

Levinasian Ethics of Face As Moral Guidance for Leaders of Superior Quality

Agustinus Tamtama Putra,

tinustam@gmail.com

Sanata Dharma University

Antonius Along,

antoniusalong05@gmail.com

Universitas Terbuka Jakarta,

Abstract

This paper elaborates on Emmanuel Levinas' idea of the face of the other, which is the ethical basis for the most humane treatment of others as subjects. This idea of the ethics of the face of levinasian then becomes a moral guideline for leaders of superior quality. The author argues that a good leader is one who sees and treats anyone not as an object, let alone as a means to get personal gain. An excellent leader is one who first realises that other people are the most prioritised, upheld in dignity, loved as the primordial human intuition in looking at someone's face. In conclusion, this research underlines the discovery that superior quality leaders are effectively formed through the meaning and embodiment of levinasian face ethics in various contexts of life together.

Keywords: *Face, Other, Leader, Ethics, Humanity*

I. Introduction¹

Leadership is the ability to influence and motivate others to achieve a common goal. In an organisational context, leadership is not just about giving instructions, but also inspiring, empowering and supporting team members to reach their full potential. Leadership can be defined as the process of influencing the activities of individuals or groups to achieve specific goals in specific situations. It involves the ability to direct, motivate and support team members. Effective leaders are able to create a clear vision, inspire others, and build a

positive work environment.

Effective leadership is critical to an organisation's success. Here are some reasons why leadership is a key factor. Firstly, it drives goals. Leaders provide clear direction and steer the team towards achieving organisational goals. Without effective leadership, team members may lose focus and direction. Second, it increases motivation. A good leader is able to motivate team members to work with passion and dedication. High motivation contributes to increased productivity and performance. Third, it builds co-operation. Effective leadership encourages co-operation and collaboration among team members. This creates a strong synergy and maximises the team's potential. Fourth, it encourages innovation. Leaders who support and empower team members create an environment that encourages creativity and innovation. This is essential for organisational adaptation and sustainability. Fifth, provide support. Leaders provide not only direction, but also the necessary support and guidance to help team members overcome challenges and achieve goals.

There are various leadership styles that can be applied, each with advantages and disadvantages. Here are some common leadership styles. Firstly, authoritarian or autocratic leadership. Leaders make their own decisions without consulting team members. This style is suitable for situations that require quick decisions or when team members lack experience. However, it can reduce team motivation and creativity. Second, participative and democratic leadership. The leader involves team members in the decision-making process. This increases team member satisfaction and commitment, but the decision-making process can be

¹ This section is an elaboration of Author 2, Antonius Along, *Seni Memimpin dalam Dinamika Organisasi Halaman 2 - Kompasiana.com*

slower. Third, delegative or *laissez-faire* leadership. The leader gives full freedom to team members to make decisions. This style is suitable for highly competent and independent teams, but the lack of supervision can lead to confusion. Fourth, transformational leadership. Leaders inspire and motivate teams with great vision and purpose. They encourage innovation and positive change in the organisation. However, the focus on long-term vision can neglect short-term needs. Fifth, transactional leadership. Leaders focus on clear tasks and responsibilities as well as rewards and punishments. This style is effective for maintaining performance and efficiency, but can stifle the creativity and initiative of team members. Sixth, servant leadership. The leader puts the needs and well-being of team members first. It builds strong and trusting relationships within the team, but can be perceived as less decisive in decision-making.

However, effective leadership with the various styles above is only possible by a person with superior moral qualities. The excellence of a leader lies in his ability to humanise people. Only a leader who prioritises the welfare and maintains human dignity—no matter who he or she is, including his or her subordinates—will be able to be a true leader who is effective and humanist. For this reason, it is necessary to learn from Emanuel Levinas in looking at fellow human beings, including co-workers, as subjects that are prioritised in the relational pattern of living together. For that purpose, the following section will discuss the ethics of the levinasian face as a basis for anyone who wants to become an effective leader with superior qualities.

II. Research Methods

This paper uses the literature method. First of all, an important theme that is the subject of ethics is to be stated, namely human beings. Ethics exists as far as humans, so humans initiate their lives based on this subjectivity. Only often in the course of history, human life becomes a monument of conflict. Man is no longer the subject of his life, but an object that often suffers a tragic fate.² So important is man that this paper will unravel the thought of Emmanuel Levinas that specifically answers the anxiety of man who asks about man as a subject in himself, something that may often be ignored in leadership. After exploring Levinas' thought, the next part is an interpretation of the relevance related to excellent leadership with Levinasian ethics as its moral guidance. Before that,

a brief biography of Levinas will be presented.

III. A little about Levinas³

Emmanuel Levinas was born in 1906 and grew up in Kaunas, Lithuania in the Jewish tradition where the Hebrew Scriptures influenced his whole being. In 1923 he moved to France to study philosophy and spent two semesters in Germany attending the lectures of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. However, since his entire family in Lithuania was murdered by the Nazis and after 1940-1945 he became a German prisoner as a French soldier and was not killed because he was not known to be Jewish, he decided never to set foot in Germany again.

After a military life where death was as close as his family members who were exterminated by the Nazis, Levinas turned to science. As director of the Ecole Normale Israelite Orientale in France, Levinas occupied himself with the interpretation of the Talmud as one of the main sources of Jewish life. Levinas wrote a famous book based on his dissertation titled *Totality and the Infinite*. This book made him a professor of philosophy at Poitiers. Jacques Derrida in 1967 discussed Levinas' book in depth. Levinas' next famous work after he became a professor at Paris-Nanterre and the Sorbonne was entitled *Other Than Existence or Beyond Essence*. Levinas died on 25 December 1995, after his namesake Immanuel, on the birthday of Jesus.

Emmanuel Levinas⁴ (hereafter Levinas) elevates human subjectivity to the highest level. However, the subjectivity in question is not in a solitary sense—limited or confined to and within itself—but in a deep, open and peaceful subject relationality. This character leads to the belief that Levinas' subject matter is truly contextualised within the framework of living together as human co-subjects. The conflictual monuments of human life are characterised by many things and show that humans can also be objects of subjectivity. The discussion of the subject and the consequences that follow ethically is therefore the subject of discussion here in order to anticipate also the reductionistic and equalising tendencies that alienate the subject into absolutism. The following section talks about levelling ethics as a moral guideline against the unjust treatment of human beings.

2 Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Holocaust*, UK: Polity Press, 1989, 6-13.

3 Cf. Franz Magnis-Suseno, *12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 2000, 88.

4 Translation of Levinas' writings into Indonesian and commentary on them from Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Abad Kedua Puluh*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 2006, pp. 85-110.

IV. Levinasian Ethics⁵

Levinas' ethics speaks of a reality "over here". "Over here" is of course different from "over there" where it seems so close, not distant and even fused with the subject's innermost self. "Over here" implies the attitude that people take. This is the default attitude closest to humans, without distance, without objectification when "meeting" someone. It is the basic attitude from which the primordial responsibility for the unique human person is derived and reveals the uniqueness of the individual. This primordial responsibility in turn becomes the consciousness of human nature, a deep intuition when encountering the uniqueness of another human being.⁶

In his study of humans as subjects, Levinas does not propose a theory of ethics. Influenced by Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas tends to see phenomenological reality as in the creed of phenomenology itself, namely observing what appears. In his study, Levinas did not necessarily agree but also criticised Husserl where for him, Husserl stopped at the structure of consciousness, limited to asking about reality and tended to see other people as "my object". In this case, the negation of the other occurs where humans are raped of their uniqueness because they are considered different. For Levinas, Husserl repeats a philosophical mistake throughout history by tending to merge plurality into one. This reductionistic tendency is seen as totalitarian because it leads to the oppression and killing of "others" in history. The I-you, we-they dichotomy is very dangerous in this regard. In fact, for Husserl, the emergence of the other as the other is a definite phenomenon in reality. Presence always breaks down selfhood.⁷

Martin Heidegger on the other hand contributed important ideas to Levinasian ethics. The horizon of existence for Heidegger is considered the basis of human existence and every human being obeys that existence. For Levinas, Heidegger ignores ethics when he relativises everything into the universality of existence. This then emasculates the "otherness" of

human beings, everything is generalised or melted into that universality. It is clear that it is not the human being at the centre that should be loved and cared for, but the existence itself so that all are equated. It is within this framework that Heidegger is considered a supporter of Nazi ideology, which of course was very traumatic for Levinas personally.

Levinas developed the ideas of Husserl and Heidegger. From Husserl, on the one hand, there is a trace of the phenomenological method that examines what is revealed. There is an art in seeing what is there but unseen. Levinas applies this in seeing what really happens when he meets other people. Heidegger, on the other hand, contributed the idea of getting out of Husserl's subject-object framework. The open and ready-to-be-filled horizon of existence for Levinas becomes a space of encounter between subjects and the moment of the emergence of others with their unique authenticity.

Levinas emphasises the "other" as other in its own right.⁸ This ethics does not imply a normative sense in which we should pay attention to others, respect and care. More fundamentally, the point of departure for Levinas' ethics is the simple everyday reality that when there is a moment of encounter with another person, everyone is already bound by primordial responsibility. In this case, the layer of consciousness is not as in the Cartesian *clara et distincta* idea as Husserl thought because words are always inadequate and representative enough in parsing reality. Similarly, the Heideggerian "language as the home of being" where the event of being "inside" existence - by Levinas - is considered not to recognise language itself. Therefore, Levinas' language is in line with Wittgenstein's statement that the implicit is often difficult to say with simple everyday language. The ontological language of existence is rejected as in the philosophical tradition that asserts ontology is metaphysics or first philosophy as in Aristotle's thought. For Levinas, first philosophy is not ontology, but ethics. The tendency of ontological metaphysics to reduce plurality to sameness and eliminate diversity becomes the "philosophy of sameness". In "Other Than There Is" Levinas thus performs a *linguistic turn* in a metaphorical way because words in everyday language are not sufficient in explaining reality. So the words

5 For the inspiration for this section, see. Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Abad Kedua Puluh*, 89-93

6 On responsibility for the other Paul Marcus quotes Levinas, "I understand responsibility as responsibility for the Other, thus as responsibility for what is not my deed, or for what does not even matter to me; or which precisely does matter to me, is met by me as face." cf. Paul Marcus, *Being for the Other*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008, 39.

7 For the section on Levinas' ethics in relation to Husserl and Heidegger see. Franz Magnis-Suseno, *12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20*, 89-91.

8 Writing about Levinas' thoughts on the Other Frances Gray says, "Space and time separate us, but, paradoxically, space and time also bring us together as the mystery we live, the mystery of human existence and the mystery of 'autrui'". Cf. Frances Gray, *Jung and Levinas*, New York: Routledge, 2016, 55.

Levinas uses are also nuanced in the experience of meeting others, including “hostage-taking” or “the state of the accused”.⁹ In this book, there is a circular structure in the semitic rhetorical tradition, where a point is circled and elaborated from different points of view in repetition.

V. The Face of Otherness

Levinas argues that philosophy tends to generalise the different or the disparate into totality or universality. This he calls the totalitarian tendency of egological totalism. Instead of departing from this universality, Levinas departs from the absoluteness in encounter which thus entails the impermanence of the other. Socrates says that the other is the other me and thus reduces the “many to me” with me as the centre. This kind of metaphysical equation threatens the “external world” as the result of the subject’s cognitive engineering. The culmination of all this is found in German idealism in the thought of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel where the “moment” of the Universal Spirit (the Grand Narrative) eliminates infinity as also found in the thought of Husserl and Heidegger.¹⁰

Such a philosophy of identity or—let’s call it—a philosophy of equation is opposed by Levinas. He fears that alterity or otherness is not guaranteed or threatened, following the other because it negates the other, totalitarian, reductionistic, universal. For the Jewish minority, this is especially contextual in the context of the horrific experience of Levinas’ family in Lithuania “and the Jewish fate is just a kind of striking paradigm of something that happened everywhere, throughout history, but culminated in the 20th century, where people, ethnic, racial, religious, national minorities who were antagonised, small people, indigenous tribes, homeless people etc., were discriminated against, oppressed, driven from their homes, terrorised, murdered.”¹¹ The philosophy of identity, which is also Heidegger’s inability to place ethics in his philosophical system—in Levinas’ eyes—is part of the package of barbarism.

Levinas emphasises that the other must be secured and not threatened. This is also a message of deep humanism,¹² do not be cruel to your neighbour and

be a philosophical prophet. According to Jewish tradition, Levinas proposes several terms that hint at this prophetic dimension, including “glory”, “choice” (Yahwe), “creation”, “prophecy”, “inspiration”, “testimony”. In this case, philosophy becomes a place to look for the “trace” of others who must be saved. The encounter with the *other* has two implications in Levinas’ thought, namely the *visage* in *Totality* and the *substitution* in *Other Than There*. In these two key terms, Levinas does not mean normative things to do as taught by other ethical figures or schools. More fundamentally and radically, Levinasian ethics opens the eyes to “the presence of the other as the basis of existence”. “Face” or “face”¹³ is not in the sense of a visible physical appearance, but of a “presence” where we “meet each other face to face”. Face implies presence and greeting. The face greets us, sometimes with words, sometimes with silence. This is a common phenomenon of daily life.

The logical implication of presence is face as the appearance of another person (epifany). The person who makes his presence known to us is unique in himself, beyond our control. Our choice of loving or hating, hugging or hitting is a reaction that follows later. What matters most in Levinasian face ethics is the moment of gaze or the moment of encounter. In a more fundamental sense, the person with whom we meet cannot be intimidated or dominated, nor can they be integrated into a broader framework, categorising them, locking and sorting them according to the disposition of the subject. It is as it is, different, in front of me. The face is naked, sublime, unmasked so that it cannot be ignored, eliminated, dismissed, a kind of absolute and infinite reality. That is why the face screeches, “don’t kill me!”¹⁴ a primordial appeal in which we are powerless to harm. Though we may want to and be able to, we cannot resist what appears before us. This is the power in the powerlessness of the face. Not “killing” the face is purely ethical in Levinas.

“Don’t kill me!” cannot be avoided. The same greeting is also reserved for my subject. In this case we are responsible for each other. This responsibility leads to freedom. The choice lies with the one who is aware

9 Franz Magnis-Suseno, *12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20*, 93.

10 Franz Magnis-Suseno, *12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20*, 94.

11 Franz Magnis-Suseno, 95. Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Holocaust*, 66, where racism and all kinds of hatred are the root of all crimes against humanity.

12 “Hanya hubungan dengan orang lainlah membuka dimensi transendensidan mengantarkan kita ke sebuah hubungan yang

sama sekali berbeda dari pengalaman dalam arti kata inderawi yang relatif dan egois...” lih. Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Abad Kedua Puluh*, 91.

13 John Llewelyn, *Emmanuel Levinas The Genealogy of Ethics*, New York: Routledge, 1995, 64.

14 The primordial expression of Genesis in the decalogue reads, “You shall not kill.” Cf. Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Abad Kedua Puluh*, 94.

of the appeal when gazing at a face. In the moment of gaze, ethical responsibility is created as primordial data of encounter. Although sometimes when dealing with new people we are not always ready to react, the reaction is a process of incorporating the person's phenomena. Humans cannot be spectators or passive in the moment of encounter. The "noble" other implies both a challenge and a calling. In this primordial moment of encounter we cannot run away, be held captive, held hostage, persecuted before any reaction. Nor can we be free and indifferent in this encounter, because we are totally responsible for the salvation of that person. It is this totality that brings us into the person's position or in other words "substituted" where his burden becomes my burden, his anxiety my anxiety, his hope my hope. Levinas calls this "passivity that is more passive than passivity" because reaction comes later. Responsibility automatically precedes attitude.¹⁵

Encounter for Levinas is the primordial data where I become me when I encounter others. Indeed, the uniqueness of me can only be understood in relation to others. To quote Isaiah 6:8 "this is who I am" passivity is about being responsible and willing, though whether one wants to or not is a reaction that comes later. Other semitic religious terms from Levinas' life background related to this responsibility include "infinity", "glory" and "inspiration". The presence of the other as an absolute reality where passivity means helplessness in the presence of the "Infinite" as the absolute horizon of meaning. The subject bears witness to the "Infinite"¹⁶ in primordial experience. This transcendental aspect is not in the sense of generalisation, but rather a leap over limitations as a feature of worldly contingency, gazing at the "glory of the Infinite."

The essence of Levinas's ethics is to take responsibility for safety because others are easily hurt and it is up to the subject entirely. A priori the subject must bear his life. According to Levinas, goodness is first. Unlike in Plato's view where the first idea is the One or the Existent, Levinas asserts that the first is the Good. This is the ontological reality. Everyone is chosen, not forced or raped, cannot reject the "Good". Each person is not simply thrown into the world like the Heideggerian idea of abandonment, but rather an essential acceptance like a mother of her child. Life

is then about extending oneself, accepting with open arms the presence of the other.

Finally, responsibility intersects with justice.¹⁷ Face presents a primordial ethic that leads to total responsibility. Although one cannot be total in giving oneself to everyone given that there are many others, justice begins with the presence of a third party. In this justice, one cannot be passive anymore. Activeness in greetings and words, with regard to attention, time, property and self is a matter of justice. Justice in this case is a primordial face. Each person acts as an agent of justice after coming face to face with the face of the other.

VI. Comparison of teleological and deontological ethics¹⁸

Levinas' ethics is not teleological Aristotelian which emphasises that humans should do things for the sake of eudaimonistic happiness by being wise. Wisdom in Levinas' eyes cannot answer the fundamental issues related to human rights. Human beings must be protected and safeguarded not in the solitary-conceptual state of the subject which thus makes others the object of all the subject's wisdom, but arises from phenomenological open awareness based on love. While Levinas does not explicitly say that love is the source of responsibility and substitution, it is clear that both indicate that in the moment of encounter and towards the person encountered, one must inevitably love. It is in this sense that Levinas' ethics of love—so to speak—leads to a deeper sense of human dignity. Given that wisdom is not always good and that people have different levels of wisdom, Levinas' ethics more deeply and tangibly highlights human presence insofar as humans are the source of ethics.¹⁹

Levinas' ethics is also not a Kantian deontology where Kant highlighted that ethics is about performing obligations based on the rules of the game that are common to the whole society, as well as respect for those common laws. This kind of conceptual universality of ethics is clearly not accepted by Levinas. Generalising ethics to a conceptual level threatens the uniqueness of the individual self. Kant's abstract law is also not a

15 Passivity does not mean immobility, nor is it bondage because "... sensibility and passivity are related to the ethical sensibility and passivity in which my being accused by the other is at the same time my accusing myself..." cf. John Llewelyn, Emmanuel Levinas The Genealogy of Ethics, 175.

16 Franz Magnis-Suseno, 12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20, 101.

17 Franz Magnis-Suseno, 12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20, 103.

18 Cf. Franz Magnis-Suseno, 12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20, 106-107; cf. Frances Gray, Jung and Levinas, 80.

19 Frances Gray, Jung and Levinas, 80: refers to the responsibility for the presence of the other as a metaphysical three-part series: "1. The Other as Infinity pre-exists and engenders me; 2. The Other cannot be reduced to the Other of the same (the Other is not simply a not-me); 3. I am responsible for the Other."

solution to the problem of human rights; in fact, this tendency to consolidate can make humans sacrifices for other humans as long as the general law remains in force. For Levinas, responsibility and care overcome all conceptual levels of ethics. The practice of ethics is only possible if real, unitary, whole human beings present before us are loved and not killed, accepted in all their uniqueness.

After looking at Levinas' view of ethics and juxtaposing it with teleological and deontological ethics, the following section will show the contextualisation of the above ethical foundation in leadership character. A good leader, in essence, is one who upholds humanity above all else. It is unacceptable for a true leader to suck the lives of subordinates, make subordinates as objects like a squeezed cow, let alone sacrifice subordinates as a sacrifice to pass all desires that lead to the dredging of personal gain. Ethically, such a leader is clearly immoral. A good leader is one who builds as described in the following section.

VII. Contextualisation for Leaders²⁰

Constructive leadership is a concept that encompasses the idea that leaders are not only in charge of directing, but are also instrumental in creating a strong foundation for the development of an individual, organisation or society. A good leader is able to bring about positive change, as well as motivate others to contribute to achieving a common goal. What are the characteristics, challenges and impacts of constructive leadership? The first characteristic of a constructive leader is having a clear and inclusive vision. A constructive leader has a clear vision and is able to inspire others to work towards that vision. However, a good vision is not just a big idea, it must also be inclusive, meaning all members of the team or community feel recognised and have a role in its achievement. A constructive leader is also able to communicate effectively so that every individual understands the vision and how to achieve it.

Second, a leader who is able to listen and empathise. A constructive leader must have the ability to listen actively. This means they not only listen to the opinions of others, but also seek to understand their underlying perspectives and feelings. The ability to empathise allows the leader to respond to the challenges and needs faced by others, thus creating a sense of trust and solidarity within the group.

Third, leaders are good at making wise decisions. Effective leadership requires wise decision-making. Constructive leaders consider various viewpoints and conduct in-depth analyses before making decisions. They understand that the decisions they make not only affect the present, but also have a long-term impact on the well-being of the people they lead.

Fourth, a leader is one who is able to inspire and galvanise. A constructive leader not only commands, but also motivates. They are able to inspire those around them to give their best, even in difficult situations. This kind of leader creates an environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to contribute their best.

Fifth, true leaders have responsibility and integrity. A good leader must have integrity, which means they walk their talk. They act consistently with their values, and are not afraid to take responsibility for their mistakes. Leadership with integrity creates trust, which is a key element in building strong relationships with the people they lead.

But what are the challenges in building constructive leadership?

Despite the many benefits of constructive leadership, there are some challenges that leaders often face. One of the biggest challenges is dealing with resistance to change. Many people are comfortable with the status quo and feel fearful or anxious about changes that may come. A constructive leader must be patient and able to show people that change is necessary and beneficial. Another challenge is limited resources. Often, leaders are faced with situations where they have to work with limited resources, be it in the form of time, manpower, or funds. This is where the ability to innovate and think creatively is needed.

In addition, maintaining a balance between personal, group and organisational interests can be challenging. A constructive leader must be able to maintain harmony between these various interests to avoid harmful conflicts. If they are able to, the impact of constructive leadership is created. Constructive leadership has a significant impact on both individuals and society. At the individual level, it helps develop the potential of everyone involved. Leaders who support the growth of individuals will help them achieve personal and professional success. At the organisational level, constructive leadership can improve productivity and team performance. The supportive and collaborative environment created by such leaders will encourage innovation, creativity and efficiency. At the societal level, constructive leadership can create sustainable change. Leaders who prioritise the public interest and

20 This section is an elaboration of Antonius Along's thoughts in *Pilar Penting dalam Mewujudkan Perubahan Positif*. "Kepemimpinan yang Membangun" Halaman all - Kompasiana.com

fight for social justice will create a more just, equal and prosperous society.

Constructive leadership is not just about leading, but also about creating a strong foundation for positive and sustainable change. A constructive leader has a clear vision, listens with empathy, makes wise decisions, and takes responsibility for his or her actions. Despite the challenges, the impact of constructive leadership can be felt in the long term, at the individual, organisational and wider community levels. Constructive leaders will continue to inspire the next generation, demonstrating that with integrity, vision and empathy, positive change can be achieved.

VIII. Conclusion

The most important thing that can be concluded from this entire paper is that Levinas raises the essential thing of human life, namely its presence. Human presence is not only at the physical sensory level, but more deeply as an appeal to respect human dignity. A leader should be aware of this fact. Cruelty in the name of institutions or certain groups is a failure to see the cry of others "don't kill me!" This failure to see is what Levinas considers to be the result of "socratism" where everything is equalised. A failed leader is one who does not see others as subjects. Levinas' message is clear, stop all kinds of oppression! In the world of work, for example, oppression often occurs because leaders fail to prioritise humanity and instead turn to authoritarian tendencies. So the philosophy of identity, big stories, logocentrism, metaphysics and all philosophical hegemony that triggered various barbarities throughout human history are rejected by Levinas, as well as the oppressive patterns of leaders who objectify others, in this case their subordinates. This is contextual to contemporary extreme movements, and the barbarity that accompanies them at all levels of fear,²¹ as well as the negative tendencies of today's leaders who are non-ethical, or at least ignore the importance of ethical thinking.

The real subject matter of this Levinasian ethical view is violence and injustice, in short, the objectification of the subject in all fields and domains

of life, in all contexts throughout the ages,²² including the attitudes and treatment of leaders towards their subordinates. In this case, humans have fallen into the blindness of seeing human diversity as the beauty and realisation of the "Infinity" that is essential in human life. To realise the importance of the human person with all the uniqueness, Levinas underlines the primordial rights that everyone should receive from anyone, namely the right not to be hurt. True leaders reach that deep sensitivity. So Levinas explains the process of understanding begins with the process of encounter in which it is phenomenologically revealed that in fact everyone has the right to life, not to be threatened, not to be killed, not to experience a tragic fate. Of course, this is all based on Levinas' personal experience, but his ethics opens the horizon of how respecting human beings is always the priority of ethics. The idea of a unique other that must remain unique in the encounter brings with it the responsibility to preserve the other's uniqueness, something that every leader should be aware of.

As a respondent, the author sees that the ethics raised by Levinas are really sharp in seeing the often complex reality of life, especially in the relationship between leaders and the people they lead. Living together in communities, families, workplaces and various other domains actually requires mutual understanding and care, as well as sufficient understanding complemented by full awareness that other humans are realities in which the universe of meaning is included. Heidegger's horizon of existence in Levinas's vision must be read in the context of the existence of person to person, person to person. Respect for human dignity is an absolute requirement in living together amidst all the divisions that occur in all places and times. But in the context of no physical encounter, does Levinas' thought still trigger awareness? Before thinking about contemporary technological advances, structured evil in the military - with the Nazis as an example directly related to Levinas' life - holds great danger because orders are carried out by subordinates at the behest of superiors without seeing faces.²³ Leaders with a Hitlerian style will tend to ignore the faces of their neighbours and horse-goggled subordinates will submit to do everything without

21 That morality can be subordinated and even legally legalised to the point of collective solidarity and consensus, Bauman wrote in a commentary on the crimes of Nazi General Eichmann, *thus, "In the aftermath of the Holocaust, legal practice, and thus also moral theory, faced the possibility that morality may manifest itself in insubordination towards socially upheld principles, and in an action openly defying social solidarity and consensus."* Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Holocaust*, 177.

22 Bauman's Nazis, who were also close to Levinas' life, are just one of the millions of human barbarities that even in modern times, if not vigilant, are very likely to occur through the legitimisation of certain groups that negate others and consider their truth claims to be absolute. Cf. Franz Magnis-Suseno, *12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20*, 108.

23 Franz Magnis-Suseno, *12 Tokoh Etika Abad ke-20*, 95.

rational consideration. Certain strategies come from, say, commanders and commanders from generals who will naturally be distorted to implement the tactics without considering whether this has an impact on the face of the other. Such considerations may escape the scrutiny of such structuralist institutions. It becomes even more of a threat to face when in the advanced medium of information technology, people are not face-to-face so they dare to spread hateful news, so loudly speak (even if when caught then cry and regret). Real personal presence in cyberspace can be a threat to the Levinasian ethics of face.

Finally, it remains the case that Levinas' ethics contributes great ideas for ethics and excellent leadership. Everyone, especially leaders, are "called" to be philosophical-phenomenological prophets by truly paying attention to human beings as ethical subjects, as the basic source of morals. The human rights in each person should be upheld as the presence of the "Other". The advice for leaders of all ages, including modern humans, is once again to listen to the cries of "don't kill me!" from other humans, whether they meet physically or virtually. So considerations about the presence of the face of the Other must be included in all domains of human life, including the world of professional work. The benefit of Levinas' ethics is that it opens up the realisation that life cannot be arbitrary. There is a world into which humans must enter and position themselves-substitute themselves-so that the world in the face feels loved and accepted. The sense of sacredness of that face becomes an absolute requirement to enter the life in question. A good leader is aware of this fact and aware of this ethical intuition. Contextual relevance becomes an open space for further practical elaboration in the world of work where the expected leader is one who has sensitivity to human rights and more fundamentally, sees God in every face he meets. ■

IX. Literature

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