

EMMANUEL LEVINAS'S PERSONALIST PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIAN PACIFISM: TOWARDS A RESPONSIBLE PROCESS OF PEACEMAKING/PEACEBUILDING

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Abstract

This paper first locates Levinas within the currents of twentieth-century philosophical and theological thought and presents his philosophical anthropological view. It also discusses the ethical and anthropological logic of Christian pacifism and connects this with Levinas' personalist philosophy as an approach for dealing with today's conflicts. The paper concludes with a call to commitment in nonviolence.

Introduction

Emmanuel Levinas's personalist philosophy or ethics of responsibility provides significant support for the logic of Christian pacifism and the pacemaking/peacebuilding approaches for dealing with today's violent conflicts.

Contemporary violent conflicts are dominantly identity conflicts. They are intrastate, and asymmetric in nature. Rooted in relationship, most of them are protracted. This nature of conflict, the paper argues, require an inner-oriented nonviolent peacemaking/peacebuilding approach, which is capable of addressing the dynamics of human relationships, motives and frustrations that lead to conflict, and of working toward personal and structural transformation and the restoration of justice and relationship. This pacifist perspective of peacemaking/peacebuilding is based on Jesus' normative humanity and anthropological purview, which understands human beings as fundamentally relational, moral, and capable of self-tran-

scending acts. It is this anthropological construct of Levinas, which endears him to Christian pacifists. The paper will first locate Levinas within the twentieth-century philosophical and theological currents and then present his philosophical anthropological view. Next, it will show the ethical and anthropological logic of Christian pacifism and follows with an elucidation of the elements for responsible process of peacemaking/peacebuilding in dealing with today's conflicts as Levinas's personalist philosophy and the logic of Christian pacifism support. The paper will conclude with a call for a commitment to nonviolence.

Locating Levinas in the Twentieth-Century Philosophical and Theological Current

Theology and philosophy battled similar challenges in the twentieth-century of proving their relevance; having something to say that is of benefit to humanity which has legitimacy in the scientific age. The philosophical approach to this crisis varied. The analytic philosophy, launched by Bertrand Russell, arose and dominated the Anglo-Saxon world. Existentialism arose in Europe, adopted phenomenology's approach and focused on practical issues, which finds in human inner life of anguish, the seeds of self-evaluation. Significantly, theology aligned with philosophy in this effort, thus, bringing theologians under the rubric of one broad philosophical mode (existentialism) with atheists.

However, the crisis between theology and philosophy in the twentieth-century is no less critical. The whole existentialist philosophical movement was carried out within the triumphant milieu of liberal individualism, of which traditional Christianity's community structure is the gravest question it places itself on trial. What is common - and central - to all the philosophers is that the meaning of religion and religious faith is recast in relation to the individual. Some of the philosophical views put religion itself radically in question such that the faith or the denial of faith they produced was disconcerting to those interested in popular religion. However, although the philosophical theologians find themselves under the rubric of existentialism, they wind up in different religious camps, with some of them desperate to establish their religious roots.

No religious group resisted the liberal individualism and the philosophical current that supported it as the Roman Catholic Church, whose philosophical theologians “dug in behind ancient barricades and called for a neo-Thomism in which ‘being’ was the subject matter that was beyond science and hence open for philosophy.” Notably, for nearly two centuries, the Catholic Church remained aloof to the important subject of human rights, primarily because of their formulation in context and philosophy of liberal exaltation of the individual over community. A change only came with Pope John XXIII encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, which endorses human rights as linked with human dignity. Arguably, however, the Catholic Church’s resistance to liberal individualism was concerned, primarily, with protecting the Church and its authority, institutionally and dogmatically, in the world. This contention finds support in the fact that classical theology offered no adequate and compelling treatment of biblical personalism or of integration of person and community than was lived and transmitted in the Church. But the Church was more an institution than a community, such that true emancipation of the individual could hardly be affirmed. However, Protestant theologians like Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr were no less strong critics of (Protestant) liberal individualism and inordinate optimism of human possibilities with sophisticated reason and modern scientific civilization.

Remarkably, it was the personalist philosophers from within the broad existential philosophical current who provided a sound and balanced anthropology that complements the Christian traditional anthropology, provided the necessary corrective to the one-sided extravagant liberal individual, and the context upon which contemporary ethics build. Jewish scholars, among them Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, are outstanding in the group. Buber presents an anthropology founded on what he calls the “I-Thou” relationship, contending thereby that the human being is constituted in the relation with the other and not with the material world. His “I-Thou” relationship is one of stimulation and reciprocity, which is opposed to Heidegger’s *Dasein* as a creature of solitude, whose authentic existence is secured to oneself alone rather than in community with the other. For Buber, as Jos? Comblin puts it, “What the ‘I’ discovers in the ‘thou’ and vice versa is not the subjectivity of the other, nor the projection of the subjectivity of the ‘I,’ but really the other, by virtue of a

certain immediate communication.” For Levinas, Buber and Heidegger have elements that are true to the nature of the human person. Thus, they are unavoidably his interactive partners. However, he comes onto the scene with an originality that broadens the perspective of Buber while integrating the element of Heidegger’s isolated being. What is Levinas’s anthropology?

Levinas’s Personalist Philosophy or Ethics of Responsibility

Levinas makes morality his ‘first philosophy,’ the central thesis of which is intersubjectivity and responsibility as the essence and realization of the human person. He draws from his Hebraic tradition, which sees the whole of human life to lay in fidelity to relationship, with the covenant God at the center, in developing this thesis. From this background Levinas develops his ethics of responsibility as first philosophy against the Western prioritizing of the self, which is the root of the violent totalizing structures in which the “I” seeks to annihilate the other. Levinas’s project is not to destroy the subject, but to develop an ethical suspension of the ideal prioritizing or sovereignty of the self by a radical prioritizing of the other. Thus, his first step is to establish that the human person is radically relational and realizes oneself only in responsible relationship.

To be sure, to say that Levinas grounds his thought in his Hebrew religious tradition does not mean that his philosophy cannot stand apart from this tradition. According to him, he never introduces a Talmudic or biblical verse into his philosophical texts to try to prove or justify a phenomenological argument except to illustrate.⁹ Levinas’s anthropology presents a balanced view of the human person in a phenomenology of sociality and ethical responsibility, a disclosure of personality that transcends both the individual and the collective without underestimating the “isolated subjectivism” (the problem with Buber), or locating sociality in the subject alone (the problem with Heidegger).¹⁰ This philosophical anthropological stance opposes any ontology seen as *analogia entis*, but tries to establish a transcendence that cuts diachronically through “the unity of being and the univocity of its esse.”¹¹ For Levinas, the I-thou relationship is not one of a synthesis of beings. The relationship with the Other (*Autrui*), accord-

ing to him, is through an absence of the other (*Autre*), for which the I-thou dialogue concentrates on the rupture of the individual from the whole, thus, making the dialogue or relationship not one of symmetry as it is to assure the I of its independence. It is from this asymmetrical structure that Levinas develops the concept of the ego as the accusative “me” - the *subjectum* - rather than the normative “I”.¹²

For Levinas, “subjectivity is not a modality of essence.”¹³ The subject is constituted by responsibility to the other, a responsibility that precedes human freedom, that is, dates before my beginning, dates in an immemorial and unrepresentable past. What this means in Levinas’s construct is that ethics or responsibility is the condition of being, yet, a site outside ontology, anarchic to the totalizing of ontological categories. It is an anarchic responsibility to my neighbor to which nothing in the rigorous ontological order binds me, but which summons me from nowhere. This dateless responsibility lies beyond all significations. Levinas locates the condition for its appearance and signification in the rupture of proximity.¹⁴ Evidently, the anarchy of proximity brings to a halt the ontological play, for consciousness begins only with relation to my neighbor to whom “I am obliged without this obligation having begun in me, as though an order slipped into my consciousness like a thief, smuggled itself in, like an effect of one of Plato’s wandering causes.”¹⁵ This is a relation that is prior to every representation or phenomenality. This means that the Other, as Roger Burggraeve points out, is not secured in the horizon of the surrounding world or any other system or totality. The Other exceeds every historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural framework of meaning and representation.¹⁶

The Other is secured in the “absolute other,” the “being of beings” or the “wholly other,” the concept of which Levinas calls Illeity, meaning the transcendence of the Infinite beyond all thematization or entering into conjunction with me while still concerning me. Yet, the Infinite other leaves its trace in the Other whose face is the epiphany of the Infinite other that obliges me into responsiveness to and responsible relationship with the Other as the signification of the other. Levinas identifies the operation of illeity God.¹⁷ Let me note precisely that because ethics or responsibility or otherwise than being (*autrement*) is fundamental, for Levinas, it is not cognition prior to approach, but vice versa.

The point deserves stressing that it is because the Other, whose face bears the irreversible presence of the other, appears against the totalization of the self, that the Other puts me in the accusative. The “I” - the accusative “me” - encounters my neighbor, the Other (*Autru*), as one who has priority over me, thus, placing me as a *sub-jectum* and speaks to me of the wholly other (*autre*).¹⁸ So being, the I remains forever open to the impress of the Other/other, because it is always in the accusative - *sub-jectum*, passive and dedicated to alterity. As he writes:

The epiphany of the absolute other is a face, in which the other calls on me and signifies an order to me through his nudity, his denuding. His presence is a summons to answer. The I does not only become aware of this necessity to answer, as though it were an obligation or a duty about which it would have to come to a decision; it is in its very position wholly a responsibility or a diacony, as it is put in Isaiah, chapter 53.

To be an I means then not to be able to escape responsibility, as though the whole edifice of creation rested on my shoulders. But the responsibility that empties the I of its imperialism and its egoism, even the egoism of salvation, does not transform it into a moment of the universal order; it conforms the uniqueness of the I. The uniqueness of the I is the fact that no one can answer for me.¹⁹

This ever openness witnesses to the passing of the Infinite Thou, which finds expression in communication - the said, so inevitable because its signifyingness provokes signification by provoking the responsibility of the-one-to-the-other, which is the structure of ethics.²⁰ Significantly, it is in this ethical relationship that a person becomes a person or is liberated - “an anarchic liberation.”²¹

With the concept of the “thirdness” or the illeity, Levinas transcends the ontology of Buber’s I-thou relationship, providing his concept of *Gemeinschaft* with a transcendental condition. The ethical implication of responsibility to the other which did not arise from a free contemplative subject, but which reduces the subject to passivity of an accusative *ad infinitum*, is that the self is the one who has not right. In this context, the self is not a conqueror, swept up in the self-consciousness of continuous rivalry with enemies and the need for powerful self-assertion of its existence, which is the image of the person that has *de facto* prevailed in the modern Western world and breeds war. From this purview, war, for

Levinas, has an ontological metaphysical root - the totalization of being. Consequently, the idea of peace for him can be affirmed and pursued only beyond this ontology or totalization, possible only from an eschatological point of departure.

Levinas's idea of eschaton or eschatology is the seeking of a relationship of beings beyond the objective totality of existents and not the end of history, as it exists in Christian theology. Eschatology, in his view, "draws beings out of the jurisdiction of history and the future; it arouses them in and calls them forth to their full responsibility."²² Levinas's eschatological responsibility is characterized by hospitality to the Other, which entails the recognition of the dignity and unconditional rights of the Other as one to whom I am subject and through whom I realize my freedom. Invariably, in Levinas's thought, justice, which is crucial for peace, begins not in my self-asserted ego or freedom, but in the Other. However, the superiority of the Other, or rather, the asymmetric structure of the relationship, is one that is ethical. The Other teaches me from an ethical height.²³ The content of taking responsibility for the Other in self-disinterestedness is goodness, which lies outside the Other. In Levinas's construct, it is what the Other teaches of me that is original, awakening in me in the epiphany of his or her face a guilty conscience and responsiveness towards his or her wellbeing in complete disinterestedness - a responsibility in which the idea of infinity is consummated.

Because of the uniqueness of the self in the passivity or the passion of the self, subjectivity for Levinas correlates with suffering or persecution. The proximity of the face of the Other affects or wounds the self, leaving the self vulnerable, guilty, a debtor, even when the self has not made a choice. As Adriaan Peperzak puts it, "Only a persecuted subject is a subject who - without so desiring, against his will - lives for the Other."²⁴ Levinas well illustrates his idea of persecution with the idea of substitution by which he means that the subject is subject to every thing, responsible for all that has to do with the other.²⁵ The option open to the subject in this unconditional hostage is not death, but to live beyond egoism and altruism. This means the religiosity of the self. It is in this religiosity, that is, the condition of being hostage, according to Levinas, that pity, compassion, forgiveness and proximity exist, which is the condition of all solidarity.²⁶

Let me recall the point that for Levinas the Other is not only my

immediate neighbor. The third party whom I also stand in relationship with extends to the Other Other whom I do not even know. The third party introduces into my relationship the question of justice as necessary and togetherness in a place as the meaning of essence.²⁷ Invariably, Levinas's ethical rule of responsibility to the Other, as John Milbank says, calls us "to place first the general community, which is bound together by such respect to the generalized otherness ... For no other ever demands my self-loss, my giving myself up - no neighbor, but only a threat to the neighbor which is at the same time a threat to a community principle of mutual self-sacrifice to maintain solidarity in order to preserve the fiction of community into the future."²⁸ In the community context, equity becomes necessary. The third party balances the asymmetry of proximity, thus making the I stand in symmetric relation with the Other.²⁹

On the same reason of the third party who makes human relationship fundamentally communitarian, non-resistance, for Levinas, cannot be generalized. For him, as Burggraave explains, the individual can decide not to respond violently to his or her persecutor, thus, breaking the circle of violence, but cannot make the decision for the other. I cannot leave others defenseless before an unjust aggressor. While Levinas is of the view that no effort should be spared in nonviolently settling conflict, he maintains that we cannot hold, a priori, that there is no situation in which the use of violence is legitimate. For him, the violence to the third party justifies my opposing the Other's violence even with violence.³⁰

I will turn at this juncture to the logic of Christian pacifism.

The Ethical and Anthological Logic of Christian Pacifism

Arguably, the greatest challenge of Christian pacifism since the Constantinian fusion of church and state in the fourth-century has been to overcome the overpowering influence of the (Augustinian) negative assumptions about human beings upon which the construct of just-war ethic for social morality has been based. The Christian pacifist anthropological framework calls for a reformulation of the anthropological question for the construct of both personal and social morality. The first aspect of this anthropological reformulation is the change from seeing the fundamental tendency of the human person as negative (evil), with a pervasive pathology of pride and urge to dominate, to moral, as a relational being who

reveals oneself to the other because of love and towards whom the only appropriate attitude is love. In other words, in the Christian pacifist anthropological framework, to overcome the dominance of the negative anthropological assumptions upon which power morality has been constructed and dominated Christian position and teaching for centuries is to take a new approach to ethics based on the positive viewpoint of the possibility of human self-transcending acts and responsible relationships.³¹

From the pacifist anthropological base and framework, which, as Levinas's personalist philosophy supports, sees the human person and fundamental tendency as relational and responsible loving relationship with the other, the ethical orientation in the construct of social morality cannot be how or when to provide a metaphysical distinction and moral privilege to a violence we intend using to counter the violence we loath as morally outrageous. It is rather how to awaken and draw human beings into moral sensibility, imagination, and creativity in continuous self-transcending act against the passions that tend to belie our authentic personality and destroy our relation with the other. The orientation is toward an ethic of nonviolence, the epitaph of which can be said to be that there is some way to appeal to and instill moral sensitivity to human beings, to give them the assurance to love, the security to be kind, and the integrity necessary for a functional empathy and responsible relationship. This will give us a more enduring just and peaceful society.³²

The Christian pacifist anthropological framework correlates with community - the second aspect in the reformulation of the anthropological question. Although the Christian pacifist ethic transcends the dichotomy between individualism and communalism, it sees community as fundamental to the realization of the human person. However, the Christian pacifist anthropology does not entertain the subordination of the individual to community to entail denying or undermining the individual's rights, freedom, and dignity. On the contrary, it seeks authentic community seen in nurturing human freedom and the fuller realization of the human person, safeguarding human rights and dignity against arbitrary exercise of power. This understanding of community prioritizes the place of the poor. As Levinas's philosophical anthropological ethical construct informs us, it is in such community that transcends the traditional opposition between individualism and communalism that the individual enters into symmetric

relationship with the other and gains his or her wholeness. However, it is with the question of which means the community can use in safeguarding the individual's rights and dignity and the common good against arbitrary exercise of power that the question of what the community is vis-à-vis the individuals that constitute it critically arises.

Levinas posits ethics that transcend both the individual and community in the disclosure of personality. As he writes:

Justice is born from the signifyingness of signification, the one-for-the-other, signification. This means concretely or empirically that justice is not a legality regulating human masses, from which a technique of social equilibrium is drawn, harmonizing antagonistic forces. That would be a justification of State delivered over to its own necessities. Justice is impossible without the one rendering it finding himself in proximity.... Justice, society, the State and its institutions, exchanges and work are comprehensible out of proximity. This means that nothing is outside of the control of the one for the other.³³

Drawing from this, whether the community is a collection of individuals or more than the sum total of the individuals, as different opinions may hold, it is a moral agent subject to the same ethical authority as the individuals that constitute it. Even though one may argue that there is a common community interest that is beyond individual interest, community is not an abstract entity and does not exist apart from the individuals that compose it. Here, too, is the position of Christian pacifism, which, as I will show below, derives from a higher moral authority to either of individual or community. What this means is that violence cannot be bad in the hands of individuals and good in the hands of community, which is subject to the same ethics with the individuals that constitute it and exists for the fuller realization of their personality. However, given human limitation or the effect of sin, there remains the serious problem that there will always be some people who would tend to dominate and threaten the lives of others. Indeed, it is in the community context that control becomes very pertinent, which may require the use of force. But this does not mean that there has to be a new ethics for community the main thrust of which is violence or that the community has a blanket authority in use of violence. What the pacifist anthropological ethical framework enjoins the community is to

spare no effort in engaging in loving, construction of nonviolent ways of controlling human irrational and selfish impulses and settling of disputes, while at the endpoint it can engage the ethics of justice within the limits of relative prudence and self-defense.³⁴

The above argument is more compelling from the point of view of revelation on which the logic of Christian pacifism lies. Christian tradition believes that the human person is a creature that bears an inherent, irreducible relation to his or her creator. While the Christian tradition shares with a number of other religions a belief in the goodness and unity of the created universe, it distinguishes itself by confessing that God, in Jesus, became genuinely human.³⁵ Jesus Christ is the person par excellence who reveals to us a new *anthropos*, and redeemed and restored humanity to a state of unsurpassable worth. For Christians, no epistemological commitment precedes their faith in God. Ethics is an inexorable and inextricable part of this faith, and it is Jesus who “defines” it.

A proper theological approach drawing from revelation will ask what the human person or dignity means first and foremost as revealed by God through Jesus Christ and in relation to God. What Jesus' humanity reveals to us is that the human person is a person of unsurpassable worth and dignity. Let us note that the person of Christian biblical revelation is a person in community with others and with Christ at the center. Levinas talks of the Third who is always involved in my relationship with the Other, who plays a fundamental role in the values and philosophies of the self in that relationship, such that the relationship is not I-thou, but I-you and the Third - a threesome relationship. It is in this ethical relationship that God is thought of. In our Christian context, as Graham Ward rhetorically posits, “Cannot that you in Levinas’s Jewish triad be read Christologically? As Christians we too are ‘always threesome: I and you and the Third who is in our midst.’”³⁶ Matthew 25 is one of the powerful biblical passages that evidence this Trinitarian pattern of relationship. In this passage Christ tells us that whatever we do to anyone we do it to him. What he taught and showed us about how to deal with every human being is glaring: love and nonviolence, which he demonstrates by his own character of unbounded love unto death. As John Howard Yoder says, this is the only valid starting point for Christian pacifism.³⁷ Christian pacifism is based on faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Like Levinas, Christian pacifism is concerned with the realization

of the human person in a community of love, justice and peace, but unlike Levinas, the Absolute other determining the principle of responsible relationship is not knowable only through ethical command, but a real person of flesh and blood, Jesus Christ, yet, truly God. The implication of the New Testament anthropology and ethics is that the human person is constituted in community or rather called into relationship with the other, not with the background of the self, but of Christ. This means, as Yoder stresses, that neither the neighbor nor the intrinsic sacredness of life account for the reason we love our neighbor, including our enemy, and repudiate violence. The reason is not that we think our enemies are wonderful people or that we are unconcerned with the life of our innocent neighbor/s. The simple reason is that it is what Christ did and asks us to do.³⁸ As is the view of Levinas, for Christian pacifism, it is praxis (obedience to Christ) first before reflection.

Following the example of Christ, pacifism is not a stance of passive spectatorship in the face of evil. It is a way of life in active pursuit of justice and peace. Here lies the logic of nonviolent conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding as a product of faith - the way, following the example of Christ, the New Testament shows us .to keep from turning our moral outrages into newfangled versions of the thing that outraged us.³⁹

What elements in the process of nonviolent process of conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding do the logic of Christian pacifism and Levinas's ethic of responsibility suggest for responsibly and adequately dealing with contemporary conflicts?

Elements of Nonviolent Peacemaking/Peacebuilding for Responsibly and Adequately Dealing with Today's Violent Conflicts

There are four key elements, we can take from the logic of Christian pacifism and Levinas's ethics of responsibility, and apply for responsible process of peacemaking/peacebuilding

1. *A Responsible Peacemaking/Peacebuilding Process Should Be a Sustainable Community Process and Community-oriented as well as in Pursuit of Holistic Change.*

Seen either from a philosophical, theological, or experiential point of view, the radical nature of human beings is the sensitivity and respon-

siveness to boundness and boundedness. Both commonality and plurality are essential parts of our human nature and need to be recognized for a peaceful community. However, in an age that encourages selfishness, materialism, relativism, and discrimination, indeed, in which personal relations are forced into Buber's "I-it," it is important to stress our common humanity, that a person is a person only in relation with other people. Our interrelatedness and interdependence requires, in the first place, that a responsible process of peacemaking/peacebuilding should be community-oriented. Thus, it should work toward a proactive encounter between the conflicting parties to thrash out their conflict issues as problems to be solved and not problems to be won.

Also, given that today's conflicts are entangled in a complex web of relationships and that human relationship and wellbeing have personal, interpersonal, structural and cultural dimensions and elements, a responsible and adequate peacemaking/peacebuilding process must seek holistic change. To be precise, this means, first, that the process must seek to change both the immediate presenting issues of the conflict as well as the underlying issues, the deeper level of relationships in which the conflicts are entangled. Second, it means that the process must pursue constructive changing cutting across all dimensions of human relation and systems and structures, which contribute to human wellbeing. This correlates with the idea that peace is not simply the absence of war, but involves human wholeness and integrity. Thus, the quest for peace entails creating those conditions and structures necessary for human wellbeing or the fuller realization of the human person and dignity. Because of this holistic change orientation, peacemaking/peacebuilding activities must be carried out at the different levels of society at the same time. Invariably, it must be a community process, involving multiple actors. Evidently, a responsible and adequate peacemaking/peacebuilding process must move beyond a number of frontiers that characterized the traditional paradigms of peacemaking/peacebuilding. As John Paul Lederach eloquently puts it:

We must move beyond a short-term, crisis orientation and toward development of our capacity to think about social change designs in terms of decades. We must move beyond a hierarchical focus on politics and toward the construction of an organic, broad-based approach that creates space for genuine responsibility, ownership, and participation in

peacebuilding. We must move beyond a narrow view of postconflict peacebuilding as a political transition and toward the formation of a web that envisions a whole body politic, whole persons seeking change in a radically changing environment.

2. *A Responsible Peacemaking/Peacebuilding Process Should Be a Process of Restorative Justice and Relationship.*

The Christian pacifist perspective of peacemaking/peacebuilding sees peace as rightly the work of justice, for love, which is at the heart of human dignity and relationship, cannot be separated from justice. Love and justice exist in dynamic and paradoxical relationship.⁴¹ Love engenders justice. But the justice love engenders, and which respects human dignity and is concerned with community building, is not the retributive kind of justice the aim of which is to punish. It is restorative justice the aim of which is to correct and heal broken relationships. Restorative justice and relationship defines a paradigm of peacemaking that neither neglects the dignity and wellbeing of the victim of injustice nor violates the dignity of the perpetrator, but works towards change and reconciliation and future mutual relationship.

Let me state it categorically that the central thesis of the peacemaking in the paradigm of restorative justice and relationship is not that justice is an absolute prerequisite for reconciliation, but that “true peace is possible only through forgiveness and reconciliation.”⁴² However, the centrality of forgiveness does not mean that there is no genuine debt of justice. Forgiveness and repentance go together. This is necessary, as the paradigm of restorative justice and relationship is also concerned with the moral integrity of the offender. On its own, forgiveness is not easy in a context of violent conflict. It requires the healing and purification of memory. At the heart of the process of restorative justice and relationship is the creation of a social space of proactive encounter between the conflicting parties, where the past is probed in an atmosphere of acknowledgment of truth or the wrong committed, validation of the pain caused, acceptance of repentance, offer of forgiveness, and then restoration of the broken relationship.⁴³ Levinas is insightful to this process. As Burggraeve succinctly puts his view:

According to Levinas, the conditions necessary for a genuine, legitimate and complete pardon can be realized only in intimate community where both partners are fully open to one another and thus in complete control of their actions. When in an intimate relation with the other I commit an injustice against him, this pardon is available to me only in the form of judgment of my actions made on the basis of a careful analysis of my intentions or examination of my conscience. Only after I thus confess my fault can the other person grant me forgiveness and forget what I have done. In this way, the relation with the other can free me from pain at actions escaping my will and intentions.⁴⁴

From this purview, justice and truth can rightly be described as requisites for reconciliation. This critical task in peacemaking/peacebuilding process can be seen here as creating such environment and space of encounter, which enables both parties to transcend their selfish orbits, anxieties, and conflict issues and enter into a new reassuring and trustful relationship.

3. *A Responsible Peacemaking/Peacebuilding Process Should Be an Eschatological Peace Process.*

A Christian pacifist perspective of conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding takes the issue of justice seriously. However, it recognizes that we cannot achieve full justice in this world. It suggests that a responsible peace process must be carried out within an eschatological setting. This means acknowledging God's creative and redemptive presence in human history. The historical event of Christ, as George Weigel observes, reveals the ultimate creative intention of both human beings and the history we now live in. As far as the historical incarnation is concerned, we live in an anticipatory way. Thus, the Christian proclamation about human nature and destiny flows directly into eschatology.⁴⁵

Although Levinas's notion of eschatology is not about the end of history understood chronologically as is the Christian notion, it shares with Christianity the notion that eschatology determines the nature of ethics. Eschatology, from his transcendent ethics and in the measure in which it calls us into full responsibility in relation beyond the totality or beyond history, posits a limit to our behavior. Set in the context of 'incarnational humanism,' eschatology is not a call for inaction. It calls us to responsibil-

ity and action for the cause of justice and peace. It is one that affirms human possibility under divine grace. From this perspective, shalom serves as a kind of check-and-balance in a peace process. It defines the orienting horizon the pacifist perspective of peacemaking/peacebuilding, but cautions us against thinking that we must achieve complete justice on earth for peace to flourish.⁴⁶ The eschatological setting of peace tells us that complete justice is an eschatological reality.

4. A Responsible Peacemaking/Peacebuilding Process Should Embrace Certain Spirituality.

As Christian pacifist's and Levinas's anthropology tells us, human dignity and relatedness, or, to use Levinas's language, the face of the Other makes a demand on us, which responding to it calls us to certain spirituality. The face of the Other invites us into solidarity, which, in turn, demands of us to engage in peacemaking/peacebuilding work, and responsibly too. Levinas talks of sacrifice, pity, compassion, pardon and proximity as the condition of all solidarity. These define the spirituality peace actors needs, coupled with humility and patience, for responsible peacemaking/peacebuilding. A responsible peacemaking/peacebuilding requires a non-instrumental and non-dispassionate approach.

Conclusion

Levinas's ethics of responsibility is in accord with the central anthropological and ethical concerns of Christian pacifism. His work is evidence that a sound ethics needs a sound anthropology. With his ethical subjectivity, which dethrones the self as the guarantor of morality and freedom as the highest of primary values in establishing the primacy of heteronomy of our response to the human other, or to God as the absolutely other, he reminds Christians that obedience to our Christological nonviolent ethics lies at the heart of our genuine humanity and Christian vocation. Generally, both views encourage us to take a new approach, personally and socially, to the pursuit of justice and peace, and to see

peacemaking as a demand of our common humanity.

Endnotes

¹See Peter Wallensteen and Karin Axell, “Armed Conflict at the End of the Cold War, 1989-92,” *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 3 (1993); Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, “Armed Conflict and Its International Dimensions, 1946-2004,” *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 5 (2005); John P. Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United State Institute of Peace Press, 1997).

²See William Hordern, *Speaking of God: Nature and Purpose of Theological Language* (New York: the Macmillan Company and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964), 17-18.

³Among the Christian and Jewish philosopher and theologians include Karl Jasper, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, Gabriel Marcel, Emil Brunner, Martin Buber, and Emmanuel Levinas.

⁴See William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1958, Anchor Books edition, 1962), 17.

⁵Hordern, *Speaking of God*, 20.

⁶See José Comblin, *Being Human: A Christian Anthropology*, trans., Robert R. Barr (Turnbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1990), 46, 50.

⁷*Ibid.*, 51.

⁸Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 304.

⁹Richard Kearney, *Dialogue with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 174. See Robert J. S. Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1993), 142-154.

¹⁰Here is Levinas's claim: “Just as in all the philosophies of communion, sociality in Heidegger is found in the subject alone; and it is in terms of solitude that the analysis of *Dasein* in its authentic form is pursued. Against this collectivity of side-by-side, I have tried to oppose the ‘I-you’ collectivity, taking this not in Buber's sense, where reciprocity remains the tie between two separated freedoms, and the ineluctable character of isolated subjectivity is underestimated. I have tried to find the temporal transcendence of the present toward the mystery of the future. This is not a participation in a third term ... It is a collectivity that is not a communion. It is the face-to-face without intermediary.” Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1987), 93-94.

¹¹Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 94.

¹²*Ibid.*, 90; Emmanuel Levinas, “Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 72-74.

See Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 140-141.

¹³Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 17.

¹⁴Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 84. Levinas describes proximity as "anarchically a relationship with a singularity without the mediation of any principle, any ideality. What concretely corresponds to this description is my relationship with my neighbor, a signifyingness which is different from the much-discussed "meaning-endowment", since signification is this very relationship with the other, the-one-for-the-other." Emmanuel Levinas, "Substitution," In *The Levinas Reader*, ed., Sean Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 90; Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 100.

¹⁵Emmanuel Levinas, "Essence and Disinterestedness," in *Emmanuel Levinas Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. Adrian T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 119.

¹⁶Roger Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights*, trans. Jeffrey Bloechl (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 88.

¹⁷See Levinas, "Essence and Disinterestedness," 119; Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 147. Writes Levinas, "Illeity overflows both cognition and the enigma through which the Infinite leaves a trace in cognition. Its distance from a theme, its reclusion, its holiness ... is its glory, quite different from being and knowing. It makes the word God be pronounced, without letting 'divinity' be said." Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 162. It is important to note here that though God is ever-present in Levinas's philosophy, God, for him, as Manning observes, "is not the manifest God of natural theology, nor the mysterious but still comprehensible (by some) God of mysticism, nor the God who is understood as the first and most excellent Being. For Levinas, God is the absolutely unknowable, absolutely transcendent, and wholly other God of traditional Judaism. What isn't so traditional about Levinas's God, what isn't so commonplace about Levinas's 'certain kind of Judaism,' however, is his insistence that God can be known only through the ethical command." Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger*, 147.

¹⁸As Burggraeve explains, "Concretely, the Other appears over against the totalizing effort to be, as a fact or givenness which resists the noetic and practical totalizations of the self-interested ego. In the process of affirming its own centrality in a world assembled around it, the ego is struck by this appearing precisely in so far as the Other appears as "radically other" (which is what Levinas has in mind when he capitalizes the word Other). Precisely where this Other escapes the concerns of the ego, Levinas speaks of the human Face." Burggraeve, *Wisdom of Love*, 88.

¹⁹Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, tran. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht : Martinus Nijhoff , 1987), 97.

²⁰See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 146; Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 111.

²¹See Levinas, "Substitution," 114.

²²Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 23. Elaborating further, Levinas writes: "Eschatology institutes a relation with being beyond the totality or beyond history, and not with being beyond the past and the present... It is a relationship with a surplus always exterior to the totality, as though the objective totality did not fill out the true measure of being, as though another concept, the concept of infinity were needed to express this transcendence with regard to totality, non-encompassable within a totality and as primordial as totality." 22-23.

²³See *Ibid.*, 267; Burggraeve, *Wisdom of Love*, 105.

²⁴Adrian Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993), 222.

²⁵According to Levinas, "Substitution is not an act; it is a passivity inconvertible into an act, the hither side of the act-passivity alternative, the exception that cannot be fitted into the grammatical categories of noun or verb, save in the said that thematizes them. This recurrence can be stated only as an in-itself, as the underside of being or as otherwise than being. To be oneself, otherwise than being, to be dis-interested, is to bear the wretchedness and bankruptcy of the other, and even the responsibility that the other can have for me. To be oneself, the state of being a hostage, is always to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility of the other." Levinas, "Substitution," 107.

²⁶Levinas, "Substitution," 107.

²⁷Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 157.

²⁸John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 223.

²⁹Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.

³⁰Burggraeve, *Wisdom of Love*, 158; Burggraeve, *Emmanuel Levinas: The Ethical Basis for a Humane Society, Bibliography 1929-1977, 1977-1881* (Leuven: Center for Metaphysics and Philosophy of God Institute of Philosophy Leuven, 1981), 56. In the view that a priori one cannot hold that there is not situation where the use of violence is permissible, it seems Levinas's raises the violence used in protecting the third party against the unjust aggressor to a moral level, an integral element of his transcendent ethic of responsibility. Arguably, therefore, his ethics do not offer us answer, strictly speaking, as how to break the circle of human violence. The question here is not whether or not it is humanly possible to avoid violence. The objection is raised objectively in assessment of his ethics. Irrespective of this critique however, I see Levinas's position as one that supports a qualified pacifism, which requires that no effort should be spared in seeking nonviolent ways of settling dispute, but which, at the endpoint, given human limitation, permits an ethic of justice within the limits of relative prudence in protecting the other or oneself.

³¹To be sure, the idea of overcoming the over-powering influence of Augustinian anthropological assumptions is not to deny that war is rooted in human sinful passions, or that in the human fallen state pride and its concomitant passions

of greed and lust for power will continue to generate strife. It is not to say that with correcting the errors within the political, social, and economic systems and structures we will establish perfect just and peaceful social order in this world. That will be naïve optimism, the more naïve optimism, as history has shown, of which will be to think or say that with violence we shall bring a perfect or enduring just and peaceful social order. However, it is important to recognize the symbiosis of human sinful impulses and the unjust structures in the cause of violent conflict, which are the immediate factors behind today's conflicts. They are correctible. Without denying the serious dilemma that exists in the case of unjust aggressor between the exercise of responsibility and charity that call to protect the innocent neighbor and the preventing of the unjust aggressor who is no less a neighbor to be loved, no tough-minded realist can deny the ambiguity involved in the use of violence. Even if we continue to kill the unjust aggressors, we cannot guarantee that there will no longer be unjust aggressors in this world. How one should deal with the unjust aggressor calls for excruciating decisions that require weighing alternative nonviolent options, which include persuasion, negotiation, and the more direct control of the behavior of others by institutional controls, restraints, sanctions, or privileges. The pacifist anthropology viewpoint sees the just war ethics based on negative assumptions of human egocentric and animalistic impulses, where it serves as the main thrust of social ethical construct, as a naïve approach to the question of justice, peace, and war. It sees power morality as masking the basic fact about human moral capacity and suggesting that human egocentric negative impulses are more powerful than love, kindness and empathy, and urge for relationship to be the determinant in defining social morality. Indeed, it sees just war ethic as freezing our moral imaginative power and creative ability to develop loving, nonviolent ways of conflict reconciliation and social transformation. Just war ethic, it must be noted, is not itself a search for conflict resolution before they escalate to war, neither does it inspire or encourage that.

³²See Kenneth B. Clark, *Pathos of Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 38, 78.

³³Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

³⁴See John H. Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2002), 23.

³⁵See Adam G. Cooper, "Redeeming Flesh," *First Things* 173 (May 2007), 31.

³⁶Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, 146.

³⁷John H. Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism*, with new forward by Mark T. Nation (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 2003), 56.

³⁸Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 42; John H. Yoder, "Living the Disarmed Life: Christ's Strategy for Peace," in *Waging Peace: A Handbook for the Struggle to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, ed. Jim Wallis (San Francisco and Sydney: Harper and Row Publisher, 1982), 127-130. Michael Elliot rightly observes, "Our biblical vision leaves no room for separating our strategies and tactics from our objectives. The methods we employ to achieve the vision have themselves to be embodiments

of the vision. Thus we cannot establish a peaceful and just society through tactics which regard human life as expandable.” Michael C. Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-culture* (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), 117.

³⁹Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 208.

⁴⁰John P. Lederach, “Remember and Change,” in *Transforming Violence: Linking Local and Global Peacemaking*, eds. Judy Z. Herr and Robert Herr (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1998), 189.

⁴¹See Thomas D. Williams, *Who is My Neighbor? Personalism and the Foundations of Human Rights* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 187.

⁴²Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 517.

⁴³See Lederach, “Remember and Change,” 189.

⁴⁴Burggraave, *Wisdom of Love*, p. 125. See Emmanuel Levinas, “The Ego and the Totality,” in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 30-31; Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 159.

⁴⁵George Weigel, *Tranquillitas Ordinis: The Present Failure and Future Promise of American Catholic Thought on War and Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 340.

⁴⁶See Weigel, *Tranquillitas Ordinis*, 336-41. See also Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 49.