of already been chosen to be responsible for the other. Before the awakening of any intellection, the self is already awakened 'without a beginning.' Levinas contends that every other philosophical discipline has a moment of being awaked in time. The expression 'to take the responsibility' refers to the idea that one has to approach the other through the eyes of responsibility.¹⁰ The other cannot be conceived as an object because of its transcendence. But can we call the other as a mystery in the phenomenological circle? If the 'element' that gives me an experience is a 'mystery' – at least in the conceptual rendering – the other can be called as a 'mystery' in the aforementioned sense. To express it differently, the other is the one who gives me an ethical experience in different dimension. The other gives me an experience of the other which is of a non rational and non conscious character.

Our familiarity with the classic phenomenology of Husserl and of other important pheonomenologists like Heidegger, Sartre, and Ponty, normally find difficulties with the Levinasian

⁸ Haar, "The Obsession of the Other: Ethics and Traumatization," 96.

⁹ Sekar, "Ethical Foundations of Consciousness in Emmanuel Levinas," 25.

¹⁰ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 23.

contention of ethical experience of non-conscious type in the inter-personal relation. Evidently, one has to, therefore, devote oneself in making further enquiry whether Levinas speaks of the epiphany or revelation of the other to me as something that pertains to the 'non-phenomenal' or 'trans-phenomenal' appearance of the other. It leads us to a further query regarding the idea of the appearance of something to my consciousness devoid of the possibility of being understood as a phenomenon. Many of the phenomenologists 'may tend' to hold the position that only 'phenomenon' becomes meaningful within the phenomenological circle. But, this would, of course, not nullify the Levinasian idea of proposing a different possibility 'within the existing' possibility of phenomenology.

Levinas' contention of ethics as the first philosophy does not deal with a set of rules regarding the ethical codes one has to observe. There is no need for providing any ethical rules either. It is because, according to Levinas, ethics originates anarchically from the structural constitution of the subjectivity. Down through the history of philosophy, all the instances of genocide, violence, or any sort of human injury occurred, according to Levinas, on account of the prioritization of the self. The autonomy of the self could exploit, subjugate, or instrumentalize the unique other. The universals and the categories have no significance in the inter-personal ethical discourse between the same and the other. According to Levinas, the other is beyond my cognitive reach and understanding. The other transcends my idea of the other in me.¹¹ My every attempt to understand the other is making the other a *cogitatum* of my reason and consciousness. The other appears to me as a revelation and such an epiphany of the face challenges all the cognitive and rational approaches of the same.¹²

VULNERABILITY OF THE FACE AS AN ETHICALLY NECESSITY

The very appearance of the other to me is as a vulnerable destitute. The 'nakedness' of the other signifies the resistance of the other to the cognitive autonomy of the same. The autonomy of the same is a violence to the other, and it makes the other naked, subjugated and victimized. The face requests the same not to reduce its otherness.¹³ The face of the other in its very nakedness of destitution appeals to the self to relate to the other in a total 'dis-interestedness.' Besides, the face of the other challenges me to be 'dis-interested' in the discourse.¹⁴ The 'dis-interested' relation to the other refers to the withdrawal of every subjective power over the other that makes the other an intentional correlate of my own consciousness by way of participation. Every inter-personal encounter with self interest denies the alterity of the other. The 'interested' relation is a relation

¹¹ Therukaattil, *Becoming Human*, 67.

¹² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 46.

¹³ Peperzak, *To The Other*, 19.

¹⁴ Burggraeve, "Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other," 31.

of self interests emphasizing the autonomy of the self over the other. The self is pre-originally ethical in order to relate to the other in a dis-interested manner. Levinas holds the idea of the primacy of ethics in relation to the idea of the pre-original and anarchical ethical disposition of the self and he describes this contention in terms of the idea of the 'I' as 'an-archic' or 'pre-original.'¹⁵

The other cannot arouse the self to make a 'dis-interested' relation with the other if the self is not structurally tuned for the same. This ethical tuning of the subjectivity is without an origin that makes ethics the first philosophy. The face of the other, hence, questions all the subjective curiosity to appropriate the other under the domain of intellection and ratiocination because the inter-personal ethical relation between the same and the other is a relation of non rational nature. It rules out every possibility of a subject-object correlation. The face of the other requests the self from its utter vulnerability and helplessness: 'thou shall not kill me.'¹⁶ It is a request to the self not to objectify and expose the nudity of the other.¹⁷ The self has every possibility and tendency to make the other as an object. But the other always cries to the self not to use its power over the other. Hence, the cry of the other is a questioning and an ethical resistance¹⁸ to the autonomy of the self. And, if the self uses its power over the other, and makes it an object, there ends the possibility for ethics. Ethics occurs only in the context of an asymmetrical inter-personal relation between the self and the other. The asymmetrical relation signifies the non rational approach of the same to the other, where the other is held as the master.

DERIVING PHENOMENOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE IDEAS OF ENIGMA AND EPIPHANY

The Other is an epiphany and not a phenomenon. The other unceasingly provokes me and resists my faculty with its enigmatic presence. The enigmatic presence of the other intrudes always and obstructs my cognitive approach to make an equality or cognitive familiarity with the other. A phenomenon, in the generic sense of the term, is that which appears to my consciousness. For Husserl, phenomenology refers to the study of conscious experience and consciousness.¹⁹ If one follows the sequence of the Brentannian descriptive psychology, the phenomenon is that which appears to my consciousness and provides me a psychic experience. Brentano justifies the idea of a real object in the empirical world, although it has an 'intentional inexistence' in my psyche. The

¹⁵ Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 170.

¹⁶ Burggraeve, "Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other," 31.

¹⁷ Burggraeve, "Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other," 31.

¹⁸ Davis, *Levinas: An Introduction*, 50.

¹⁹ Thomas and Mathew, "Origin and Development of Phenomenology," 253.

aforementioned contention of Brentano refers to the object of my psychic experience or inner perceptions.²⁰ According to Levinas, the other is beyond the reach of my psychic faculty. Husserl rejects Brentano's concept of the real objects and tries to develop the idea of intentionality as different from that of Brentano. For Husserl, the object that gives me experience – conscious experience, or the object of my experience is the ideal object that does not have any real existence in the empirical world. As we come to the Levinasian idea of the other, the other is neither a phenomenon nor an object that gives me a psychic experience. For Levinas, the other is an absolute revelation beyond the reach of every intentional horizon. The other appears as totally irreducible, separate and unknown to me.²¹ The epiphany of the other is absolutely unknowable to me, to my reason. The irreducibility of the other is considered as the 'non representable' dimension of the epiphany of the other. Levinas states that "in a face the expressed attends its expression, expresses its very expression, and always remains the master of the meaning it delivers."²² The non representability of the epiphany of the other is its resistance to be an object of my reason and my attempt to rationally represent the other by means of thoughts, categories, or concepts.

The other escapes all my approaches of rationality and is not possessed.²³ The justification of the possibility for the other to escape my rational approaches and assimilation is on account of the ethical structure of the subject that can engage into a relation of non rational manner. The subjective structural quality for an ethical encounter with the other that can occur in a non rational manner is a fundamental element that makes ethics as the first philosophy. The ethical structure of the self is 'pre-rationally' or 'non rationally' awaked for an ethical encounter. However, Levinasian idea of the epiphany of the other signifies an elevated position of the other in the discourse. In the inter-personal relation, the other is placed in a higher position vis-à-vis the self. The self is bound to place the other as its own master and ought to consider itself in the position of servitude to the other. Therefore, "height [of the other] is a resistance without powers, a command that can only compel but does not make it inevitable."²⁴

According to Levinas, the possibility of the ethical experience before the awakening of the conscious moment is because of the structural constitution of the self, and the foundational principle for the primacy of ethics in the day-to-day- relation with the other. For Levinas, the self is already in debt for the other.²⁵ The 'already in debt' for the other is to be significantly noted and

²⁰ Brentano, *Descriptive Psychology*, 3.

²¹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 30.

²² Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 55.

²³ Davis, *Levinas: An Introduction*, 32.

²⁴ Dhanaraj, "The Vulnerability of the Face and Our Responsibility," 66.

²⁵ Burggraeve, *Proximity With the Other*, 67.

understood as the 'originless' ethical awakening of the self to the other. But it is very much open to the discussion for the phenomenologists who belong to the Western philosophical tradition that claims the supremacy of subjectivity, reason, and freedom. The quality of any intentional and ontological approach to the other bears the signature of an autonomous subject.

The autonomous self encounters the other either in the manner of a noetic-noematic relation or in the manner of relating to one of the same category of a 'genus' of being – a relation pertains to a totalitarian attitude. But, for Levinas, the self is capable of encountering the other in a non rational, non intentional, and non ontological manner. The pre-originality of the ethical self, therefore, questions and controls every subjective inclination for objectifying and categorizing the other. The ethical predicament of the self, hence, is a pre-original structural disposition of the self that makes ethics as the first philosophy. The ethical disposition of the self enables the self to welcome the other in a non cognitive manner, without reducing the otherness of the other, or without looking for the factual, historical, and natural background of the other. Besides, the self welcomes the revelations of the other through the face of the other or as the other who is standing before me as my master in the manner that resists all my powers. The other as the master, hence, provokes and demands justice from me.

DISCOURSE AND ITS NON RATIONAL INFINITY

The possibility for placing the self at the position of servitude, and the other as the master is possible only because of the ethical structure of the same. It is also legitimate and adequate to consider the ethical 'openness' of the subjectivity for an asymmetrical inter-personal relation with the infinitely strange other.²⁶ Grounded on the ethical openness of the self, the other occupies a privileged position in the phenomenological thought of Levinas. The inter-personal discourse produces an experience of responsibility, and this ethical experience of responsibility in the subjectivity is possible only in the discourse. Discourse is the inter-personal relation between the self and the other of a non cognitive manner. Levinas' ideas of ethics communicate the nucleus of the discourse as the non rational, inter-personal, and asymmetrical encounter between me and the other.

The other demands a relation of non rational nature because of the infinity of the other that is uncontainable by the self. The idea of discourse must, therefore, have a non rational, an inter-personal relational, and an asymmetrical dimension. The idea of the infinity of the other is the non containable dimension of the other by the self. The other always escapes the power of the

²⁵ Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 71-72.

²⁶ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 194.

subject.²⁷ It is a demand of the other to the self not to reduce the otherness of the other. The other from its 'height' reveals to the self and questions the freedom of the self. The infinity of the other is the height of the other vis-a-vis the self in the discourse. Discourse and ethics become possible only because of the ethical structure of the self, and the infinity or the height of the other is maintained in a discourse since the subjectivity is structurally capable for encountering the other with the other's infinity.

The structural capacity or the ethical attunement of the self to consider or encounter the other as superior or privileged than the self originates from the subjectivity itself. The ethical subject or the self is capable for such an asymmetrical inter-personal relation. It is the ethical condition of the self that enables the self to respond to the other's ethical resistance to be grasped.²⁸ The revelation of the face puts me in question and limits my freedom. The face interrupts my world and commands me, limits me, and prepares me to be conducive for the inter-personal discourse. The command of the other comes from the absolute alterity of the other.²⁹ This command makes me responsible for everything that I do. The nature of the ethical resistance of the other is its immeasurability that is beyond my cognitive faculty. The aforementioned ethical resistance of the other signifies a subjective adaptability so that the resistance be recognized and responded responsibly.

If my subjectivity has been incapable for a recognition of the ethical resistance of the other, there would not have originated an emphasis of the asymmetrical inter-personal encounter between the self and the other in the philosophy of Levinas. It is an appearance in the manner of a revelation or epiphany. The domain of revelation or epiphany is beyond the reach of cognition and intellection. Revelation preserves the dimension of the height of the agent of revelation. In other words, the epiphany signifies the subjective capability of recognizing *the epiphany as an epiphany*, which goes back to the subjective structural dimension itself. It leads to a further query: what is that in the self that enables the self to recognize the epiphany of the other as an epiphany? How does the self become capable of transcending egocentrism? These questions will converge into the contention of the structural disposition of the self to recognize, welcome, and safeguard the infinity or transcendence of the other in the discourse.

IN FAVOUR OF AN ETHICAL PRESUPPOSITION FOR DIALOGUE

The self or the subject itself is capable of 'putting itself in question' or its egocentrism.³⁰ The self is capable of questioning its own egocentrism for the sake of an asymmetrical and inter-personal

²⁷ Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 8.

²⁸ Levinas, *Totality and infinity*, 197.

²⁹ Davis, *Levinas: An Introduction*, 50.

³⁰ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 195.

relation that makes the primacy of ethics as justifiable in reference to the anarchical ethical structure of the self. It is acceptable, therefore, to contend that the inter-personal relation is resident in the epiphany of the face.³¹ But, is it enough to consider the discourse as possible only because of the epiphany of the face of the other? If the self is not disposed to welcome the epiphany of the face, then what happens to the epiphany of the face? Naturally, the epiphany of the face remains unaddressed by the self. Ethics resides, therefore, both in the epiphany of the face as well as in the ethical structure of the subjectivity that addresses and welcomes the voice or the revelation of the face. However, it is very pertinent to contend that the face makes the other visible to me through the revelation.³²

According to Levinas, the epiphany of the face itself is a language of the other³³ that is vital for the discourse. Language, normally, presupposes a speaker. If the speaker is the other then who is the listener for the meaningfulness of the language or the utterance? Who is the one whom the language is spoken to? A genuine investigation into the Levinasian thought signifies that language is 'not a presuppositionless' utterance of the face of the other. Language is the ethical language, or the language that invites me for ethics. The language presupposes the listener – the self and invites the self to an ethical discourse and experience. For ethics, as we have mentioned previously, the mere appearance of the other is not sufficient: ethics, at the same time, presumes the presence of a responsible subject that considers, respects, and welcomes the other as revealing from a 'height.' The asymmetrical inter-personal relation or the ethical relation is, hence, dependent upon at least two factors – the ethical structure of the self and the epiphany of the face. The aforementioned both factors are inevitable for ethics and make ethics as the first philosophy.

Thinkers may tend to consider Levinas as a philosopher who highlighted/prioritized the other at the expense of the self. But, the ethical structure of the self is a fundamental and inevitable element for the possibility of ethics in the Levinasian thought. The inter-personal dialogue creates an ethical experience or an experience of responsibility in the self. The idea of the pre-originality of the subjectivity is a radical idea in the Levinasian contention of ethics as the first wisdom. The epiphany of the face as language presupposes at least two significant implications: they are the ethical self and the non comprehensible dimension of the language of the other that exceeds the bounds of reason and being.³⁴ The face requires the self for ethics and to be responsible for the other. The other does not reveal as an empirical sensation to the self. Its revelation exceeds all the

³¹ Therukaattil, *Becoming Human*, 68.

³² Burggraeve, "Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other, 29.

³³ Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 55.

³⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 50.

limits of the empirical dimension and a possible apprehension as there is a "height"³⁵ in the face of the other.

The face presupposes the receiver of the revelation – the self and it commands the self to be responsible and to be accountable for the other. The idea of the 'command' cannot be understood in the ordinary sense of the term. It is a command to the self that invites an ethical gaze at the other.³⁶ Normally, a command is given from the authority to an inferior agent. The phenomenological implication of the 'ethical command' of the other is analogous. Because it is meaningful to say that the other as the master commands to the self. But the self has every chance and capacity to evade the command or ignore this command. The other, therefore, has to request the self to consider it as the master. Therefore, it is quite legitimate to contend that the reverence given by self to the other is a 'sign of benevolence' of the self. Besides, the command of the other is both a 'command and a request' by the other. This ethical command signifies both the height and the vulnerability of the other.

CONCLUSION

Our investigation states that the inter-personal dialogue between the same and the other is an essential concept in the philosophy of Levinas, which is grounded in ones' responsibility for the other. The dialogue is ethically structured and it protects the dignity and infinity of the other by the self. The inter-personal dialogue of discourse is a possibility before the beginning of any time or before the awakening of my freedom and consciousness. It is because my 'self' is structurally attuned for taking the burden of the other. The other is already present in the self so that the self can respond to the other. The 'already present' other in the self is the ethical structure of the subjectivity. The possibility and capacity to dialogue with the other is the ethical vocation of the self. The pre-original ethical mandate of the self is an inescapable responsibility and a vocation of the self. The ethical structure of the self prepares a platform for the inter-personal dialogue between the self and the other. The Levinasian contention of ethics as the first philosophy has been a revolutionary position as well as critique of the autonomous tradition of Western philosophy, which held metaphysics as the first philosophy. However, Levinas' argument in reference to the ethical structure and the pre-original ethical 'attunement' of the self for bearing responsibility for the other stands undeniable, although questionable.

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³⁶ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 85.

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