

THE ANTHROPOLOGY IN LEVINAS' PHILOSOPHY AND *EVANGELIUM VITAE*

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John Paul II's recently published encyclical letter, *Evangelium Vitae*, has several concrete things to say to contemporary times, which simultaneously corroborate the key element of Levinas' Philosophy. In fact, several concepts of both sources do converge, such as: 1) Levinas' distinction between "totality and infinity" with the encyclical's culture of death and the culture of life; 2) Levinas' "phenomenology of the other" with the encyclical's concept of man; 3) Levinas' idea of "the face of the other" with the encyclical's "blood of Abel"; 4) Levinas' insistence on the "primacy of Good over Being" with the encyclical's similar insistence on the primacy of the value and meaning of life over efficiency and productivity; and 5) the concept of God. The encyclical and the philosophy of Levinas do not only share similar views; they complement each other as well. While the works of Levinas call for profound meditation, the encyclical provides the urgency for action. Whereas Levinas romanticizes human relationship through the "face of the other", the encyclical evokes the individual conscience through "the voice of the blood." Levinas and the encyclical are indeed two important contemporary voices that call for a new understanding of man: man who is responsible to and for other men. The aim of this paper is to examine and compare the anthropology of these two sources.

Both philosophies emerge from the perception of the horrible threats to human life. According to Peperzak,¹ Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* was evoked from the question: "How has it been possible that

¹ Peperzak, A.T., *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993, p. 124.

a nation of great thinkers, poets, and musicians, under the leadership of a barbaric killer, had committed the most extensive mass murder of history? Other than the haunting horror of World War II, Levinas also saw the evil and violence of "colonial and imperialistic wars or systematic torture in the name of communist or capitalist ideologies." Similarly, the encyclical also responds to the twentieth century threats to life. However, it is obviously more comprehensive. It considers this century, for instance, as "an era of massive attacks on life, an endless series of wars and a continual taking of innocent human life."² Such a threat includes everything opposed to life, a violation of the integrity of the human person, an insult to the human dignity, and to disgraceful working conditions.³

Totalitarianism and the Culture of Death

Both philosophies express the same opinion against totalitarianism. Totalitarianism, according to Levinas, is founded on ontology, that is, the philosophy of being. It is the reduction of the other to the ego.⁴ Ontology as the first philosophy is a philosophy of power.⁵ It has vision which is an inclusive panoramic view of all things, impersonal like the Hegelian *Geist* or the Heideggerian *Sein*.⁶ This ontology inevitably leads to injustice. Each member has the attitude of giving oneself to the total system and the development of the system coincides with the interests of the self. The self, however, is a monopolistic ego who values order, harmony and system. His duty is to gather all things around the mind (self). It is a self-centered dominating ego who intends to remain within himself, assimilating the other. Such egocentric attitude of man leads him to treat others as his extensions. From this philosophy, the

² *Evangelium Vitae*, 17 (henceforth referred to as EV).

³ E.V., 3.

⁴ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. A. Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, p. 34.

⁵ Ibid. p. 46.

⁶ According to Levinas, being is an *il y a*, not an *es gibt*. The German term connotes generosity, while the French term brings horror. In his phenomenology, Levinas created a bad image of being. For him, it is something that one must escape from.

nature of man is understood as to manipulate and control the other to one's advantage. The other is at his disposal. Such activity is a source of his enjoyment.

According to the encyclical, the criterion of a totalitarian State is Purely economic: efficiency.⁷ Within such a criterion, "A person who, because of illness, handicap or, more simply, just by existing, compromises the well-being or lifestyle of those who are more favored, tend to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated."⁸ Euthanasia, for instance, is "justified by the utilitarian motive of avoiding costs which bring no return and which weigh heavily on society."⁹ On the issue of demographic explosion and fear of low economic and social development, totalitarianism promotes a massive program of birth control.¹⁰ This phenomenon is not only a single evil force of Cain killing Abel, but "scientifically and systematically programmed threats" to life.¹¹ The encyclical describes it as a "culture of death"¹² which is a "conspiracy against life."¹³ In that culture, a certain Promethean attitude exists, similar to the monopolistic ego, which leads people to think that they can control life and death by taking the decisions about them in their own hands.¹⁴ This culture attributes "to human freedom a *perverse and evil significance*: that of an *absolute power over others and against others*" which results to the death of true freedom.¹⁵ Such a system uses "reason of force" instead of "forces of reason". The weak become the Levinasian "other" being assimilated into the system of the Cartesian ego or the strong, and freedom is distorted by "becoming the freedom of the strong against the weak who have no choice but to submit."¹⁶

⁷ E.V., 12, 23, 64.

⁸ E.V., 12.

⁹ E.V., 15.

¹⁰ E.V., 16.

¹¹ E.V., 17.

¹² E.V., 12, 21, 24.

¹³ E.V., 12, 17.

¹⁴ E.V., 15; also 66.

¹⁵ E.V., 20.

¹⁶ E.V., 19.

The Other and the Concept of Man

The totalitarian concept of man is based on the traditional monopolistic ego, the self. On the contrary, the concept of man must be discovered in the nature of the other. According to Levinas, the other in all essential respects is like me. Yet it is essentially different from me. He or she cannot be subsumed under my categories. The other is a stranger who creates a sense of distance that is "far from me". He creates a need in me for friendship, yet remains a stranger. If he is used, he is reduced to what he is not. Similarly, the encyclical points that the defect of totalitarianism is the distorted concept of man. In a totalitarian State, man is reduced to being a 'thing', and no longer grasps the 'transcendent' character of his 'existence as man'. Moreover, life itself is a mere thing, which man claims as his exclusive property, completely subject to his control and manipulation.¹⁷

In this reversal proposed by Levinas, experience favors language rather than vision, listening to other rather than making a judgment on what he sees of the other. It welcomes the other as other. This is what Levinas calls *Infinitarianism*. It has an other-oriented mode, that is, to penetrate into what is radically other than the mind that is thinking it. It aims at transcending what appears in the other person, to discover what he or she in himself or herself- the otherness. Infinitarianism takes the risk of going out of oneself, and tries to speak and give his world to the other.

This metaphysical reversal of outlook, that is, the shift from the self to the other, is concretely applied in the encyclical, when the Holy Father calls everyone to listen to the silent language of a profound sharing of affection¹⁸ communicated by the other, that is, the weakest and the most innocent. The culture of death, he assesses, is the result of a failure to listen to them. The letter describes it as an eclipse of the sense of God and the sense of man.¹⁹

The other *qua* other is the Other.²⁰ The alterity or exteriority of the other makes him unassilable to the system of the ego. Infinity is

¹⁷ E.V., 22.

¹⁸ E.V., 19.

¹⁹ E.V., 21.

²⁰ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 71.

characteristic of this transcendent being as transcendent. The other is the absolutely other. The other, therefore, is irreducible to the self. The self can only have an idea of the transcendent and that idea is infinitely removed from that transcendent, that is, exterior, because it is infinite.²¹ This makes their relationship characteristically infinite, open to all possibilities. The encyclical begins with the basic concept of man, as "mysteriously different" from other earthly creatures.²² Similarly, man is infinite in the sense that he shares in the life of God, that is, a full participation in the life of the Eternal One.²³ Thus, it does not merely evoke a perspective which is beyond time. Consequently, man is created equal because every man shares the same dignity which comes from God. Human dignity cannot, therefore, be equated with the capacity for verbal and explicit, or at least perceptible communication²⁴ nor with "normality", and physical well-being.²⁵ Furthermore, man is a being who is "not to be used" and, unlike animals and things, cannot be subjected to domination by others.²⁶

According to Levinas, the concept of man leads to the concept of rights. He emphasizes the alterity of the other in calling each man, the only one of his kind.²⁷ Each man is unique and incomparable and non-interchangeable. He also emphasizes the absolute identity of the individual. Man is unique, not because of any individuating difference but because of a unity prior to any distinctive sign. Unity is always before multiplicity. Each is the sole purpose of the world. He alone is responsible for the real. Each man has his own right to the world.

The culture of death is the relation of the self-dominating the other, or the relation of the strong deciding for the weak. In such a culture, the concept of right is similarly distorted. Its absolute meaning is relativized to the mind of the self or the strong.

²¹ Ibid., p. 49.

²² E.V., 22.

²³ E.V., 37.

²⁴ E.V., 19

²⁵ E.V., 63.

²⁶ E.V., 19.

²⁷ See E. Levinas, *Outside the Subject*. Trans. M. Smith. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994, pp. 117, 124.

The concept of right ceases to be such, because it is no longer firmly founded on the inviolable dignity of the person, but is made subject to the will of the stronger part. In this way, democracy, contradicting its own principles, effectively moves towards a form of totalitarianism. The State is no longer the "common home" where all can live together on the basis of principles of fundamental equality, but is transformed into a tyrant State, which arrogates to itself the right to dispose of the life of the weakest and most defenseless members, from the unborn child to the elderly, in the name of a public interest which is really nothing but the interest of one part.²⁸

The Face and the Blood: the Call for Responsibility

"The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face."²⁹ Face is a mode, not a figure or image produced by a gaze. It expresses itself. The face expresses the truth which is not impersonal, but an expression which ruptures from the enveloping of Being to spread out its form and content. Genuine communication takes place through the face, that is, to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which exactly means to have the idea of infinity. The other, according to Levinas, reveals himself through the face. He reveals himself by signs, gestures, and facial expressions. To describe this communication, Levinas borrows the Husserlian term "appresentation", which means the indirect perceptual presentation of an object mediated through the direct presentation of another.³⁰ This relation with the other is an ethical relation, a teaching. The face immediately summons me, claims me, recalls me to a responsibility I incurred in no previous experiences.³¹ It is an epiphany of the face. The demand comes from a God who loves the stranger. The strangeness of the other puts me in question by demanding of me. The meaning of the face is non-in-difference-for- the-other-in-me. That is the original speech of the face. It elicits my response and responsibility.³² Similarly, the face is unique. It is alone in translating transcendence. It does not

²⁸ E.V., 20.

²⁹ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.50.

³⁰ E. Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, p. xvii.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 93-94.

³² Ibid., p. 94.

provide proof of the existence of God, but provides the indispensable circumstances of the meaning of that word, the first prayer, the first liturgy.³³ The other disturbs the same and brings it to an awareness. Once he is penetrated by the call of the other, he can never be the same again. "I" frees from its return to self, to answer for the other. The I has an inexhaustible responsibility: for with the other our accounts are never settled.³⁴

Perception, which starts from the self, is the usual everyday human experience from which ontologism is derived. I see the other as my need. I can learn from him. I can enjoy his company. But none of these types of perception allows the otherness of the other to reveal itself. This is the reason for Levinas' preference for listening to vision mentioned earlier. Perception transforms the phenomena into moments of my material or spiritual property. This sort of phenomenology is what Levinas calls egology.

The other may only reveal himself or herself if he or she breaks and destroys the horizon of my egocentric monism. The other has to destroy the a priori phenomena which function as moments of my universe. The other's face (facing me, speaking to me) interrupts and disturbs the order of my ego's world. It permeates me by disarranging my own order, the order that I can never restore again. Then if it succeeds, even if I shoot him away or kill him, I will never be the same again.

As mentioned above, the face is not a figure capturable by photography or painting. It is not the impersonal face. It is a face that expresses! Levinas suggests an experience of it. The face touches me, regards me, looks at me. It speaks to me in a language by some living man or woman. The language is not language with an analyzable structure. What is said is not important, but what he is saying!³⁵ The said is the language of hypocrisy. Whoever speaks to me is not relevant. What is important to know is that it is always a revelation of the Other. It is less important to pay attention to the other than to the others's otherness. The discovery of the alterity of the other is possible because

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 125.

³⁵ This is another distinction central to Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, particularly in section 3, "Exteriority and the Face", pp. 187-247.

of the nakedness of the other's face. If I am moved by the other, it is not because of the beauties, talents, potentials of the other but because of the other's otherness.

The other resists description that would present it as part of the phenomena within my universal order of beings. Since they disrupt my egology and refuse to fit into my consciousness, they cannot be categorized within the models of phenomenology. The other transcends the limits of consciousness and its horizons. The other surprises me and disables my capacity for assimilation. It comes towards me as a total stranger with a dimension of height that surpasses me.

The other man's death calls me into question, as if by my possible future indifference, I had become the accomplice of the death to which the other, who cannot see it, is exposed; and as if, even before vowing myself to him, I had to answer for his death of the other, and to accompany the Other in his mortal solitude. The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question.³⁶

The title of the first chapter *Evangelium Vitae* is "The Voice of Your Brother's Blood Cries to Me from the Ground", quoted from the Genesis story about the murder of Abel. The encyclical metaphorically uses the term 'blood' to refer to that voice of the other speaking to the self, calling him to responsibility. "Where is Abel your brother? Cain replied: "I do not know: *Am I my brother's keeper?*" The encyclical confirms: "Yes, every man is his brother's keeper, because God entrusts us to one another."³⁷ The story was particularly selected by the encyclical because of its universal significance. Death has entered the world through the sin of the first parents, and has entered through a violent way, with the murder of Abel.³⁸ Because of sin, specifically anger and envy, man has become the enemy of his fellow man. What was violated at the very beginning was an ethical relation, the *spiritual kinship* that unites mankind in one great family, in which all share the same fundamental good: equal personal dignity. Even the kinship of flesh and blood committed by Cain is likewise violated today in practices like

³⁶ S. Hand, "Ethics as First Philosophy" in *The Levinas Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p. 83.

³⁷ E.V., 19.

³⁸ E.V., 7.

abortion and euthanasia. According to Levinas, God loves the stranger, the other. Similarly, the encyclical teaches that after the crime, God intervenes to avenge the one killed.³⁹ The blood of the one murdered demands that God should render justice.⁴⁰ The biblical blood refers to life and life, especially human life, belongs to God. Anyone who attacks life, attacks God himself. Moreover, the voice of the blood shed by men continues to cry out, from generation to generation, in ever new and different ways.

Threats to life come in new forms, more powerful, more horrible. They come from "the strong" in the society who commit such conspiracy against life. What, therefore, is the special calling of the voice of the blood today? According to the encyclical, it is a call both to an individual attitudinal reversal and a change of culture from a culture of death to a culture of life. It is a call to a rediscovery of the concept of man and the meaning of his rights and duties. The call to responsibility is, foremost, addressed to the individual conscience, as it stands before God in its singleness and uniqueness. But it is also a question, in a certain sense, of the "moral conscience" of the society.⁴¹ The vocation is not only individual, but also social responsibility, because the thing to be changed is a culture of death, a structure of sin.

The cause of the deafening towards the voice of the blood is the perverted notion of freedom. When individual freedom is absolutized, the result is the lack of solidarity, openness and service to others. According to Levinas, "...infinity, overflowing the idea of infinity, puts the spontaneous freedom within us into question. It commands and judges it and brings it to its truth."⁴² The encyclical attributes this particular action of the infinite to God. God gives everyone freedom. That freedom, however, is governed by divine law. And the same freedom possesses an *inherently relational dimension*.⁴³ The suppression of truth and the confusion between good and evil is a result of a penetrating influence of the media. These factors contribute to the eclipse or darkening of man's responsibility towards his fellow man. Levinas

³⁹ E.V., 8.

⁴⁰ E.V., 9.

⁴¹ E.V., 24.

⁴² E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 51.

⁴³ E.V., 19.

suggests that the way to realize this responsibility is through the analysis of the idea of the Infinity to which we gain access only starting from an *I* who listens to the Other. Similarly, the encyclical writes: "And yet all the conditioning and efforts to enforce silence fail to stifle the voice of the Lord echoing in the conscience of every individual: it is always from this intimate sanctuary of the conscience that a new journey of love, openness and service to human life can begin."⁴⁴

Other than the blood of Abel, the call to responsibility comes through another yet nobler form, that is, the redeeming blood of Christ. His blood more graciously than the blood of Abel (Heb 12,24). The voice of the blood of Christ speaks for every other human being who has been killed since Abel. The blood calls man to a new vocation, that is, the sincere gift of self even unto death within the motive of love.⁴⁵ In a complete manner, man's call to responsibility towards the other is revealed in the life of Jesus himself, the Word of Life. Through the words, the actions and the very person of Jesus, Man is given the possibility of knowing the complete truth concerning the value of human life.⁴⁶

What is man's responsibility towards the Other? According to the encyclical, it is the responsibility for life. To defend and promote life, to show reverence and love for it, are tasks which God entrusts to every man, calling him as his living image to share in his own lordship over the world.⁴⁷ Moreover, he has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives. The dominion of man over other creatures is not an absolute power wherein he has the absolute freedom to use or misuse them. The dominion to be exercised is subject to law, both biological and moral.

Good and Life: The Primacy of Ethics

In Plato's *Republic*, good goes beyond being. Following Plato, Levinas puts Ethics as the first philosophy, not ontology. In his preface to *Totality and Infinity*, morality is revealed as the theme of the work.

⁴⁴ E.V., 24.

⁴⁵ E.V., 25.

⁴⁶ E.V., 29.

⁴⁷ E.V., 42.

It is not only a perspective or a branch of philosophy. It coincides with metaphysics as first philosophy. The primacy of the Other is the primacy of the good as well. As in Plato, the other calls the mind of the self to refer not to the true (being) but to the good. And this relation of the self to the good is an ethical relation which forever exceeds the egoism and tyranny of the ontological relation.

I am Responsible for the Other. His is the remark that primarily links Levinas's philosophy to *Evangelium Vitae*. According to Levinas, the search for the meaning and justification of being is higher than and prior to the question of to be or not to be. Levinas moves away from Husserl's transcendental idealism and Heidegger's hermeneutics of being towards the ethical question of the meaning of being.⁴⁸ The ego or the self in relation to the Other is a form of *mauvaise conscience*, or non-intentional conscience. The self has no intentions or aims, and cannot avail itself of the protective mask of a character contemplating in the mirror of the world a reassured and self-positing portrait.⁴⁹ The self does not grasp the Other as truth but affirms the Other as good by responding to its right to be.

It is in laying down by the ego of its sovereignty (in its 'hateful' modality) that we find ethics and also probably the very spirituality of the soul, but most certainly the question of the meaning of being, that is, its appeal for justification.⁵⁰

This response means that responsibility for the Other preexists any self-consciousness. This responsibility for Levinas is: "a guiltless responsibility, whereby I am nonetheless open to accusation of which no alibi, spatial or temporal, could clear me."⁵¹ Finally, ethics, which is the practical relation of the same to the Other, is prior to ontology because "...responsibility for my neighbor dates from before my freedom in an immemorial past, an unrepresentable past that was never present and is more ancient than consciousness of..." —the priority of which does not belong to "the order of thing, of something, of number or causality."⁵²

⁴⁸ See S. Hand, "Ethics as First Philosophy" in *The Levinas Reader*, p. 75.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

In the encyclical, life, particularly human life, is the good. Life is always a good. It is the object of God's love.⁵³ God who loves the living, gives meaning to life. Life is a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory. The encyclical quotes St. Irenaeus of Lyons: "Man, living man, is the glory of God." Man has been given a sublime dignity, based on the intimate bond which unites him to his Creator: in man there shines forth a reflection of God himself. Man is different from the rest of creatures because he was created after the image of God. The life which God offers to man is a gift by which God shares something of himself with his creature. Besides, he is endowed with spiritual faculties. He alone has the ability to attain freedom and truth, and is capable of knowing and loving the Creator. Human life is more than mere existence in time. It is the seed of existence which transcends the very limits of time. Life is the good and the infinite in the other than calls the self to responsibility.⁵⁴

Earthly existence, however, is not an absolute good. Eternal life is. What is more important, therefore, is to remain faithful to God, the Eternal One, even to the point of risking one's life. This is the extent of my responsibility to the Other, and to God. If the self respond generously, life can become a place where God manifest himself, where the self meets him and enters into communion with him.

God

God, according to Levinas' assessment of the Western tradition, is the Being of beings, who exists of its own essence and gives the existence to other beings. He is the beginning, the source, the end. For Levinas, however, the idea of God comes from the relation of the self to the Other. It is only through the Other that God reveals himself. Moreover, God does not add to the human Other. He is another Other. Lastly, even if he reveals himself through the other, he remains an anonymous "essence."

God-talk is full of uncertainty. We are unable to capture God by any discourse. Thus, Levinas describes him simply as: "The one who

⁵³ E.V., 31.

⁵⁴ E.V., 34.

has left a trace behind in the Other who knocks at my door." God is no longer present. He has already passed —the memorable past! What he has left behind us is a responsibility. He puts me on my way as one-for-the-Other. We can only see his back, his traces! He is no longer in the present. God transcends or escapes the phenomenological experience and from all ways of evoking the human Other.

God is an abyss, not an arche, not a starting point. He cannot present himself in our time nor be represented as a Presence in another. (This is a denial of the divinity of Jesus). God's revelation is similar to the way in which the Platonic Good reveals itself to men. The encyclical, on the contrary, reads: "This is a great gift of the Creator, placed as it is at the service of the person and of his fulfillment through the gift of self and openness to others..."⁵⁵ The encyclical affirms God's presence in every human individual. A violation against man, for instance, is a violation against God. Or, "when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life."⁵⁶ Yet, it does not end that way. The decadence continues because both senses mutually affect each other. In turn, the loss of the sense of man "produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God's living and saving presence."⁵⁷ "Once all reference to God has been removed, it is not surprising that the meaning of everything else becomes profoundly distorted."⁵⁸ It results in totalitarianism. Man and nature subjected to every kind of manipulation. The sense of god, however, strengthens human solidarity. "When God is not acknowledged as God, the profound meaning of man is betrayed and communion between people is compromised."⁵⁹

Levinas' God is absent. The encyclical, on the contrary, accentuates God's presence. God is present in the self and speaks to him directly through his conscience. It is God who can change the heart and mind of the ego, because "it is only before the Lord that man can admit his sin and recognize its full seriousness."⁶⁰ Moreover, the glory of God

⁵⁵ E.V., 19.

⁵⁶ E.V., 21; similarly 22.

⁵⁷ E.V., 21.

⁵⁸ E.V., 22.

⁵⁹ E.V., 36.

⁶⁰ E.V., 21.

shines on the face of every man.⁶¹ God is also present in the Other, namely: 1) in the fetuses within the mother's womb for "God who searches them and knows them, who forms them and knits them together with his own hands, who gazes on them when they are tiny shapeless embryos and already sees in them the adults of tomorrow whose days are numbered and whose vocation is even now written in the 'book of life'"⁶²; and 2) in the elderly at the face of death, who are still being summoned by God to satisfy their moral and family duties, and above all, to prepare in a fully conscious way for their definitive meeting with Him.⁶³ Quoting the Apostle Paul, the encyclical says: "whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:7-8).

Conclusion

The centrality of the Other, of ethics, and the good makes Levinas' anthropology revolutionary to the traditional humanism. The dominating Cartesian transcendental ego is deposed to servant-hood and the unrecognized other is put at the very heart of the self, so that the self is a continuous awakening towards responsibility. In a certain way, the encyclical makes a redefinition of man from its perverted notion as having absolute dominion over the world. Man is willed by the Creator to be ruler and lord, over things, over himself, and over his life. (Note that the encyclical never mentioned that man is willed to lord over another man.) Man's lordship, however, is not absolute, but ministerial: it is a real reflection of the unique and infinite lordship of God. Man is the minister of God's plan.⁶⁴

Two differences are worth noting. First, Levinas' ethics, in spite of its emphasis on the primacy of the other, remains obscure. The demand of the other lacks force. The responsibility called forth by the face is vague. The encyclical, however supplies the moral imperatives and spells out the responsibilities of man. Nevertheless, Levinas succeeds anthropologically, that is, in the profound distinction between totality and infinity, and in the ethical relation between the two modes

⁶¹ E.V., 35.

⁶² E.V., 61.

⁶³ E.V., 65.

⁶⁴ E.V., 52.

of being, that is the self and the other. Man as he is defined, is one-for-the-Other.

Secondly, the encyclical does not share in the extreme humanism of Levinas phenomenology. There still exist a totalizer of beings, God. God's presence in every human individual, whether weak or strong, egoist or altruist, makes man mysteriously different rent from other creatures, makes him equal in dignity with other men, and makes him subordinate to no other men, but God himself. God is the author of life. He alone decides for man's life. He is the sole Lord of this life. Again, man is not the master of life, nor is he the master of death. He is the servant called from eternity to responsibility. In life and in death, he has to entrust himself to the good pleasure of the Most High, to his loving plan. God, however, is not a monopolistic ego or an interested Being who desires to build an 'economic' whole of other beings. On the contrary, He is the very source of freedom. In this way, he is not only a totalizer, but also an infinitizer. In one sense, He is a totalizer; in another, He is an infinitizer.

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⁶⁶ E.V., 46.