Politics, Feminism and Violence in Levinas's Political Philosophy

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Abstract

One basic fundamental problem associated with Levinas's ethical metaphysics or moral phenomenology is that his political theory seems to be too implicit rather than being explicit. Levinas is not just a theorist of ethics and metaphysics, but he is also a political theorist. Levinas has dealt with many political issues such as freedom, justice, feminism, law and order, violence, terrorism, war and terror, history and genocide. Levinas's political theory as far as the state is concerned is a very robust one that could be given scholarly attention. This paper unravels Levinas's political theory as it affects our contemporary world today. This paper concludes that Levinas's political theory reflects on contemporary ideological issues such as conflict or violence, history, freedom, law, justice and order, global ethics of peace, the freedom of the state, inter-subjective freedom, feminism and genocide or war and terror. Levinas's political theory is very robust and that difference is not really negative par se but it is part and parcel of our humanity.

Keywords: Violence, Feminism, Freedom, Political theory, the State, Ethics.

1.1 Introduction

This theoretical discourse titled politics, feminism and violence in Levinas's political theory presupposes the misguided use of the term "politics". Politics is all about resolving the conflicts of interest. Politics is undermined by violence or force. John Hoffman and Paul Graham (2009) define politics as a public process that involves resolving conflicts of interest. Politics is undermined by force and is inherent at every level in all societies (Hoffman and Graham, 2009, 500). According to Levinas cited by Fred Alford, politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself (Alford, 2007, 109-110). This is exactly what captured or qualified Levinas to be a political theorist. Levinas as a theorist of otherness and difference could be referred to as a political theorist of difference. Scholars are quick to define the term "difference" as a negative connotation. Difference, is however, part and parcel of our humanity. Levinas's work is riddled with so much abstract and evocative thinking. Levinas's evocative writing could be described as "the language of prophecy". Levinas as an ethical, metaphysical and a political thinker is described as a post-modernist, deconstructionist and pro-feminist. Levinas is a critic of totality and is said to eliminate otherness for the sake of the self (same). Levinas's moral and political theory elucidates an

existential encounter with the face of the other in an ethical immediacy. The other's face, says Levinas, is naked and vulnerable (Alford, 110). The result of our existential, social, ethical and political encounter is an experience of unmediated otherness. The other does not just have an encounter with the self but disrupts the order of the self"s world. Levinas's political theory is similar with Rousseau's critique of private property which leads to the usurpation of our enchanted world. Levinas's political theory demands the need for mutual dependence irrespective of tribe, sex, gender, race, colour, religion or language (Alford, 111). In his "Otherwise than Being", Levinas believes that there is a totality that encompasses self and other. Levinas is quite perchant about violence or if you like terrorism or war and terror. Violence as a state of subjectivity places our humanity in a state of "natural" narcissism. Levinas agrees with Hobbes in his state of nature with the narcissistic –nature of man with the rest of the world. Levinas would agree with Hobbes and Rousseau in their conception of the state of nature to fulfill his dreams and aspirations. No man is an Island. We need others to survive. One is always indebted to the other. The state of nature as furthered by Hobbes and Rousseau reflect a reality that is ethical, political, conventional and a-historical. Levinas's ethical experience is that of exteriority. Exteriority exposes our being to the dimension of the unknowable, infinity or an untheorisable height (Fleurdelitz, 2007, 52). Levinas's conception of exteriority always represents an opening to infinity. Levinas's intellectual project is "crystallized through discourse on violence and suffering Levinas's ethical and political theory calls for the need of an "infinite responsibility". Levinas sees war as form of annihilation (Fleurdelitz, 52-53).

1.2 Understanding Levinas's Transcendental Subjectivity and the Limits of Political Theory

Levinas's conception of political theory has been so controversial and idiosyncratic. The term "politics" for instance, has a far wider meaning than just the idea of the state. Hoffman and Graham (2009) believe that by political theory we do not mean simply the study of the state, for politics is far wider than the state. Accordingly, Hoffman and Graham posit that politics is not all about the activities of the state but it is about conflict, and conflict occurs at every level of society. Politics is about conflict and its resolution, and resolving conflicts of interest occurs in all societies, at all levels (Hoffman and Graham, xxvii). Levinas's political theory talks about plethora of contemporary issues such as the politics of being – the self and the other, state, politics, ethics history, violence, terrorism, war and terror, genocide, feminism, freedom, society, law, religion, metaphysics and epistemology. Levinas's political theory is simply empirical and normative. Theory is either empirical or it is normative (Hoffman and Graham, xxviii). Levinas's political theory talks about the idea of difference. The idea of difference makes the idea of politics more explicit. Difference is part and parcel of our humanity. The idea of difference has been given a pejorative and

a negative assumption. Accordingly, Hoffman and Graham iterate further to say that politics arises from the fact that we all have different interests and ideas –and the more explicit the difference between us is, the more explicit the politics. It therefore, follows that a political concept is always controversial and it cannot command general agreement (Hoffman and Graham, xxxi). Levinas's political theory is predicated on the state. The question of what the state is, is linked to the question of when the state emerges historically. Levinas opines that the state is governed by laws and the state serves as an instrument of curtailing human freedom. In one of Levinas's quotes "freedom is not just the absence of constraint but obedience to laws" of society. The ethical system of freedom based on rightness or wrongness is the normative basis of the state. Levinas believes in the powers of laws in the political state. Laws confirmed customs and social values. They were not made by a particular body that represented citizens and expressed a united "will (Hoffman and Graham, 13). Levinas's political theory posits that the state is linked to force (Hoffman and Graham, 15). The state is a rational agent. It is an instrument of law and order in a well ordered society. Levinas's political theory reflects what Iain Mackenzie calls a "politics of common purpose", and that to think about politics is to become part of a conversation that has been ongoing for over 2000 years (Mackenzie, 2009, 1). Mackenzie asserts that while philosophizing about politics, means thinking beyond the everyday to and fro of political opinion, it is also true to say that political philosophy must always keep its feet firmly planted on the ground of contemporary issues, movements and debates. In some sense, it is this connection with unfolding events and the desire to understand the constantly shifting sands of our collective life that puts the politics into political philosophy (Mackenzie, 2).

Furthermore, Levinas's political theory, however, talks about a range of contemporary issues such as feminism and violence. Feminism is simply a social movement that talks about gender equality and sexual difference. The issue of sexual difference has become a major contemporary political issue. Mackenzie (2009) observes that Judith Butler's ground breaking work on the social construction of sexual difference, contemporary political philosophy is alive and well and grappling with new ways of thinking about classic problems, with a range of newly identified problems and with innovative theoretical paradigm as well. Political philosophy, in short, is a negotiation between the (often competing) demands to philosophize about political life and to politicize those philosophical claims themselves ((Mackenzie, 3). Levinas's political theory reflects on the human dimension of politics (Mackenzie, 4). Levinas's political theory is in tandem with the Mackenziean position that political activity, it would appear, is a particular way of reaching agreement where disagreement exists and impact on other people. It implies that those involved even our two desert islanders are not just looking to satisfy their immediate

interests, but also engaged in a process that aims to establish a set of norms and standards that will help to resolve future disputes. Levinas's political theory is not all about conflict of interests or the politics of difference; it is all about the game of mutually cooperative affairs characterized by inter-subjective freedom of the self and the other. Put more differently, politics is not all about conflict and its resolution because this has always given the idea of politics a negative assumption or connotation. Iain Mackenzie, however, opines that perhaps, politics is really a much more cooperative affair (Mackenzie, 4-5).

Iain Mackenzie observes that we must be careful of assuming too quickly that politics has the resolution of conflict as its raison'd'etre. Perhaps, politics is really a much more cooperative affair, so that political activity is first and foremost a way of binding together groups of people with common interests? Rather than pre-suppose disagreements and conflict, it may be that politics is being thought of as the pursuit of the common good (Mackenzie, 9). Levinas's ethical and political theories aims at the idea of the common good in normative human society. Levinas's political theory aims at politics as a form of human activity or social interaction or ethical relation that is governed by norms and values. Accordingly, Mackenzie (2009) believes that: Politics is a form of human activity that results in, and/or expresses, norm-governed human interaction. Political philosophy is the attempt to understand the nature and value of such norm-governed interaction. In social and political theory, a norm is a standard of behaviour or appropriate conduct. It is a principle that exerts a certain– authority over those to whom it applies so that it serves to regulate their activity. Norms, of course, are everywhere in our personal, social, economic and political lives. Although, we are not always conscious of them, we soon become aware of their power to regulate behaviour if we break one (Mackenzie, 9-10). None-the-less, political theory is often defined as an explicitly normative discipline, its task being to explicate and evaluate the norms governing our interaction (Mackenzie, 12-13). Levinas's political theory is normative political thinking or theory:

> *What we call, in short, normative political philosophy is the evaluation of the standards embedded within our norm – governed behaviour, an evaluation that assesses whether or not these are the right standards for personal and collective life. It is this view of political philosophy that informs debate about the nature of equality, liberty, justice, sovereignty, and many other core normative concepts. For example, we may hope to base our collective lives on standards that embody our freedom and equality* (Mackenzie, 13).

Normative political philosophy presupposes the broader domain of moral and ethical philosophy. Political philosophy is an applied ethical philosophy. Iain Mackenzie (2009)

for instance, observes that while normative political philosophy has a very close relationship to legal theory, we can also see that (typically) normative political philosophers understand their work as a particular form of endeavour within the broader domain of moral and ethical philosophy. Political philosophy is tasked with providing morally justified norms that should be embedded within our political institutions and constitutions (Mackenzie, 13). Mackenzie, however, argued that:

> *Yet the emphasis on the norms that govern our social interactions does not lead only to the question of whether such norms are morally justified. For many political philosophers, norms must be understood not from a moral point of view but as features of our social life that condition us into acting „normally". In other words, a norm is simply a way of imposing on everyone the dominant view of what only some regard as normal behaviour. Put like this, the norms expressed through the social, political and legal frameworks of a country may be techniques of control, first and foremost. Rather than being means to ensure a legitimate political order, they may be primarily a way of ensuring order so that the legitimacy they (allegedly) receive from moral philosophy may simply be a cover for the social order that they maintain* (Mackenzie, 14).

Accordingly, Iain Mackenzie pinpoints from the Marxian tradition of political thought that norms are part of a broader ideological framework that distort reality in the service of underlying economic interests (Mackenzie, 15). According to the Mackenzieaan tradition, norms is simply the ongoing compromise reached by political participants of different ideological persuasions. Ideologies are the lenses through which we view the political world, be it liberal, conservative, democratic, republican, Marxist, feminist, or whatever (Mackenzie, 15-16). Levinas's political theory has a much more global perspective of politics. Politics involves sometimes momentous redefinitions of what actually counts as a political issue. Levinas's political theory has a feminist stance. Mackenzie (2009) believes that:

> *Women, for example, have had to redefine what is meant by politics in order to gain access to this domain for themselves, and also so that issues pertinent to their lives can be treated as worthy of being included within the realm of norm-governed behaviour. What we think of as „the political world", in short, has undergone, and will no doubt continue to undergo, transformative moments where previously non-political issues become politicized as individuals and groups expose the effects of power upon their lives* (Mackenzie, 18).

Feminist interventions in the political world have brought to light the fact that we are often very unaware of the norms that govern our behaviour. To draw an analogy with language, we might say that the political world is littered with dead norms in the way that our everyday language use is littered with dead metaphors (Mackenzie, 18-19). The above negative assumption of language characterized by dead metaphors‟ was also observed by Levinas's moral phenomenology. Levinas's moral phenomenology goes beyond subjectivity or ethical subjectivity but it also reflects on political philosophy. Political philosophy is broader and deeper than we may imagine (Mackenzie, 19-20). Levinas's political theory is predicated on inter-subjectivity and the politics of recognition. Feminism as a social movement is quite pronounced in Levinas's political theory. As observed by Martin Cohen:

> *Mary Wollstonecraft's book "A vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) offered a radical personal narrative by pushing forward "women's political importance". Feminists, for example, demonstrated how gender bias has infiltrated the realm of philosophy as a socio-political movement. The idea of sex as biological and gender issue is construed and constructed socially, culturally and politically. Gender issue has become a contingent issue which has permeated sexual relationship within cultural traditions. Feminist movement as a social movement has become a unique part of philosophy that guarantees the contemporary theoretical and political intervention as a unique global project for the liberalism of women and society as such* (Cohen, 2008, 132).

From the Levinasian tradition of the political and moral point of view women should be seen as the opposite other. Our philosophical view in this contemporary ideological political standpoint, is that women ought not to be judged from their biological or physiological differences, but in terms of equality of opportunity. The centrality of feminism as a social movement as far as gender bias is concerned is a political and economic struggle against the oppression of women (Cohen, 132-133). Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) furthers the feminist theoretical project that men and women are made not born. She draws a critical distinction between sex and gender as furthered by Freud. The feminist movement as a social movement brings about feminist criticisms of ideological constructs of phallocentrism and patriarchy. Phallocentrism refers to male dominance in the history of production, reproduction and social formations. The concepts of man and woman are essentialized ideas that do not reflect the exclusive domain of truth. Feminism, itself has also become a mode of oppression. Feminism has formidable diversity which limits unity. The contemporary debate of feminism as a socio-political movement has been

so controversial and has had some kind of unity out of this formidable diversity (Hoffman and Graham, 314-315). Hoffman and Graham (2009) further observed that:

> *Feminism as an ideology has always been highly controversial. It asks such questions as: do women have too much or too little power? It is not only controversial as far as traditional defenders of the status quo are concerned. Some women feel that they are in favour of equality with men, but do not like the idea of feminism. It has been said that we live in a post-feminist age and some contend that the main goals of feminism have been realized, so that it is quite unnecessary for feminists to continue their argument against male domination. Feminism, however, is also controversial in the sense that different feminists mean different things by the term. There are different varieties that seem to have little in common. Different feminists try to suggest a way of extracting some kind of unity out of this formidable diversity* (Hoffman and Graham, 315).

Hoffman and Graham claim that feminism is not an extension of another ideology. It is concerned with the interest of women, and a new set of words needs to be developed to reflect the – separateness of women. Feminism represents as total a break as possible with male – constructed society. Politics is not simply about the law and state as liberals think, it is about human activity in general and the celebrated slogan – the personal is political (Hoffman and Graham, 321). Moreover, the interpersonal relation of human activity is a political and an ethical one. Hoffman and Graham assert that feminists' dynamism and entrepreneurial flair of women should be both rewarded and acknowledged but to regard feminism as a class question is unhelpful and harrowing. As observed by Hoffman and Graham, feminism as the emancipation of women is doubly problematic. First, because emancipation sounds as though at some privileged point in time women will finally be free and autonomous, and second, because the very term „woman" implies that what unites women is more important than what divides them. Postmodern feminism leads to a kind of academic conservatism that makes emancipating politics impossible (Hoffman and Graham, 334-335). These scholars asked one very pertinent fundamental question:

> *Is feminism still relevant in today's world? They conclude that it could be argued that the emphasis upon different strands of feminism is itself counter-productive. If feminism is defined broadly as the emancipation of women, then it becomes possible to see each of the different feminism making a positive contribution to the development of feminism overall while betraying a certain one – sidedness which needs to be discarded. Feminism can only be constructed as a visible and dynamic theory through multiple feminisms* (Hoffman and Graham, 326).

According to Christina Hoff Sommers, feminism offers a tried and true road map to equality and freedom (Cristina, 2008, 53-64). Levinas's political theory reflects the foundation of ethics as the highest good in the sense of the ethical ideal – the ideally best kind of person (Wood, 2005, 9-10). Feminism arises from a "supposed promotion of a collective identity for women based on shared victim status (Convery, 2005, 1-10).

1.3 Levinas on Violence

Levinas regards the other as that mysterious unexplained. Something that lies outside and defines the limits of the known, that which is exterior and foreign. Our worldly preoccupations offer a partial alleviation of our existential gravity, but it is only ethics or the relations to the other, absolutely other, that can fully lift this burden. Levinas's ethical metaphysics stresses the primacy and privilege of the other and our unlimited responsibility towards that other. Levinas's ethical and political theory reflects social and existential situatedness or the internal regulatory principle of social interaction. Taking responsibility for the other remains the cornerstone of ethics (Hofmeyr, 2005, 11-12). Levinas believes that: Ethics and politics are inter-connected or interdependent. Politics, then, only becomes possible if ethics succeeds. As politics concerns the social, it cannot be about singular solitary subjects. Levinas makes no bones about his distrust of politics. He inverts the hierarchy and maintains that it is not politics that should qualify ethics, but ethic should always keep politics in check. Ethics is the condition of possibility for politics (Hofmeyr, 17-18). According to Levinas (Totality and Infinity) cited by Hofmeyr (2005): politics is opposed to morality, as philosophy to naiveté (TI, 21/xi). He maintains that violence is inherent to all forms of politics that ignore the other and destroys the identity of the same by making them carry out actions that destroy every possibility for action. Levinas defends a pre-or trans-political ethics rooted in the primordial relationship between human beings. It is not that all forms of politics are necessarily bad, for politics, often serve to ensure each individual's rights, but politics is fallible. Politics protects against the ultimate form of violence, that is, against war, through temporary peace agreement, through negotiation and precarious measures that can be overturned at any time (Hofmeyr, 18-19). Hofmeyr (2005) concludes that for the peace aimed at by politics is based on a compromise of interested forces within an encompassing totality under the auspices of universal reason. Politics means that subjectivity is understood solely as other-invoked.

Moreover, the self is figured as part of the socio-political world shared with others. Ethics is the stylization of one's conduct (Hofmeyr, 19-20). According to Fleurdelitz, despite his final call for peace and the wisdom of love, Emmanuel Levinas inevitably spoke of violence

and perhaps even more of it. His call for infinite responsibility is actually crystallized through discourse on violence and suffering (Fleurdelitz, 52-53). Violence, at least as a concept, poses itself as a concept and as a significant presence to Levinas's plantilla while it reaches unexployed dimensions that await phenomenology and vital thought. As a part of his ethical proposal, understanding violence becomes important so that the self may go beyond it while reaching the other. Violence and terrorism at the local, national and trans-national (international) levels has assumed an alarming or a horrifying proportion. For Fleudelitz (2007) this has now been a theoretical concern for political philosophers and political theorists such as Emmanuel Levinas. According to the Levinasian tradition, violence was part of the human condition when Levinas was brewing his intellectual project. The mind grew from 1920s to 1960s which historically resulted in countless conflicts among societies and/ or states coming from different political inclinations and offending persons and even race (Fleurdelitz, 53).

Furthermore, succinct and vivid, he describes war as a form of annihilation that destroys not just the other, but also sameness (i.e., the relation the self builds with the other), and even the subjectivity of the self who wages it. Fleurdelitz candidly admits that political and ethical redemption in as much as they are in human forms cannot bring back to his primordial and original relation with being (Fleurdelitz, 54). Accordingly, Fleurdelitz holds that war is a violent and permanent disruption of man making his own project. Fleurdelitz posits further that Levinas's sensitivity to violence both in theory and human affairs is brought by the overall temperament of his (historical) dwelling, the experience of war and so the subjective taste of such disruption (Fleurdelitz, 53-54). Fleurdelitz asserts that: The radical nature of Levinas's critique of Western philosophy was brought to the foreground in his heavy ontological bearing of thinking. Emerging from the phenomenological training of Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas is definitely aware of the heavy ontological bearing of thinking. Levinas recognizes that in order to see an ethical relation that goes beyond ontology, violence must be settled as a plausible reason for responsibility. The radicality of the Levinasian proposal rests on the radical nature of his critique of Western philosophy (Fleurdelitz, 53-54).

Fleurdelitz claims that violence is at the centre of the Levinasian critique. Violence can still be present even in the act of generosity and responsibility; responsibility can still be a plausible dwelling of violence. Fleurdelitz (2007) observes that:

Levinas is like telling us that war has its way of altering how man builds himself. Levinas"s common approach to violence is more descriptive than definitive. Levinas speaks of violence as a reduction or actual tyranny, an epistemic dissection or a real bloody genocide.

Violence is viewed as a condition for totality and a negation of infinity. It absolutizes being through a cruel negation of its possibilities. Violence is a dictatorial and stagnating situation that prevents the disruption of totality. As a consequence, violence brings forth suffering which is taken not only as a form of passivity, but as a negation-a form of unmeaning (Fleurdelitz, 54-55). Violence brings about the impasse of life and meaning-bearing an absurd pain as its affective outburst. Levinas believes that violence brings about suffering and suffering is brought by another who is, more often than not, intentional or intending. Levinas speculates that suffering is obviously unwanted (Fleurdelitz, 56). Levinas admits an ethical dilemma in the treatment of an executioner. According to Levinas (Useless Suffering, Entre Nous, 101), cited by Fleurdelitz:

> *To think suffering in an inter-human perspective does not amount to seeing it in the co-existence of a multiplicity of consciousness, or in a social determinism, accompanied by a simple knowledge that people in society can have of their proximity or of their common destiny. The inter-human perspective can subsist, but can also be lost in the political order of the city where law establishes mutual obligations between citizens. The inter-human is also in the recourse that people have to one another for help, before the astonishing alterity of the other has been banalized or dimmed down to a simple exchange of courtesies that has become established as an interpersonal commerce of customs* (Fleurdelitz, 58).

The experience of violence in traditional epistemology can be taken on two ends; the part of the knower (self) and the part of the known (other). We do not think for thoughts we think for being and the other is somebody exterior to being that must be understood while remaining exterior. Levinas's notion of inter-human relationship presupposes inter-subjective existential encounter or discourse ethics. For Fleurdelitz, discourse comes through speech, but speech is meant not just as an exchange of thoughtful words but as an authentic human experience. Violence comes through an existential void caused either by ontological deprivation or suspension. Levinas claims that the paradoxical character and the unceasing monotony of violence brings not only anguish; but horror (Fleurdelitz, 59-60). Levinas's ethical-existential encounter brings to the foreground face to face relationship. Accordingly, Fleurdelitz, however, further argues that:

The face is capable of expressing primordial sings due to its very uprightness, defenseless and naked. Where there is nakedness in the face, there is also destitution. This now shows how vulnerable the face of the other is. And though, this vulnerability, the self may be induced to take advantage, inviting the self to an act of violence. Levinasian treatment of

violence actually talks about murder. Levinas affectively heightens this by talking about murder (Fleurdelitz, 61-62).

As the most banal incident of human history and the total negation of a being, murder does not care about the force that the other may possess as part of the world and murder on the larger scale, where else would Levinas direct his readers but to his emotionally driven description of the Nazi-genocide? The highest criterion of ethics is responsibility. And consequently the ability to respond is the meaning of the term responsibility (i.e., response-ability) to use the words of Gabriel Marcel. Levinas seemingly alludes to a notion of Gabriel Marcel who said that responsibility is the human persons's ability to respond. Responsibility is incumbent on the self exclusively, that which can never be refused (Fleurdelitz, 63-64). Accordingly, Fleurdelitz posits that: We are all responsible for all men before all. Responsibility therefore is not only for a single other, but for every other that exists through the other. Levinas now brings into surface his notion of justice. Beyond the face to face is a world of citizens, a greater number of others. Consequently, this implies the necessity to having institutions and states, who will be the arbiters in every self's ethical endeavour that are directed to a larger scale. However, one must be cautious because violence may be (and, for sometimes, is inevitably) used in the exercise of justice. Levinas himself admits the existence of violence in the fulfillment of justice in his ethical thought. For Zygmunt Bauman (1997:53-54), cited by Fleurdelitz, ethical problems emerge because of Levinas's shortsightedness to look into the expanded human capacities that in turn possess greater consciousness. Consequently, violence necessarily proceeds from the ethical encounter and response, on the other hand, is a by-product of being held hostage (Bauman, 1997, 66-67). According to Levinas cited by Bauman, justice establishes the state (Bauman, 68). However, the Levinasian paradigm can truly respond to its altruistic servitude (Yang, 2008, 1-2). Levinas sees goodness as transcendence and the political authority must hold on to goodness (Yang, 3-4).

1.4 Evaluation

Levinas's phenomenology of politics is actually hinged on ethical metaphysics. Levinas's phenomenological ethics presupposes his political theory. The major themes in Levinas's political thought namely history, violence, freedom, ethics, law, justice, politics and religion are quite apt and fundamental to human existential situation. Violence can only disrupt our humanity. Violence breeds violence. Violence has dangerous and disastrous consequences. Violence can only proceed from the ethical encounter and responses of human existential relation. Violence only brings about suffering and human suffering is brought by another human person. Levinas agrees that justice is the only form and substance which establishes the state. Human history has been characterized by a total

negation of our Beingness. Throughout human history we have virtually loss every sense of our humanity. Human intellect has failed us. Technplogy has created more havoc than good to our humanity. According to the Levinasian perspective politics and ethics are inter-related or interconnected. Levinas's work is difficult to understand and it takes a bird's eye view to unravel his theoretical discourse. Levinas's view on politics is idiosyncratic and apologetic. Levinas's moral and political philosophy is actually anchored on ethical relationship or inter-subjectivity or the intersubjective recognition of persons. Difference has been given a negative assumption but it is part and parcel of our humanity. One fundamental element of Levinas's phenomenological ethics and political theory is the critical understanding of dialogue. Levinas's conceptualizations of ethics and politics reveal the sense of ethical sensitivity and rational dialogue. The concept of dialogue requires the need for contact and critical understanding. Levinas's conceptualization of politics and ethics require the need for normative peace and communicative dialogue. Peace means the absence of conflict or war. What disrupts normative peace in human contemporary society is the prevalence of injustice. Injustice occurs as a result of inequalities among human beings in society.

Levinas's phenomenological ethics and political theory envisages his reflective response to the iconic horrors of modern life exemplified by the holocaust; his rejection of totalizing political and cultural conceptions of ourselves that he considered to be a source of these catastrophes. Levinas's phenomenological ethics and his political theory reflect the radical analysis of otherness and face of human beings (Yang, 4). The ethical questions of human value lie at the heart of our conception of reality or humanity. Neither politics nor moral phenomenology reflects on an intelligible goal rather than a beckoning mirage that leads us only to confusion. Politics, for instance, does not only aim at resolving the conflicts of interest but it requires dialogue. According to the Aristotelian political and moral compass:

> *Dialogue is the best way to conserve the important contribution that conflicting views can make to complex and many-sided philosophical truth. Aristotle aimed at the truth and sought to use philosophical argument (dialogue) to reconcile different views in order to achieve an objective account of reality rather than as a compromise removing tensions among disputants without regard to truth. Levinas's fundamental theme of the priority of the other over the self in ethics, metaphysics and the rest of his philosophy such as law, politics, feminism and religion represents a global perspective of the sources of normative justification of society. Levinas offers an appreciation of liberal values that is grounded in religion, ethics, politics and feminism vis-à-vis his theoretical orientation of violence as the synonym of force* (Silvano, 2006, 41-42).

Levinas's moral metaphysics is a phenomenological analyses and his emphasis on the supremacy of ethics over ontology is existential, humanistic and religious. As observed by Silvano Petrosino (2006), Levinas and his philosophy of "Otherwise than Being"reflects a critique of totality, a detachment from metaphysical violence, the exaltation of the difference of the other and, therefore, the evasion from being. Ethics has an independent and preliminary range. In Levinas's writings, ethics does not only have to do with man and human, as ethical concerns, but more essentially, with the deepest nature of reality and therefore of reality as such (Reynolds, 2001, 31-32). Levinas's phenomenological style of moral metaphysics and political theory priorities the other over the self. For Jack Reynolds, the other is that which by definition must elude any attempt to grasp it. Levinas's ethic presumes a rationalistic discourse of intention, good conscience and goodwill (Reynolds, 38). Reynolds, however, posited that Levinas's political significance reflects a more relational and phenomenological analysis or – implications of communal society characterized by personhood and identity. Levinasian account of the radical singularity involves in the face to face confrontation. Levinas's political theory reflects a political significance that aimed at the denial of fundamentals of all sorts (Reynolds, 38-39). The condition of relating to the other recognizes the community to be seen as an organized whole. Levinas's political theory aims at the good rather than "being" and it is holistic and spiritual orientation toward moral value and human identity. Accordingly, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (2006) conclude that Levinas's abiding concern was the primacy of the ethical relation to the other person and his central thesis was that ethics is first philosophy. His work has also had a profound impact on a numbers of fields out philosophy such as theology, Jewish Studies, Literature and Cultural theory, psychotherapy, sociology, political theory, international relations theory and critical legal theory (Critchley and Bernasconi 2006, xi). Levinas's political theory reflects on contemporary ideological issues such as conflict or violence, history, freedom, law, justice and order, global ethics of peace, the freedom of the state, inter-subjective freedom, feminism and genocide or war and terror. Levinas's political theory is implicit rather than being explicit. Levinas's political theory is very robust and that difference does not really entail a negative assumption parse but it is part and parcel of our human existential, socio-political and economic relations. For Gottlieb Roger (1994), ethics is traumatization (Gottlieb, 1994, 9-10).

1.5 Concluding Remarks

Levinas's political philosophy is deeply rooted in his ethical metaphysics. His theoretical reconstruction showcases the concern for the other. Levinas's ethical metaphysics and political theory reflects the social and existential situatedness or the internal regulatory principles of ethics. Ethics is deeply rooted in human moral responsibility. Levinas posited

that ethics and politics are interwoven. Levinas's ethical metaphysics stresses the primacy of the other and our unlimited responsibility towards the other. Levinas's ethical metaphysics, phenomenological ethics and political theory envisages his reflective response to the iconic horrors of our modern life exemplified by the holocaust. This paper, therefore, concludes that Levinas's political theory reflects on contemporary ideological issues such as conflict or violence, history, freedom, law, justice and order, global ethics of peace, the freedom of the state, inter-subjective freedom, feminism and genocide or war, terror and terrorism. Levinas's political theory is very robust and that difference is not really negative par se but it is part and parcel of our humanity.

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