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Emmanuel Levinas and the Prophetic Voice of Postmodernity¹

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I

Without a doubt, Levinas' principal concern in philosophy is how the self meets the Other. His magnum opus, *Totality and Infinity*, bears the subtitle, *An Essay on Exteriority*. Exteriority refers to a region beyond the horizons of the self, that which "is" beyond transcendental subjectivity. If there are such "beings" as other selves, that is, other subjects, they exist out there in the exterior. But if knowledge is confined to the interior—as Levinas says it must be—then the Other cannot be known. He writes, "There is in knowledge, in the final account, an impossibility of escaping the self; hence sociality cannot have the same structure as knowledge" (EI 60).

This view that limits knowledge to the interior of conscious life rests on epistemological discoveries made by Descartes, Kant, and those that follow in their tradition. Ideas are always my ideas. They are alleged interpretations of my perceptions. But, these perceptions are also ideas, hence interpretations. What it is, then, that representations (perceptual or conceptual) re-present becomes a philosophical question along with others. Does knowledge refer at all to any extra-mental domain? If so, then how does it refer? If it turns out that knowledge is limited to the interior, then are there other subjects who represent the world as I do? If there are, then how can we know this fact?

Descartes attempted to answer the first of these questions by proving the existence of a veracious God, who, because he had to be truthful, created Descartes with the capacity to separate ideas that represent reality from those that do not. Kant, however, showed that Descartes' proof for the existence of this God violated the limits of reason precisely because it fled from the interior of conscious life. The Continental tradition to follow will largely agree with Kant: knowledge does not represent anything outside of the self in any manner of identity that would allow the claim that the content of a representation is "like" the "object" represented.

¹ The following lecture was written during October 1993 for an "Andiron" Lecture at the University of Evansville and was originally titled, "Levinas' Postmodernism and the Violence of Representation." The topic for this particular year was the Other. As those familiar with the works of Emmanuel Levinas undoubtedly know, introducing his thinking to a general audience presents quite a problem; to begin with, understanding Levinas requires a knowledge of the history of Western philosophy from which he departs. Secondly, Levinas' use of language is unusual even within this tradition. To make matters more difficult, I wanted to do more than introduce Levinas' concept of the Other. I wanted instead to present some of the implications that follow from his view with an eye toward particular moments in world history. In what follows, I undertake what I call "macro-history" using Levinas' philosophy as a springboard to understanding moments in Western history. It is important that the reader understand that the following is a mixture of Levinas' thought (and many others, in fact) with my own and that the lecture is intentionally provocative and impressionistic.

Thus, ideas, which were formerly thought to be representations of an "other" reality or domain of existence, turn out to be created by human cognition in the act of understanding. They get their truth value by how well they can be situated within an already familiar system of references. Thus, Nietzsche, who characterizes knowledge as a matter of expressing what is new and surprising in the language of the old and familiar, states "The essential feature [of knowledge] is fitting new material into old schema,... making equal what is new" (WP 499). Knowledge is a denial of difference. Levinas, expressing this same concept in the language of Husserl, states that "Knowledge is always an adequation (an equating) between thought and what it thinks" (EI 60). Perhaps more to the point, knowledge is the act of equating the thought with reality. To know the truth is to have invented a coherent system of representations that allegedly corresponds to (or equals) things as they are apart from consciousness. But this truth is the condition that I have achieved when my interpretation of reality makes sense to me. It is coherence cleverly disguised as correspondence, i.e., representation.

Thus, knowledge is, quite literally, comprehension; it is "the same as the process of incorporation of appropriated material in the amoeba" (WP 501) in the words of Nietzsche. And Levinas writes, "Knowledge has always been interpreted as assimilation. Even the most surprising discoveries end by being absorbed, comprehended..." (EI 60). To comprehend is to embrace, swallow, possess, make what was other a part of the self. So, knowing is a reduction of the foreign to the familiar, of what is other to the self.

II

Let us adopt an enlightenment view of reason for a moment. Reason has replaced religion. It's credo, an undying faith in the canons of truth. The "real" world is now the known or knowable world. Because there is no longer an in-comprehensible order of existence, there is no longer an "other" world. In the words of Nietzsche, "God is dead, and we have killed him." Dostoyevsky rejoins, "If God is dead, then anything is permissible." We will have to deal with the ethical consequences of this later.

III

Undoubtedly, Others exist. But, as I have indicated in section one, if, however, knowledge is taken as the be all and end all of human existence, if everything is reducible to theoretical relationships, then the Other does not exist. One consequence of Husserlian phenomenology was that it reduced all the capacities of the human being to these theoretical relationships. (See CM 42). Levinas reacts against Husserl noting that there are "relationships with alterity [otherness] which contrast strongly with those whereby the Same dominates or absorbs or includes the other, and whose model is knowledge" (EI 62).

One of these relationships unfolds as "metaphysical desire". This is a desire for "the otherness of the other". As such, it can never be satisfied. For in possessing the other, his otherness will always be left behind. Thus, this desire itself attests to the presence of the Other beyond knowledge, who cannot be synthesized into the rational order. "The relationship between men is... the non-synthesizable par excellence" (EI 77).

If the otherness of the other is to be desired, then something must first present this otherness to consciousness. Levinas localizes the appearance of this otherness in the face to face situation. The face of the Other resists my power to assimilate the Other into knowledge; it resists possession, which would have the net result of silencing the voice of the Other as Other. Thus, the face of the Other silently wages the command, "Thou shalt not kill". This means, in turn, that the face to face situation has an ethical dimension to it. This ethical dimension is not predicated to this event from a pre-existing ethical base, it is the very emergence of ethics itself. Responsibility is born in the face to face situation. It is always a personal affair.

The Other, precisely the being that can be killed, appears in the face to face as the author of the moral law. In so far as he emerges against my powers of comprehension, he must come from the Other side of existence, from beyond the world. The Other, then, comes from "on high," out of nowhere; he intrudes upon the rational order and interrupts my project of possessing the world. Furthermore, since the Other emerges from beyond the domain of the familiar, mundane world, she is always the stranger, unsupported. She is widow or orphan. In Levinas' thought, this face to face encounter with the stranger is what sanctions the Jewish commandment "Thou shalt welcome the stranger in your midst." If we wait until we know the stranger, it is already too late.

If one wishes to encounter the Other outside of the institutionalized order, that is, outside of knowledge, this can only be done by looking the Other in the face, by casting one's gaze on the incommensurable and accepting the responsibility this entails. This, indeed, is a difficult task. Even Moses, when he realized who had called his name, "hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Exodus 3:6)

IV

The Greeks were the first to define the "real" world as the known or knowable world. In this so-called "real" world, beings like Exxon and America exert their power on human beings under the control of other human beings. There are, therefore, others in this world. But these are others in knowledge, institutionalized and no longer personal. They have no story to tell. They are, thus, anonymous beings, place holders occupying the office of such and such in some bureaucratic structure. These others are no longer people, and they are all the same. A word of advise; don't dare to be different. There's no room for difference in an institution. There's no room for the Other in the "real" world. There was no room for Jesus in the Inn. He had to be born in a stable, outside the social order.

V

In an essay called "The Pact," Levinas characterizes the ills of our society:

[Ours is a society] whose boundaries have become, in a sense, planetary: a society, in which, due to the ease of modern communications and transport, and the worldwide scale of its industrial economy, each person feels simultaneously that he is related to humanity as a whole, and equally that he is alone and lost. With each radio broadcast and each day's papers one may well feel caught up in the most distant events, and connected to

mankind everywhere; but one also understands that one's personal destiny, freedom or happiness is subject to causes which operate with inhumane force. One understands that the very progress of technology—and here I am taking up a commonplace—which relates everyone in the world to everyone else, is inseparable from a necessity which leaves all men anonymous. Impersonal forms of relationship come to replace the more direct forms, the 'short connections' as Ricoeur calls them, in an excessively programmed world. (LR 212)

It is a world in which "men find themselves side by side rather than face to face" (LR 212). Society, through the use of technological forces, spreads news as universal truth. It speaks everyone's language; it tells everyone's story. It speaks from a "global" perspective.

We are, thus, facing a society that is not governed by Levinas' view of sociality. For him, "sociality cannot have the same structure as knowledge" (EI 60). The social, here and in the Jewish world, is an extension of the interpersonal. It begins with humans facing humans and grows into a community of individuals, each of whom is an integral part of the whole.

Modern society, as a collection of anonymous beings, is not an extension of the interpersonal. Its model is the Greek city-state, an entity that is not made up of the individuals who populate the polis. Here, the city-state is a separate entity apart from the individuals. Each individual in Athens can die and a new one take its place. But the same city-state remains. Thus, though Athens is dependent on citizens, it is not dependent on any particular citizens. Anonymous ones suffice quite well. While Athenians are not Athens, then, the Jews are Israel and are such long before reaching the promised land.

Opposed to the Greek model, the Jews are united as a people by a Covenant addressed only to individuals. As Levinas suggests, "Within this Covenant each person finds himself responsible for everyone else; each act of the Covenant expresses more than six hundred thousand personal acts of responsibility" (LR 224). Why more than six hundred thousand? Because "this was the number of Israelites standing at the foot of Sinai." He contrasts this view of law against a more universal Greek conception that has "the character of an abstract and impersonal juridical act". (I am over-simplifying here.)

The difference between the two models of society, then, is that Jewish society is formed out of the bonds that tie Israelite to Israelite. They are their brothers' keepers. In Greece, however, society binds individual to individual through the intermediary of the state. Here, the first allegiance is to society, the civil order. One need only think of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia, for the good of the state. (One might say that Iphigenia indicates that the Greeks were struggling with the relationship between individual and institution. This is to read the play either as a protest literature or as a confirmation of the values of the state. Since the play settles in favor of the state, I read it in the latter sense.)

The Greek state, then, has a reality apart from its citizens. It is an entity much like Exxon and America, metaphysical, to be sure. It is but a name, not for an "ensemble of social relations," to steal a phrase from Marx, but for something in itself, something for which one may sacrifice his very life. The state is here a metaphysical abstraction that has

taken on a life of its own. It is, to speak the language of Greek philosophy, a form without matter.

The entry into the Greek city-state is, therefore, an entry into the rational order. We should not be surprised that science and philosophy begin with the state, and that a concern for abstract truth overtakes the concrete situation of responsibility in the same gesture. This is because the state is not founded on individual responsibility, but instead sanctions it. Ordinary responsibility, if Levinas is correct, unfolds outside the rational order in the face to face, that is outside the Greek social order where men walk side by side and do not meet face to face. In Greece, responsibility is no longer a personal affair. It is institutionalized and defined by conformity to civil law. The responsible citizen is the one who obeys the city's laws—Plato's Crito bears witness to this. No longer is he the individual bound to care for the widow and orphan, to welcome the stranger in his midst.

VI On Sodom and Gomorrah

This is the voice of the prophet Isaiah:

Hear the word of the Lord, You chieftains of Sodom; Give ear to our God's instruction, you folk of Gomorrah!... Assemblies with iniquity, I cannot abide.... Cease to do evil; Learn to do good. Devote yourself to justice; Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; Defend the widow's cause. (Isaiah 1:10, 13, 16-17)

And, here, the voice of the prophet Ezekiel:

Only this was the sin of your sister Sodom: arrogance! She and her daughters had plenty of bread and untroubled tranquility; yet she did not support the poor and the needy. In their haughtiness, they committed abomination before me; and so I removed them, as you saw. (Ezekiel 16: 49-50)

How convenient of the Greeks to mark their iniquities by sexual misconduct. They failed in their responsibility, and that is why they were destroyed.

VII

The relevance of these observations about the Greek state and the Jewish state have astounding repercussions for us today. This is because the Western world is constituted from the remnants of the Greek Empire, minus the "Middle Ages." As Ralph suggests, "The term 'Middle Ages' was coined by Europeans in the seventeenth century to express their view that a long and dismal period of interruption extended between the glorious accomplishments of classical Greece and Rome and their own 'modern age'" (Ralph 351). The 'Middle Ages' are here excluded because they are disconnected from the Roman Empire in that the period saw "a contraction of the urban life on which the empire had been based" (Ralph 264). Life in the 'Middle Ages' was no longer marked principally by life in cities. The political order had changed; without a polis, political control had to be re-

centered. And so it was around the structures of the Catholic Church. A new metaphysical order was established.

The enlightenment view of the 'Middle Ages' was of an age that did not favor progress. Without life in cities, the age was regarded as 'uncivilized', taken in its true significance, that is, un-civil, having no civic basis. During the later 'Middle Ages' life in cities began to re-emerge. In the enlightenment, these cities gave way to the Modern state by way of a deliberate recapitulation of Graeco-Roman themes. The age can be characterized as enlightened Neo-Classicalism. And so the Greek city-state resumed its heritage after a long and dark interruption.

To claim that the Modern state is a Graeco-Roman invention that is reborn in the enlightenment is to claim that it once again is a metaphysical being that arises from the rational mind. It is an entity that, in the interests of justice for all, is not made up of particular individuals with names. Who the citizens are is largely irrelevant, and so the political order is out of touch with them as individuals. "Let them eat cake."

Our culture is an extension of this Modern state, though we are no longer limited by boundaries. We have a global perspective. As Levinas suggests, to read part of an earlier quote, "...due to the ease of modern communications and transport, and the worldwide scale of its industrial economy, each person feels simultaneously that he is related to humanity as a whole, and equally that he is alone and lost" (LR 212). Global perspective leads to a faceless populace controlled by "inhumane force." This follows from Levinas' view of knowledge as the reduction of the Other to the self which comes as a corollary to the reduction of the 'real world' as the known or knowable world, a consequence of adopting a Graeco-Roman basis for society.

So, here we are in the 'real world' of the Six o'clock news where reality is defined by the known. This knowledge consists primarily of the totality of representations presented by the media. These representations are of others without their otherness. Their stories are depersonalized by an interpretive transformation into a language that all can understand and no one can question. They become known to us, but without the responsibility that comes with face to face confrontation. I may see the face of the other on television, but I know simultaneously that the other does not see me, and this means that I face a person for whom I am no longer responsible. The Other has been handed over to be murdered by a society of anonymous individuals each of whom in his/her anonymity is freed from a responsible obligation; from the perspective of responsible relationship, the Other has been defaced.

What is true here for television is also true for other forms of media and for the entire totality of the discourse of the truth. This discourse, sometimes delivered by media and sometimes by science, can be characterized by a claim of absolute neutrality, a poor approximation of something called 'objectivity'. In the interests of achieving a true perspective on reality, that is, a God's eye perspective, the author disappears behind his text. Writing the truth (that is, the real) requires that the personal be denied. There is no bias in my text, as if to suggest that my past experiences and personal judgments about right and wrong, the true and false, do not determine at all how I think objectively, what needs to be said and why it needs to be said. Indeed, we teach students in the academy how to write authoritatively, that is, in such a way that their authority will not be questioned. Let-

ting the author disappear behind the text is but one way of hiding authority. When the text appears as unauthored, so too does our propensity to question its authority.

Such as it is in the domain of the media where linguistic forms of absolute neutrality and clarity determine what is real for us. This domain unfolds as the social order under the authority of a neutralized they. Isn't that our expression, "That's what they say." Who? They, the anonymous folk? Hiding back there somewhere, they are someone, and someone in particular dictating reality on our behalf. No longer can we see them; they are faceless, though no less authoritative.

The problem is that Graeco-Roman society has always preached, not a responsibility to the widow and the orphan, but a responsibility for civic concerns. Responsible citizens stay informed. (Or should we say get informed, or submit themselves to be in-formed. You must submit to patterns of indoctrination. You must read the papers, watch the news, etc. You must be a citizen of the blind social order, where no persons are permitted to maintain their individuality.) You must participate in the 'real world', 'out there', away from the home. In the Greek world, responsible citizens leave their families, and enter into the 'real world' of serious intellectual and political concerns. This is the responsibility that needs to be called into question: How did the responsibility to be informed of suffering overseas take precedence over the responsibility to feed the starving in our own community? How did it become a greater responsibility to watch half an hour of the evening news instead of spending the same amount of time responding to the needs of the widow and orphan?

If Levinas is correct, civic responsibility is parasitic on our social responsibility. Having reduced all Others to representations, we face no one, or should I say that we do not know how to face someone. Indeed, that entry into the blind, social order, the domain of the truth, not only defaces the Other, it anesthetizes us. Our civic responsibility has taught us to be irresponsible at home.

VIII

We found Socrates recently released from his chains, and Xanthippe—you know her—sitting by him, holding their baby. When she saw us, she cried out and said the sort of thing that women usually say: "Socrates, this is the last time your friends will talk to you and you to them." Socrates looked at Crito. "Crito," he said, "let someone take her home." And some of Crito's people led her away lamenting and beating her breast. (*Phaedo* 60a-b)

In the Graeco-Roman world the woman represents the home, the body, the place of caring for those in need. The men, however, represent the real world of "more serious" concerns, like that of running the polis and attending to matters of intellectual thought. The men leave the home and enter the 'real' world of the social order. At the end of the day, they return to the home. I am here, questioning this picture. To be sure, I am not the first to do so. I cannot help but think again of Nietzsche:

[The] most dangerous of all errors so far was a dogmatists error—namely, Plato's invention of the pure spirit and the good as such.... To be sure, it meant standing truth on her head and denying perspective, the basic condition of all life, when one spoke of spirit and the good as

Plato did. Indeed, as a physician one might ask: "How could the most beautiful growth of antiquity, Plato, contract such a disease? Did the wicked Socrates corrupt him after all? Could Socrates have been the corrupter of youth after all? And did he deserve his hemlock?" (BG 3)

What if Socrates was wrong? What if the 'real world' is the concrete world, as Heraclitus thought? What if the home is the only place that is really real and everything else is merely an invention of the intellect. Would we not have set our sights in the wrong direction? To invoke Nietzsche one more time, "Supposing truth is a woman—what then?"

IX

The Jewish world has always defined itself along a different access. Here the direction is not away from the home. Instead, it seeks to return home, to its own locality, to the holy land. Away from the anonymity of universalized society, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the absolute Other, addresses himself to individuals. He commands them to welcome the stranger in their midst and they respond "Here, I am, Lord." Here, in this very place, is the only place from which I can respond. Only here can I meet the stranger face to face.

Levinas captures the place where the stranger intrudes under the metaphor of "the home." It is "the horizon in which the inner life takes place." (TI 158). This domain is characterized by the metaphor of the feminine, signaling "the very welcome of the dwelling" and not a biological female. (158). The home, the domain of interiority and welcome where I can greet the stranger and offer him food and drink is precisely that domain of human existence trivialized by the Greeks. The home is a metaphor for the immediacy of sense perceptions, the body. It is the domain of sensuality and emotion. More so, it is the domain of concrete existence, away from all the abstractions of social life. Here, individuals emerge as people with stories to tell; they are not merely institutionalized others dealt with blindly on the societal level. The home is the domain of the inter-personal. It is only here at home, therefore, that responsibility can unfold.

A caveat, however, is in order. The home is a metaphor for my locality, the domain of my concrete existence. In my case, it includes the areas that I frequent, the University of Evansville, the route that I walk on my way to work, etc. It is not restricted to my house (though almost). I am the home at the deepest level of my interiority. Thus, Levinas' notion that responsibility emerges from the epiphany of a stranger intruding on the home and calling it into question means that responsibility is born in the concrete moment of inter-personal contact. It is always a local concern; anything else is an intellectual (and quite masculine) abstraction. Responsibility is always a matter of meeting face to face. Only here can I encounter the Other as author of his/her own discourse. Only here in the presence of the face to face can I hear the Other speak.

X

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold writes, "Hebraism and Hellenism,—between these two points of influence moves our world. At one time it feels more powerfully the attraction of one of them, at another time of the other; and it ought to be, though

it never is, evenly and happily balanced between them." In Levinas' terms, this seems to suggest that the Western world hangs between the immediacy of a Jewish personal ethic and the civic responsibility of the Greek state. But where Arnold seems to think that a balance is possible, Levinas views the Greek state as parasitic on the fundamental origins of responsibility. Thus, nothing can be balanced between these cultures. Indeed, much of the postmodern debate is dominated by an attempt to allow the Jewish tradition and the Greek tradition to co-exist in the same world order. Not surprisingly, this emerges because of a connection that Germany makes with its Greek origins and the association of Germany with the Holocaust. If Germany is the true heir of the Greek empire, as Heidegger suggests, then there is no room for the Jew in the Greek world. Integration of the two can occur only by the one destroying the Other.

The problem of the co-existence of these two ways of approaching a common world order, however, is not new. In what follows, I will depart from Levinas' Judaism and his contemporary concerns to address the problem from a different perspective, namely that of the Roman Catholic, or, better, the Judeo-Christian. This tradition posed a solution to the impending problems of the unity of a Greek state and Jewish responsibility.

The problem we are confronting with a single world order is a more complex version of the problem confronting the transition from Jerusalem as God's City to its appropriation by first, the Greek ruled Seleucid Kingdom in 332 B.C.E, and then, later, by the Romans in 63 B.C.E. Prior to these conquests, Jerusalem is characterized as the house of the Lord. Psalm 122 says, "I rejoiced when they said to me, / 'We are going to the House of the Lord.' / Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem." To the Psalmist, however, this is not a city of a Greek institutional order. It exists for a personal, religious reason and not for a civic one. The Psalmist continues, "May there be peace within your ramparts, / peace in your citadels. / For the sake of my kin and friends, / I pray for your well-being; / for the sake of the house of the Lord our God, / I seek your good." Here, the city facilitates interpersonal concerns, established and maintained in the context of Jewish religion.

In 168 B.C.E., however, the Greek Overlord, Antiochus Epiphanes, determined that, in the name of unity, Jews must abandon their religious customs. The First Book of Maccabees records the assault: "...[Antiochus Epiphanes] authorized them [a clan of law-breakers] to introduce the way of living of the Gentiles. Thereupon they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem according to the Gentile custom. They covered over the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing." (1 Mac 1:13-15) Though the Jews revolted under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus and won, within a hundred years, Jerusalem was hit again and fell to Roman rule. The upshot of this was that the social structure of Jerusalem was quickly changing. Under Roman rule, it was an outpost far from its capital. Certainly the citizens, here, were, in their particularity irrelevant to the Empire. The political climate was set for a religious reformer to integrate Jewish responsibility and the Graeco-Roman state. From outside the social order, Jesus appears in Jerusalem only to be killed by the Roman inhabitants of the city, that is, by the citizens. He is too much of an individual, and in his individuality he is a threat to the established order. Jesus, coming from outside the city, from a small Jewish community, enters into a Greek-like social structure as an outsider and is not welcomed as a stranger. Instead he is murdered. But, he died to redeem the world. Should we not say, then, that Jesus dies for this real world of political

and depersonalized abstractions, the world we would call cosmo-politan today, the world-city?

If we adopt this line of thinking, the incarnation of Christ and all the transformations in relational structures that this entails comes about precisely to create a world order, in which Greek society can be made responsible by a Jewish conception of individual responsibility. But it can only do this by rethinking the Other that exists beyond the depersonalized social order.

Theologically, the transformation of these structures takes on the following form. God, the absolute and unknowable Other, becomes incarnate in the world of socio-political concerns. He becomes human, but without losing his connection to the divine. Thus, God is now both transcendent Other and immanent other, at once, even though this is paradoxical. In Christian theology, he preserves his transcendence as the father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As the son, the offspring, he preserves this connection to the father through the spirit, which "proceeds from the father and the son" as the relationship between them.

With the Christian doctrine of the spirit, then, the socio-political world order of immanent others retains an integral connection with the divine and so becomes the Kingdom of God, an order of existence that lies just outside the rational order and is accessible through faithful responsibility to the stranger as an act of love. In short, with the incarnation of Christ a new political order is established, that of the Church-State.

The Catholic Church of the Middle Ages is, though in a very imperfect form, this Church-State, and it will remain as such until the Protestant Reformation. Here, Judeo-Christianity will be converted into a Graeco-Christianity and will, therefore, no longer be able to accommodate the problem of integrating personal responsibility into the social order. This moment is aptly summarized by Richard Rubenstein in *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future*:

The Protestant insistence that man is saved by faith alone (*sola fidei*), rather than works, separates man's activities in the empirical world from the realm of divinity with a remorseless logic...

It was the land of the Reformation that became the land in which bureaucracy was first perfected in its most completely objective form. The land of the Reformation was also the land where bureaucracy was able to create its most thoroughly secularized, rationalized, and dehumanized "achievement," the death camp. (29)

Carried to its fulfillment the Reformation ends with the secularization of the state that returns the Church-State of the "Middle Ages" back to a Greek social order. Rubenstein comments:

The Germans were able to create a society of total domination because of the competence of their police and civil service bureaucracies and because they possessed millions of totally superfluous men whose lives and sufferings were of absolutely no consequence to any power secular or sacred and who were as good as dead the moment they entered the camps. (35)

With the Reformation and the secularization of the state, along with the enlightenment attitudes this brings, the Western world is returned to a rational order, the order of absolute immanence. It enters the age of reason. But if the structures laid out here are correct, the age of reason means that the world is reduced to impersonal forms of representation that take the place of an Other who can be reached only through responsibility and faith. Thus, the reduction of the world to representation means the destruction of the "other world"; the stranger, widow and orphan become defaced against the backdrop of institutional concerns and media, and the author disappears behind the text. Such is the legacy of modernity unfolding under the auspices of "the truth."

To summarize, Levinas' postmodernism is centered around the violence of representation, the eclipse of the Other and God that the reduction of the world to the knowable entails. In turn, this means that politics, the art of governing the city (or polis) in the style of Greece, "is opposed to morality, as philosophy to naïveté" (TI 21). We find ourselves, once again, in need of a redeemer.

Second Thoughts – Added 5 September 1996

Over the past years, I have had several occasions to rethink the issues raised in this lecture, particularly while preparing to teach two courses, 1) the formation and development of the Catholic tradition and 2) philosophy and the Judeo-Christian tradition. While there are several things that I disagree with, two points, in particular, must be mentioned.

It seems to me that my analysis of the church-state is misplaced. Such an entity never really appeared in Western Christendom. So, rather than understanding the political situation from late antiquity to the late middle ages as a church-state, it must be understood as a time during which two distinct modes of authority held power, one religious and one secular, though they often overlapped with regard to mission and motive. Along similar lines, I think that the above lecture romanticizes Medieval Catholicism a bit. A more careful study of that period leaves me questioning whether the Catholic Church has ever found the balance that I suggest above.

Secondly, I think my analysis of the Greek city-state is a little off the mark. Much of what I say about the city-state should be predicated instead to the Greek Empire of the Hellenistic period, though certain passages in Plato and Aristotle suggest that the relationship between the individual and the city-state was already in tension. In the *Laws*, Plato deals explicitly with the relationship between the city and the individual. Here, he resists the notion that the city exists over and above the individuals that make it up. This resistance must be read as a warning against a dangerous conception of the state that some must have held in his time and that must have concerned him. In his *Politics*, Aristotle considers the dangers that come when the population of the city-state gets too big. His concern seems to be avoiding the tyranny against individuals that an Empire might bring. I have yet to undertake any detailed study on these themes in order to say anything here with certainty.

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