# 1AC – Levinas

### 1AC: Framework

#### First, ethics must be first philosophy. Prior to any other enterprise, we must recognize the content and force of our obligations as a prerequisite. And, ethics cannot depend on an antecedent deduction from external sources, but instead be self-evidence and undeniable:

#### 1] Derivation – we cannot derive reason from a state of affairs. The fact that I have an impulse cannot provide a moral reason unless I already believe in a normative maxim – i.e. the fact that I hold pain to be harmful only has normative force if I have already pre-supposed that I have obligations to minimize harm. Either you make an irreducible judgement, or the conclusion remains merely descriptive which triggers the is-ought fallacy – thus, ethics cannot lie on any other non-ethical foundation.

#### 2] Explanatory accounts fail – we cannot describe or understand ethics in any term but the ethical. Our manner of reasoning is product of how we live and conduct ourselves. Attempting to describe the external “rationality” of ethics is incoherent – you cannot use the rules of a game to explain why you are playing a game, merely how you ought to play.

#### Second, ethics is founded upon relationships between individuals – proscribing action presupposes infinite obligation to the Other, else it would lack moral significance. Totalization denies those foundational relationships – the Other cannot be captured by conceptual categories. When I understand the content of my obligations through imposed categories, I close off the unique ethical relationship that grounds the content of my obligations.

Levinas [Emmanuel Levinas, “Totality and Infinity,” Duquesne University Press (Dec. 1, 1969). Levinas was a French philosopher, taught at University of Poitiers and University of Paris, Professor at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, awarded the Balzan Prize for Philosophy in 1989.] recut CHSTM

War can not be derived from the empirical fact of the multiplicity of beings that limit one another, under the pretext that where the presence of the one inevitably limits the other, violence is identical with this limitation. Limitation is not of itself violence. Limitation is conceivable only within a totality where the parts mutually define one another. Definition, far from doing violence to the identity of the terms united into a totality, ensures this identity. The limit separates and unites in a whole. The reality fragmented into concepts that mutually limit one another forms a totality by virtue of that very fragmentation. As a play of antagonistic forces the world forms a whole, and is deducible or should be deducible, in a completed scientific thought, from one unique formula. What one is tempted to call antagonism of forces or of concepts presupposes a subjective perspective, and a pluralism of wills. The point at which this perspective converges does not form a part of the totality. Violence in nature thus refers to an existence precisely not limited by an other, an existence that maintains itself outside of the totality. But the exclusion of violence by beings susceptible of being integrated into a totality is not equivalent to peace. Totality absorbs the multiplicity of beings, which peace implies. Only beings capable of war can rise to peace. War like peace presupposes beings structured otherwise than as parts of a totality. War therefore is to be distinguished from the logical opposition of the one and the other by which both are defined within a totality open to a panoramic view, to which they would owe their very opposition. In war beings refuse to belong to a totality, refuse community, refuse law; no frontier stops one being by another, nor defines them. They affirm themselves as transcending the totality, each identifying itself not by its place in the whole, but by its self. War presupposes the transcendence of the antagonist; it is waged against man. It is surrounded with honors and pays the last honors; it aims at a presence that comes always from elsewhere, a being that appears in a face. It is neither the hunt nor struggle with an element. The possibility, retained by the adversary, of thwarting the best laid calculations expresses the separation, the breach of totality, across which the adversaries approach one another. The warrier runs a risk; no logistics guarantees victory. The calculations that make possible the determination of the outcome of a play of forces within a totality do not decide war. It lies at the limit of a supreme confidence in oneself and a supreme risk. It is a relation between beings exterior to totality, which hence are not in touch with one another. But would the violence that is impossible among beings ready to constitute a totality that is, to reconstitute it-then be possible among separated beings? How could separated beings maintain any relation, even violence? It is that the refusal of totality in war does not refuse relationship-since in war the adversaries seek out one another. Relationship between separated being would indeed be absurd were the terms posited as substances, each causa sui, since, as pure activities, capable of receiving no action, the terms could undergo no violence. But the relation of violence does not remain at the level of the wholly formal conjuncture of relationship. It implies a specific structure of the terms in relation. Violence bears upon only a being both graspable and escaping every hold. Without this living contradiction in the being that undergoes violence the deployment of violent force would reduce itself to a labor.

#### Thus, the standard is resisting totalization of the Other. The standard is not consequentialist – a) it is impossible to reduce the Other to an aggregate property since to do so would be to define them by a totalizing property, i.e. how much pain or pleasure is received, b) pain and pleasure only matter insofar as we have a relation to the Other, since understanding that Other exists and has the capacity to experience is an epistemological pre-requisite. Prefer additionally –

#### 1] Performativity – communication can only occur between multiple agents, which demands a coherent relationship with the Other.

Levinas 2 [Emmanuel Levinas, “Totality and Infinity,” Duquesne University Press (Dec. 1, 1969). Levinas was a French philosopher, taught at University of Poitiers and University of Paris, Professor at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, awarded the Balzan Prize for Philosophy in 1989.] recut CHSTM

Can objectivity and the universality of thought be founded on discourse? Is not universal thought of itself prior to discourse? Does not a mind in speaking evoke what the other mind already thinks, both of them participating in common ideas? But the community of thought ought to have made language as a relation between beings impossible. Coherent discourse is one. A universal thought dispenses with communication. A reason cannot be other for a reason. How can a reason be an I or an other, since its very being consists in renouncing singularity? European thought has always combated, as skeptical, the idea of man as measure of all things, although this idea contributes the idea of atheist separation and one of the foundations of discourse. For it the sentient I could not found Reason; the I was defined by reason. Reason speaking in the first person is not addressed to the other, conducts a monologue. And, conversely, it would attain to veritable personality, would recover the sovereignty characteristic of the autonomous person, only by becoming universal. Separated thinkers become rational only in the measure that their personal and particular acts of thinking figure as moments of this unique and universal discourse. There would be reason in the thinking individual only in the measure that he would himself enter into his own discourse, that thought would, in the etymological sense of the term, comprehend the thinker-that it would include him. But to make of the thinker a moment of thought is to limit the revealing function of language to its coherence, conveying the coherence of concepts. In this coherence the unique I of the thinker volatilizes. The function of language would amount to suppressing "the other," who breaks this coherence and is hence essentially irrational. A curious result: language would consist in suppressing the other, in making the other agree with the same! But in its expressive function language precisely maintains the other-to whom it is addl"ess~d, ~horn it calls upon or invokes. To be sure, language does not consist in invoking him as a being represented and thought. But this is why language institutes a relation irreducible to the subject-object relation: the revelation of the other. In this revelation only can language as a system of signs be constituted. The other called upon is not something represented, is not a given, is not a particular, through one side already open to generalization. Language, far from presupposing universality and generality, first makes them possible. Language presupposes interlocutors, a plurality. Their commerce is not a representation of the one by the other, nor a participation in universality, on the common plane of language. Their commerce, as we shall show shortly, is ethical.

#### 2] Value to life – life is not a prerequisite to action, but instead requires genuine relations with the Other in order to have meaning.

Peperzak 93 [Adriaan Theodoor Peperzak, “To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas,” Purdue University Press. Peperzak is Dutch educator, member of the board of editors for Fordham University Press series Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, Arthur J. Schmitt Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University Chicago.] recut CHSTM

The annihilation whereby death threatens a human life cannot be explained in terms of the categorical pair being versus nothingness, as if they formed the ultimate horizon of the world. For death is neither a being nor nothing; rather, we experience its threat as that of a murder coming from some sort of enemy. It comes from a dimension beyond life and world: from the dimension of invisibility and otherness over which we do not have any power. Therefore, death is not our last or ultimate possibility, and we are not able to accept, to anticipate, or to welcome it. Our fear originates in the will as still having (some) time by delaying the ultimate and absolute impossibility ofall possibilities, but the inexorability of death refutes any view on human being according to which it is primarily an “l can," a possibility of possibilities. The invisibility of death does not lie in the nothingness with which it confronts us but in its not permitting us to grasp it, fight with it, and protect ourselves against it. Death always comes too early and as a nonwelcomed murderer. Since we cannot conceive of it as a possibility of our own, we cannot want it. And yet, this enemy can receive a meaning precisely because it is not a moment of the world or any other totality composed ofbeings and their negations. The absolute passivity revealed in our ultimate impossibility belongs to a life that is directed to a meaning beyond its own destruction. This meaning cannot be found in a life “after death" of some immortal soul, since this idea itself sticks to the ultimacy of the categories being and nothingness as constituting world and time. To live for a time beyond one's own life is to live for the other(s), and this is made possible by mortality; the necessity of losing one's life belongs to the structure of being-for-other(s). Thus, the egoism of a fearful life can be converted into the obedience of having time for others; the absolute violence from which nobody can escape can become the source of indestructible goodness. To lose one's life for the other(s) is to be meaningful in living for a time after one's own life. If death-and suffering-were a purely individual event, it would' be meaningless; its having a place within the horizon of the metaphysical (i.e., intersubjective) relation saves it from absurdity. HThe supreme ordeal of freedom" (or cCof the will") His not death, but suffering" (216/239). For whereas death terminates the ambiguity of humanity's finite freedom, suffering is the extreme experience of the discordance discovered in mortality as human temporality. This is shown in subsection 4, cCTime and the Will: Patience" (213-17/236-40). Since time is the ability of free consciousness (or CCthe will") to postpone death, it is also the possibility of keeping a distance from all fixations that would identify the will with a certain instant or present. As long as there is time, nothing is definitive; the will can always take or change its position with regard to what the subject has done, thought, become until now. Ithas a distance toward the presence thanks to the many possibilities for a future that are still open. The future is not a prolongation of the present but rather.the possibility of having a distance from it Suffering reduces this distance and the difference between present and future-as well as between fact and possibility or between fixation andfreedom-to a minimum. In itwe are backed up and glued to what we are, without possibility of fleeing it; a feared future has caught us, annulled our capacity of withdrawal, almosttakenaway our distance, and submitted ourconsciousness to utter passivity, without permitting it to die. A heroic will is a will that Ustands" this uimpossible" situation without giving in. It conquers by patience, i.e., by a disengagement within its forced engagement, thus still saving an ultimate mastery in the midst of almost total passivity. Patience is the experience of the limit of our will. Suffering, much more so than death, reveals the ambivalence of finite freedom and self-consciousness. But suffering, too, receives its meaning from the order of discourse," that is, from its being endured for the Other. Even hate, as expressed, for instance, in torture or persecution, is better than complete isolation because it frees us from the egoistic absurdity of suffering for nobody, and without such a deliverance desire and goodness remain empty words.

### 1AC: Contention

#### I defend the resolution as a general principle ethical statement. Grant me I-meets to T/theory not checked in CX because they have access to bidirectional interps and I’ll always violate something. Now affirm –

#### 1] Totalizing violence – use of violent weapons to harm is a violation of the primordial injunction against killing. Murder is the worst form of totalization – it shatters the vulnerability that is the basis for ethical relationships.

David 04 [Joseph David, “Between the Bible and the Holocaust, Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives,” Cambridge University Press (2004), pp. 385-401. David is Senior Lecturer in Law and Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Sapir Academic College.] recut CHSTM

In this spirit, Levinas seeks to direct our attention to the primordial and familiar situation of seeing the face of the other. Seeing the other's face, Levinas suggests, creates a situation in which our shared humanity bursts forth and supersedes any other identity. Gazing into the face is first and foremost to stand opposite the humanity of the other. "[T]he relation to the face is straightaway ethical. The face is what one cannot kill, or at least it is that whose meaning consists in saying: 'thou shalt not The face is what one cannot kill. Symbolic of this perception is the custom in some cultures and countries to cover the faces of both the executioner and the condemned, so that the natural aversion to killing that emanates from beholding the human countenance may not impede the execution: The first word of the face is "Thou shalt not kill." It is an order. There is a command-ment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the face of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all. And me [sic], whoever I may be, but as a "first person,' I am he who finds the resources to respond to the call.'' In the spirit of Levinas's thought, I would argue that any suggestion of the possible use of WMD arises from the impersonalization of the battlefield —from the avoidance of the face of the other — that steady technological advances have made possible over the past two centuries. The grave ethical flaw inherent in rationalizing the firing of missiles with unconventional warheads stems, according to this perspective, from the very attempt to ignore the face of the enemy, to ignore the prohibition on murder glaringly obvious when one stops to see that the enemy has a face.

#### 2] Positive peace – nuclear peace is not true peace, but rather guaranteed through the threat of force via deterrence, a form of totalization in which the Other’s domination and assimilation is justified in the name of preventing violence against them.

Lawrence 19 [Sean Lawrence, “’I’m a Pacifist’: Peace in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” Religions, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2019). Lawrence is Associate Professor, Department of English and Cultural Studies, The University of British Columbia.] recut CHSTM

As Levinas’s references to how ontology achieves “the non-violence of the totality” would indicate, the tradition against which he opposes himself also entertains ideas of peace. “Philosophers,” Levinas notes, “deduce a final peace from the reason that plays out its stakes in ancient and present-day wars; they found morality on politics” (Levinas 1969, p. 22). Levinas himself, on the other hand, looks forward to a time “when the eschatology of messianic peace will have come to superpose itself upon the ontology of war” (Levinas 1969, p. 22). This is not to say that Levinas procrastinates peace to some sort of parousia, which, in any case, would be a Christian concept. On the contrary, the peace he does champion, as I shall show, has the immediacy of the face-to-face. He expands upon the opposition between “The peace of empires” which “rests on war” and this “messianic peace” (ibid.) in the 1984 essay “Peace and Proximity”. Here, however, Levinas draws his major distinction between European peace, derived from Greek ideas, and Jewish peace, derived from Biblical teaching. The former Levinas characterizes as “Peace on the basis of the Truth—on the basis of the truth of a knowledge where, instead of opposing itself, the diverse agrees with itself and unites; where the stranger is assimilated; where the other is reconciled with the identity of the identical in everyone” (Levinas 1996, p. 162). This peace, Levinas argues, falls into contradiction when its universalism becomes imperialism—indeed, rival imperialisms threatening in the Cold War to destroy the Earth itself. He notes in a Talmudic exegesis that “a Europe seeking itself, a universe established between men and nations and heavens and earth” is also “a Europe forever anxious without peace, frightened by its dreams and its weapons” (Levinas 1999, p. 97). The culture founded in this peace cannot recognize itself in its expressions, becoming increasingly contradictory “up to the supreme paradox where the defense of the human and its rights is perverted into Stalinism” (Levinas 1996, p. 163). Levinas not only places himself in opposition to a western philosophical tradition that privileges war, nor merely shows that such a philosophical tradition entertains notions of peace, but also declares that such an idea of peace is fundamentally flawed. Though he had not yet officially converted to Nazism, Heidegger was already, at the time of Davos, proclaiming violence as a principle of hermeneutics: “In order to wring from what the words say, what it is they want to say, every interpretation must necessarily use violence” (Gordon 2010, p. 131). On the other hand, Cassirer’s pacifism was not nearly pacifist enough. It is not merely that Cassirer lost the debate to Heidegger at Davos, or that Heidegger’s ontological phenomenology came to displace Cassirer’s Neo-Kantianism, but that even the pacifism of the western tradition, which Cassirer represented in his thought and person, perverts itself into militarism. Against both the militarist and the pacifist traditions which Levinas identifies in western thought, he proposes, especially towards the conclusion of Totality and Infinity, a positive peace. The face, he argues, “is preeminently nonviolence, for instead of offending my freedom it calls it to responsibility and founds it. As non-violence it nonetheless maintains the plurality of the same and the other. It is peace” (Levinas 1969, p. 203). Identifying peace with the face, it need hardly be said, identifies it with the phenomenon central to Levinas’s mature philosophy. “The opposition of the face,” he says elsewhere, “is a pacific opposition, but one where peace is not a suspended war or a violence simply contained” (Levinas 1987b, p. 19). The relationship is explained in a longer passage on the penultimate page of Totality and Infinity, which we may take to provide a conclusion to Levinas’s first magnus opus: The unity of plurality is peace, and not the coherence of the elements that constitute plurality. Peace therefore cannot be identified with the end of combats that cease for want of combatants, by the defeat of some and the victory of the others, that is, with cemeteries or future universal empires. Peace must be my peace, in a relation that starts from an I and goes to the other, in desire and goodness, where the I both maintains itself and exists without egoism. (Levinas 1969, p. 306)