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Trinitarian Theology via Levinas' Non-Phenomenology

Abstract: The article aims to develop the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas as a valuable new perspective in understanding the triune drama of the Resurrection. Firstly, the juxtaposition of Levinas' thought and Christian theology will be argued for, followed by a development of von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology of the Resurrection. Especially, Levinas' non-phenomenological notion of "otherness" will be used to offer an understanding of the Risen Christ's "Otherness" as communicating the non-phenomenality of Holy Saturday to the disciples. As a result, we discover significant theological openings towards a vision of a Biblical God free from the constraints of ontological thinking and phenomenal experience.

Introduction

It may seem peculiar to connect the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas[1] and Christian theology of the Trinity. Only a small, but growing number of authors, namely Michael Purcell, Adriaan Peperzak, Graham Ward, David Ford, Michael Barnes, Paul Ricoeur, Marie Baird, Stephen Webb, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion, Robyn Horner, Richard Kearney and Michele Saracino have ever directly or indirectly thought about Levinas and Christian theology.[2] While there is little evidence of anyone else attempting to connect the thought of Levinas particularly with the theology of the Trinity and Paschal Mystery, there do seem to be points of possible connection that this article will explore more thoroughly.

It should however be pointed out that the article does not seek to impose Christian thinking on Levinas' ethical metaphysics or Jewish humanism. The article aims to examine Levinas' thought as a valuable new perspective in articulating the triune drama of the Resurrection. However, certain questions and related issues need to be confronted in order to give justifiable evidence for the article's project of juxtaposing Christian theology with Levinas' thought.

1. Levinas' Thought and Christian Theology: Questions and Issues

Why should a Jewish thinker be used as a resource for Christian, Trinitarian thinking? How can Levinas admit such a Christian reading? These questions point to a number of issues: (i) the ongoing relationship between philosophical thought and the historical tradition of Christian thinking; (ii) the sensitivities involved in articulating the compatibility of Levinas' Judaism with Christian thought; and (iii) whether God is an experience and/or an encounter?

(i) Philosophy and Christian Thought

In the historical tradition of Christian thinking, Christianity has looked to the Greek philosophy of Plotinus and Aristotle and turned to the Continental thought of Immanuel Kant, Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger for inspiration. Moreover, for almost the past two millennia, Christian theology has developed outside the tradition of Rabbinic Judaism. This is all the more poignant for "a sheer closeness"[3] exists between these two great Abrahamic traditions as Aquinas and Maimonides' similar stances on "key philosophical and theological matters"[4] testify. Through the Husserlian phenomenological tradition, Christianity has in recent times has eventually met and faced Judaism theologically and philosophically. The meeting, which is not without historical significance, is exemplified par excellence in Christian theology's interest in the ethical metaphysics of Emmanuel Levinas. Perhaps this present era offers Christian and Jewish thinking a more open context for dialogue and mutual enrichment than, for example, the first and second centuries of the Common Era when the Christian movement was in "tension with the emergent Rabbinic Judaism".[5] Certainly the presence of Jewish-Christian friendship[6] after World War Two[7] exemplifies this possibility.

Levinas' writings, following in the wake of Franz Rosenzweig,[8] point prophetically to a possible bridge between Christian theology and Jewish ethical thinking. Dialogue between ethical metaphysics and theology is not new. Kant himself, by advocating an "ethical theology,"[9] had pointed to the need for Christian theology to be complemented by ethical metaphysics. Levinas' writings also echo much of Kant's polemical critique of morality, reason and theology ("a knowledge of God and His existence")[10] as well as going beyond his "reconstruction of metaphysics".[11]

Levinas' writings are paradoxically both a polemic against Christianity and a proclamation of Christian praxis underlined in Matthew, chapter 25.[12] Furthermore, his work is a process of defining Jewish identity in a Christian European world of thought, language, violence and hope. His writings cannot help but allude to Christian theological themes which at times he directly addresses. Levinas' reference to the Talmud gives the opportunity for Christian theology to begin appreciating the magnitude of such a resource. Especially from this perspective, any appreciation of Levinas' thought demands sensitivity.

(ii) Christian Imperialism and Onto-Theology

Developing a theology of the Trinity with Levinas' writings runs the risk of Christian imperialism. Here the Christian theologian must, first and foremost, be sensitive to Levinas' own background, the contexts of his thought and his original thinking. Secondly, the Christian theologian must bear in mind his or her own essential context, "the degree to which Christian theology can let God be original Love at work in all lives and traditions, uttering itself as an unconditional affirmation of the worth of all humanity and communicating itself as ever greater Lovingness to the desire and aspiration of the human heart".[13] The challenge, therefore, is to

remain faithful to the presence of "original Love" in Levinas' writings. At times, this will necessarily involve going beyond Levinas' own writings by utilising his philosophical conceptions in a Christian theological context. However, enriching a theology of the Trinity beyond his intended context might seem insensitive to his original thinking. Why should Levinas admit such a Christian reading of his writings? This stresses the importance of having both a dialogical and dialectical approach. Perhaps, the greatest challenge for the Christian theologian is grappling with Levinas' understanding of Being's otherwise and using it to inspire a theology beyond the confines of ontology.

One of the major reasons why Levinas' writings could be open to a Christian reading is that he himself points to the need of finding an answer to the insoluble problem of Jewish-Christian relations.[14] It is a question of going "beyond dialogue"[15] in order to "have the idea of a possibility in which the impossible may be sleeping".[16] In this light, the challenge for the Christian theologian is to go "towards the Other where he is truly other".[17] Any Christian theological project that seeks to use Levinas' thought as a resource must engage in a "new spirituality"[18] of radical alterity. Marie Baird, in her conclusion to her article on revisioning Christian theology in the light of Levinas' Ethics, expresses the call for such an approach:

> I have tried to show that the thought of Emmanuel Levinas can be instrumental in laying an ethical enactment, rather than an ontological basis, for the revisioning of Christian theology that will indeed support the primacy of such responsibility. In light of the Holocaust, Christian theology is called to nothing less.[19]

The implication here for Christian theology is to find a necessary unity between orthodoxy and ethical orthopraxis when in theology. This article will aim to show a positive appreciation of Levinas' Jewish background, while precluding the possibilities of "proselytism and

propaganda,"[20] which stem particularly from onto-theological conceptions of God. For Levinas, the greatest violence of onto-theology is reducing any rational articulation about God into "a reason become political and detached from all ethics".[21]

In relation to the fact that Levinas' thought is "dominated by the presentiment and the memory of the Nazi horror,"[22] a "revised" Christian theology bears the responsibility of contributing "to the prevention of a future Holocaust".[23] Christian theology must endeavour to safeguard its ontological conceptions of God from the temptation of integrating political and even economic ideologies. The very juxtaposition of theology and alterity helps to safeguard Christian theology from the grave dangers of imperialistic thinking. As a result, possessing an "ethical stance"[24] provides an appropriate context to theologise about God's Being.[25]

(iii) The Experience/Encounter of God

Another important challenge lies in Levinas' notion of God as primarily an indirect encounter and not an experience. He is suspicious of the word, 'experience' [*expérience*] and tends not to use it when writing about the relation of alterity. Even though Levinas does use the word *vécu* for lived experience throughout his interviews and writings,[26] in my judgment his notion of *expérience* also reflects *vécu*, but however in a "terrifying" way. He notes that *expérience* "expresses always a knowledge of which the I is master"[27] and also, "I am very cautious with this word. Experience is knowledge".[28] In summary, in contrast to my responsibility for the other that testifies to infinity, experience is the very mode of Being that reduces the Other to the Same.

Levinas implies enigmatically that that presence of God has a special obscurity. God remains absolutely anonymous until God's Word is heard through the non-phenomenality of the Other's

face. As a result, God is encountered non-phenomenally as a trace on the Other's face. Only a life of coming to responsibility through time (diachrony) brings unity between human free will and God's immemorial act of obliging the self to be truly responsible.

Why, therefore, should Levinas' writings admit a Christian reading when Christians use both experience and encounter to describe God's being-with-us? However, could not, for example, the drama of Holy Saturday[29] be understood as both an experience of God-forsakenness and an encounter of God's solidarity? Particularly, as will now be shown in the article, Levinas' thought provides a valuable opening for understanding the non-phenomenal encounter of God in the Trinitarian drama in the Resurrection.

2. The Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Non-Phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas

By focusing on one particular Christian theologian, a precise context can be elaborated in which Christian theology and Levinas' thought may "complement and correct each other".[30] After all, Purcell, Ward and Ford have all engaged the writings of Christian theologians[31] with Levinas' philosophy. Significantly for the article, Hans Urs von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology has yet to be explored in this regard. As it articulates a dramatic conception of the Trinity in the Paschal Mystery, it offers many possibilities to be enriched by Levinas' philosophical and Talmudic writings. To a large extent, the article continues in the emerging tradition of engaging Levinas' *philosophical work* with theology.

Exploring a non-phenomenological understanding of the triune drama of the Resurrection exemplifies especially how Levinas' thought might "complement and correct" von Balthasar's theology. However, why would a non-phenomenological representation of the Trinity and the

Resurrection be better than a phenomenological one? Furthermore, would not such a "representation" still unavoidably imply a phenomenon? In response to the latter question, Levinas' non-phenomenology could be depicted more as a post or meta-phenomenology[32] that goes beyond sense experience by describing the traces of things. Such a construction of meaning would have an important bearing for Trinitarian theology. For example, in contrast to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity that conceives God objectively and systematically, Levinas' non-phenomenology perceives God as a trace coming to mind in the Other's face. Through his kind of ethical reduction, theology is challenged to deepen its reflection about God's nature in relation to the suffering neighbour. In this light, any reflection upon the triune drama of the Resurrection must eventually coincide with religious encounters of ethical responsibility. As a result, a non-phenomenological analysis would hope to inspire Christian theology to be a living testimony of Christ's kenotic life in the Paschal Mystery.

3. "At the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible."[33] Developing von Balthasar's Trinitarian Theology of the Resurrection with Levinas' Ethical Metaphysics.

(i) Can the Truth of Love Outlast Hell?

The encounter of the Risen Christ for the disciples is direct and phenomenal. However, there is a great part of their encounter that they could not sense ostensibly. Could they ever comprehend the magnitude of Christ's suffering in going to the dead? Here lies the tension between Christ and the world. Whereas the "face of the world"[34] manifests the "evil of suffering"[35] as meaningless, the face of Christ proclaims "the evil of suffering" as the original call and opening for justice, mercy and salvation.[36] When the Risen Christ appears to the

disciples his face testifies how suffering "extreme passivity, helplessness, abandonment and solitude"[37] is never "useless"[38] and "for nothing".[39]

The face of Christ exasperates the logic of a world "detached from all ethics".[40] The logic of a Biblical God is confounding: suffering, death, solidarity with the dead and lastly, Resurrection. How then, might the world respond to the question, "Can the truth of love outlast hell?" This is a question asking whether faithfulness to God is possible at the very moment of God-forsakenness. For von Balthasar, the response depends on Christ himself. He reflects:

> Who is Jesus Christ for me? The only man in the history of the world who dared make a claim how God has established him in the Old Testament; who for that reason was looked upon as crazy and possessed (Mk 3:21f) and was crucified. For modesty is becoming to a wise man, and it is becoming for a prophet to say "Word of the Lord," not "but I say to you." God the Father confirmed this claim with the resurrection of Jesus, and thus was established the primitive Christian core of dogma: God is love; the immanent Trinity is revealed in the economic, and precisely as God's "orthopraxis" in the giving of his Son to divine abandonment and hell, which is the greatest possible conception of God … It depends on him [Jesus Christ] whether we can dare to address being as love, and thus all beings as worthy of love, an idea to which the face of the world would otherwise have hardly brought us.[41]

To ask, "Who is Jesus Christ for me?" suggests the need to be "faced" with Christ's suffering of hell. Further, "it depends" upon Christ to reveal how the truth of love can outlast hell. In this light, a study of the Trinitarian drama of how the Risen Christ commands his disciples to testify to the "the greatest possible conception of God" would prove valuable. Yet, in order to articulate clearly the Risen Christ's face revealing traces of his "divine abandonment" in hell, the

necessary tools of language are needed, of which Levinas' ethical metaphysics provides a unique source. Specifically, it offers a multitude of non-phenomenological, theological themes for von Balthasar's Trinitarian theology to draw from. Primary among these themes is the notion of otherness [*l'alterité*].[42] The notion emphasises how the encounter with God is a traumatic and unbearable responsibility.

A study of the Risen Christ's Otherness would extend possibilities for thinking rationally about, "What God's glory in its good truth is, was to be revealed in Jesus Christ, and ultimately in his absolute obedience of Cross and Hell".[43] Just as Christ revealed the good truth of his Trinitarian communality on the Cross (whereby "the spirit unites Father and Son while stretching their mutual love to the point of unbearability"[44]) he reveals it even to the dead. However, it is only in the light of the Resurrection, that the pneumatic-inspired diastasis (separation) and the pneumatic bridging of the diastasis are comprehensible.

The article will narrow its attention by focusing upon the Risen Christ's Otherness by utilising Levinas' ideas of the trace of *illeity* (otherness), encounter, diachrony, the non-phenomenality of the face[45] and the *il y a*.[46] The aim of the analysis is to develop, under the aegis of alterity, aspects of von Balthasar's articulation of the "the primitive Christian core of dogma". Specifically, von Balthasar perceives Christian dogma in the light of the "indissoluble perichoresis"[47] between the philosophical "*transcendentalia*"[48] (beauty, goodness, truth and unity) and the theological "*transcendentale*"[49] of glory (*doxa*).[50] The relation between Levinas' thought and von Balthasar's Trinitarian reflections upon Christian salvation history is also dialectical. Whereas Levinas speaks about God as an indirect encounter beyond Being, von Balthasar emphasises the ontological perception of the "*transcendantalia*" in God. In order to

remain faithful to Levinas' critique of ontological language, the article will seek to develop von Balthasar's triune drama of the Resurrection with Levinas' ethical metaphysics.

(ii) The Resurrection of the Son

In the wake of the centrifugal event of Holy Saturday, the Resurrection of the Son represents a revelation of triune love in human history. This love is a mutual encounter. Von Balthasar writes:

> Resurrection does not lie beyond history; one cannot, therefore, speak of an "historical pole' in the event. Rather is 'Jesus risen into history'. In that event, God acquires a definitive *figure* in which he appears to men, but this figure consists in the indissoluble reciprocal relationship which joins the God who gives himself in Christ to man who receives that gift, and entrusts himself to it. This is an originating relationship (like the *noēma* and *noēsis* of Husserl), existing only as personally actualised, which means to say in mutual encounter.[51]

Here the encounter of Christ appearing "to men" is exemplified in terms of Husserl's noema-noesis structure of consciousness.[52] Von Balthasar compares his reflection to Husserl's transcendental idealism to impress upon human consciousness how the Resurrection is an actual historical event of God's self-communicating love. Yet the structure of the noesis of the noema,[53] as Levinas has argued, cannot describe what is beyond seeing. Levinas' explicit emphasis on non-phenomenology suggests an important opening to understand the drama of Jesus risen into history. After all, the Risen Christ's appearing is not an isolated instant in history, but the culmination of God revealing God's Self through time and even beyond to the depths of hell. The Resurrection is not just a phenomenal encounter, but is also a non-

phenomenal one bearing the diachronic trace of Holy Saturday. In this light, the article will stress the link between Holy Saturday and the Resurrection though an analysis of Christ's Otherness.

iii) Alterity and Theology

The process here of using Levinas' ethical metaphysical language to enrich von Balthasar's theology produces a new horizon to reflect upon the Trinity and Paschal Mystery not only under the aegis of theology, but also under alterity. As a result, a theological reflection upon Christ's Otherness opens new perspectives especially for understanding the connection between Holy Saturday and the Resurrection. For example, does the Otherness of the Risen Christ become an encounter of redemption and/or an experience of God-forsakenness? Now to understand the Resurrection non-phenomenally and theologically depends crucially on examining the nature of the Risen Christ's Otherness in all its glory and ambiguity. At this point, Levinas' reflection on the diachronic nature of desire is helpful:

> Desire, or the response to an enigma, or morality, is a plot with three personages: the I approaches the infinite by going generously toward the you, who is still my contemporary, but, in the trace of illeity, presents himself out of a depth of the past, faces, and approaches me. I approach the infinite insofar as I forget myself for my neighbour who looks at me; I forget myself only in breaking the undephaseable simultaneity of representation, in existing beyond my death. I approach the infinite by sacrificing myself. Sacrifice is the norm and the criterion of the approach. And the truth of transcendence consists in the concording of speech with acts.[54]

In going beyond Levinas' intentions for his thought, could this reflection in any way apply non-phenomenally to the Risen Christ? The following analysis will seek to respond to the

question here by transposing Levinas' reflection to Jn 20:19-23 as a means of developing von Balthasar's theology. Again, the pivotal point overarching the analysis is to grasp the meaning of the Risen Christ's Otherness.

(iv) A Study of the Risen Christ's Otherness in Jn 20:19-23

When Christ approaches the disciples (Jn 20:19), they have a burning "desire" for him. The "desire" is also a "response" to the "enigma" of Christ's Resurrection signifying the triune morality of his whole existence. The disciple's "desire" for Christ unfolds as a dramatic "plot" of being commanded to a life of sacrifice.

In the drama of Jn 20:20-23, "three personages" are present, namely the disciples (the "I"), the Risen Christ ("the infinite" one) and Christ's Otherness ("the trace of *illeity*"):

> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sin of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

For the disciples to approach Christ, they approach "generously" (in an attitude of faith) what they see, namely Christ as the Resurrected One (the "you"). In proximity to Christ through the grace or "generosity" of being open towards this event of glory, the disciples are faced with a third "personage". "The Third" is Christ's Otherness (the trace of *illeity*). Therefore not only does Christ reveal himself face to face, but also indirectly. Such a reality emphasises that for both Jews and Christians, "We are always a threesome".[55] Levinas states: "The direct encounter with God, *this* is a Christian concept. As Jews, we are always a threesome: I am you and the Third who is in our midst. And only as a Third does He reveal Himself".[56] Even thought the

disciples are face to face with Christ, it is the non-phenomenal (indirect) encounter that deepens the effect of being faced by him.

The risen Christ, through the diachrony of his Otherness, "presents himself out of a depth of the past". However, before the disciples have received the Spirit, is any true response ultimately possible towards the Resurrected One who "faces" and "approaches" them out of the "depths" of Holy Saturday? The question asks whether disciples can ever discern - without the Spirit – between redeeming love and God-forsakenness? When the disciples witness Christ saying, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you," they encounter both an absolute joy and a traumatic surprise. The trauma is especially being faced with glory, namely that Christ has risen from the "dead," and as a result, possesses "the keys of Death and of Hades" (Rev 1:18).

For the disciples, no true response of responsibility is possible until Christ breathes the Spirit upon them. Before receiving the Spirit, the disciples are in a state of confusion; they are confronted by the *trace of illeity* in Christ's face revealing God-forsakenness and the extreme of solidarity with the damned. The trace of *illeity*, Christ's Otherness, confuses, startles and terrifies them like the "horror"[57] of the *il y a*: "They were startled and terrified, and thought they were seeing a ghost" (Lk 24:37). However, it is not until encountering the presence of the Spirit (as the manifestation of Christ's Otherness, namely "prophecy," in them) that the disciples' minds are opened (Lk 24:45): they "forget" themselves through "breaking the undephaseable simultaneity of representation, in existing beyond [their] death".[58]

After receiving the Spirit, how then do the disciples "approach" Christ? The "approach" is one of "sacrifice" whereby "speech" ("Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jn 21:15, 16, 17) "concord" with acts (following Jesus (Jn 21:19)). The true nature of such "transcendence" demands firstly, being faced with Christ's Otherness to the extent of receiving the Spirit

("prophecy") and secondly, witnessing to the inner Spirit through a Christ-like "sacrifice" ("testimony"). In this context, Christ's Otherness is like an "ordaining" command to hear the "Word of God" and follow him.[59]

(v) Christ's Otherness as "The Ideal Of Holiness": the unveiling of divine glory

The influence of Levinas notion of otherness provides a unique context to reflect upon Christ's Otherness. He states:

> What is important that the relation to the other [*à autrui*] is awakening [*l'éveil*] and sobering up [*le dégrisement*] – that awakening is obligation. You say to me: Isn't that obligation preceded by a free decision? What matters to me is, in the responsibility for the other, something like an older involvement than any rememberable deliberation constitutive of the human. It is evident that there is in man the possibility of not awakening to the other; there is the possibility of evil [*la possibilité du mal*]. Evil is the order of being pure and simple – and, on the contrary, to go toward the other is the penetration [*la percée*] of the human into being, an "otherwise than being" [*autrement qu'être*].[60]

The relation to an "other [*autrui*]" is perceived as an awakening [*l'éveil*] to an immemorial past of "obligation". For Levinas, this is the encounter of "otherness" [*l'altérité*] that transcends the personal freedom of "trying to be" something or someone. Responding to "otherness" through disinterestedness[61] (*autrement qu'être*) gives the possibility of overcoming evil. How then might the notion of "*autrement qu'être*" develop an understanding of the Risen Christ's Otherness? The response necessarily involves drawing out other connotations of "*autrement qu'être*". Levinas writes:

> I am not at all certain that the "otherwise than being" is guaranteed to triumph. There can be periods during which the human is completely extinguished, but the ideal of holiness is what humanity has introduced into being. An ideal of holiness contrary to the laws of being.[62]

Here, Levinas expressly points to the possibility of the human looming up and disturbing "being" and even exemplifies this in Christian terms as, "The madness of the Cross".[63] Now, could not the "ideal of holiness" correspond to what Christ's Otherness has "proleptically" introduced into "being"[64]: "the judging gaze of justice" [65] and "the loving gaze of mercy"?[66]

To think of Christ's Otherness in terms of *l'idéal de sainteté* suggests also the possibility of developing von Balthasar's understanding of "doxa,"[67] namely making "a statement about God"[68] that "transcends all speech and every word"[69] and expresses God's "hiddenness just as much as the expression of his manifestation".[70] Any proclamation of a Christian "doxa" suggests the encounter of being faced by Christ's Otherness, namely "the ideal of holiness". Therefore to proclaim the "doxa" of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is to have testified ethically to "the eschatological proclamation of his [Christ's] glory in the truest sense of the word".[71] In this sense Christ's Otherness as "the ideal of holiness" is the unveiling of "divine doxa [glory]".[72]

(vi) Christ's Otherness and the Interplay of the Transcendentals

To articulate Christ's Otherness as "glory" is also to articulate it as the interplay of the "philosophical *transcendentalia*". For von Balthasar, the "theological *transcendentale*" of glory exists in "an indissoluble perichoresis" with the "philosophical *transcendentalia*". He states:

> In so far as *doxa* is a theological *transcendentale*, it necessarily has something in common with the philosophical *transcendentalia* of being (the one, the true, the good, the

> beautiful): namely, that it exists in an indissoluble perichoresis with these, such that everything that is theologically true is also good and glorious, and everything that is glorious is si to the extent that it is also good and true; for God himself is the original One, and all his self-manifestations bear the seal of this unity. Therefore too all dogmas are only aspects of the one, indivisible, good and beautiful truth of God.[73]

The reflection gives a new perspective to understand the disciples' non-phenomenal encounter of the Risen Christ in the light of drawing from Levinas' notion of otherness. Of crucial import is the connection between glory and the transcendentals; together they create a philosophical-theological horizon to reflect upon the disciples' encounter of the Risen Christ in the theo-drama. However, the key to reflect upon the encounter is to articulate the beauty, goodness and truth of God's glory in ethical metaphysical terms, as I will not show.

The disciples received the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22). Their minds were then opened to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Finally, the disciples are commanded to proclaim "God's glory in its good truth"[74] that Christ has died and has risen from the dead. These dramatic events are not just the product of Christ's speaking to the disciples, but a product of Christ facing them through his Otherness. In this drama, the Risen Christ communicates his Otherness as an immemorial trace on his face. The Spirit acted as one who awoke the trace in the disciples. They now began awakening to the nature of Christ's suffering on the Cross and in Hell through being touched by the mutual indwelling (perichoresis) between glory and the beauty, goodness and truth of the Paschal sacrifice. The result is "prophecy" (bearing the "Trinitarian communality" of Christ's death on the Cross, "possession" of hell[75] and Resurrection) and "testimony" (witnessing to the glory of God's Creation and Revelation). This exemplifies that the Risen Christ's Otherness has

further and "proleptically" introduced beyond Being the "good truth" of "prophecy" and "testimony".

Christ's Otherness as glory testifies to the "good truth" beyond Being; it unveils the beauty of having risen from the dead, the goodness of kenotic substitution with the damned, the truth of love and the oneness of the Trinity. In this sense, the Risen Christ's Otherness is the Trinity-in-love-with-the-world. However, for those who have not been "faced" by the Risen Christ's Otherness in the world, Christ's face remains an ambiguity forgotten in the mystery of evil (the *il y a*) and lost in the mystery of coming to responsibility through time (*illeity*). The Resurrection is a triumph over ambiguity, confusion, anxiety and especially God-forsakenness. It commands the glory of giving justice and responsibility for the Other before one's very freedom. Above all, the Resurrection signifies the "good truth"[76] of God's glory coming to humanity through the Cross and out the depths of Holy Saturday. Everything is now possible for the Triune God has overcome all that is lost.

Conclusion: Forgiveness and Mercy

Before giving the Spirit to the disciples, the Risen Christ blesses them with peace and then commands them to mission: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn 20:21). These words are events that have come to pass through Christ's absolute passivity to the Father's will and through the uniting force of the Spirit. The "word-events" unfold dramatically for the disciples. Christ breathes the Spirit upon them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:22-23). This word-event (or Saying[77] in the Levinasian sense) unveils to the disciples the very meaning of the Cross and Holy Saturday. Forgiveness is possible even for those who reject

God. The disciples are now called to embrace solidarity not just with those who express sorrow for their sins, but also with those who persecute and hate them. As Christ has conquered the world of persecution through death (Jn 16:33), so the disciples, even in death, conquer the world. They have heard the Word and understand him (cf. Matt 13:23).

No longer does evil (the *il y a*) overshadow the trace of God in the conscience (*illeity*) with confusion and ambiguity. Christ has unveiled his Otherness in the good truth of God's judging gaze of justice and loving gaze of mercy. Now the disciples are commanded and ordained to judge the world through Christ's Otherness in them. The Reign of God opens before them. As the Spirit has been breathed into the disciples, justice for all Others takes the Christological form of testimony, namely the forgiveness of sins and the gift of mercy (cf. Levinas' idea of "the for-the-other of maternity"[78]).

Even if sins are retained, they are still retained in the gift of mercy. Mercy as "the for-the-other of maternity" is also solidarity ("the very gestation of the other in the same"[79]). Jn 20:23 commands the disciples to forgive sins. However, if sins are retained due to, for example, a hatred of God, then they must be retained through the trace of Christ's solidarity with the dead. Christ's Otherness unveils the very possibility for God's loving gaze of mercy to retain the sins of humanity in the hope of God's judging gaze of justice forgiving them. This is the hope of the glory to come (Rom 8:18-25). At the very moment where all seems lost (when sins are retained), everything is possible because of God's faithfulness revealed in Jesus Christ. This suggests that God's memory is not one of vengeance, but of truth: triune love outlasting all sin.

Despite their complexity, the notions of the *il y a* and *illeity* provide a useful foundation to reflect about the non-phenomenal drama of the Triune God in the Paschal Mystery. Using these notions in a Christian theological context provokes a necessary departure from the scope of the

Levinas' thought. However, implicit in the departure is an advancement of Levinasian notions in the hope of allowing the Jewish Levinas to enrich von Balthasar' theology.

The valuable insights from Levinas' notions, if left in the context of Judaism and Continental thought, would remain safeguarded even to the extent of becoming dormant or perhaps lost and forgotten. A task of Christian theology is to seek to affirm the presence of God's love in other religions and traditions dialogically and dialectically. Thus, by affirming the ethical insights in Levinas' thought, the good-truth of triune love may be further explored. New eschatological and soteriological horizons are thereby imagined ethically and theologically in order to encounter, particularly in non-phenomenal terms, the drama of the Trinity in the Paschal Mystery.

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[1] Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), born in Kovno, Lithuania was a Jewish philosopher and Talmudic scholar. He studied both in France and Germany and became a French citizen. His philosophy follows the Husserlian tradition of phenomenology and he was credited by Sartre for introducing phenomenology to France. Levinas ethical metaphysics is deeply original seeking to polemically challenge the thought of Martin Heidegger and proclaim the importance of Judaism in a Christian world. Levinas' two internationally renowned major works, *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, are testimony to his search for a religious ethics that is against all forms of political violence and economic oppression. The memory of the *Shoah* pervades all his writings. Levinas' thought touches the reader with a spirituality of teaching proclaiming a kenotic and expiating love for one's neighbour. He taught at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Universities of Poitiers and Paris-Nanterre and since 1973 from the Sorbonne.

[2] See Michael Purcell, "Leashing God With Levinas: Tracing a Trinity with Levinas," *The Heythrop Journal* XL (July, 1999) 301-318; Adriaan T. Peperzak, "The Significance of Levinas's Work for Christian Thought," in Jeffrey Bloechl, (Ed.), *The Face of the Other & The Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 184-199; Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of* Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blaney (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Marie Baird, "Revisioning Christian Theology in light of Emmanuel Levinas's Ehtics of Responsibility," *Journal of Ecumenical* Studies (Summer-Fall, 1999) 340-351; Stephen Webb, "The Rhetoric of Ethics as Excess: A Christian Theological Response to Emmanuel Levinas," *Modern Theology* (January, 1999) 1-16; John Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a future Trinitarian Metaphysic," in L. Gregory Jones and Stephen E. Fowl, (Eds.), *Rethinking Metaphysics,* Directions in Modern Theology (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 119-161; Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, translated by Stephen Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Robyn Horner, "Emmanuel Levinas: God and Philosophy," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 7:1 (Spring, 2002), 41-46; Richard Kearney, "Desire of God," in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 112-145; and Michele Sarachino, *Openness as gift: Subject and Other in postmodern context. A Study of Lonergan and Levinas*, Marquette University (UMI Dissertation Library, 2000).

[3] Alexander Broadie, "Maimonides and Aquinas," in Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman, eds., *Routledge History of World Philosophies, Vol. 2, History of Jewish Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997) 281.

[4] Broadie, "Maimonides and Aquinas," 281.

[5] Harold W. Attridge, "Christianity from the Destruction of Jerusalem to Constantine's Adoption o the New Religion: 70-312 C.E.," in Hershel Shanks, ed., *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1993) 163.

[6] See Emmanuel Levinas, "Judaeo-Christian Friendship," in *Difficult Freedom*, translated by Seán Hand (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990) 202. According to Levinas, the crucial point turning point for Jewish-Christian friendship is firstly, for Christians to respect that Jews "are significant to the future and to life," and secondly, for Christians "to go beyond respect for Jews and one day come to respect Judaism itself".

[7] In his essay, "Beyond Dialogue," Levinas exemplifies Jewish-Christian friendship after World War Two by stating, "The ten points of Seelisberg – approved in July, 1947 by an international conference against anti-Semitism – the twentieth anniversary of which we are celebrating today, is addressed to Christians." See Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, translated by Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 79.

[8] Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) was a German-Jewish philosopher. His major work combining philosophy and theology is, "The Star of Redemption," focusing on the inter-relationship of God, humanity and the world. It upholds that only Christianity and Judaism are the loci for the world's redemption. Judaism's stance to the world is the proclamation of its closeness to God whilst Christianity's stance is its mission of evangelisation in the world. (See Emmanuel

Levinas, *Outside the Subject,* translated by Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 61-63, for a discussion of Rosenzweig's understanding of the roles of Christianity and Judaism – the "Messianic "theory of Knowledge"").

[9] See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, translated with analytical indexes by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) 162-3.

[10] Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 163.

[11] Arnulf Zweig, ed., *The Essential Kant* (New York: A Mentor Book, 1970) 14, 24. Whereas Kant stresses non-phenomenal experience in terms of the concepts of "a priori" and "the transcendental unity of apperception," Levinas understands non-phenomenal experience as diachronic and immemorial; it goes beyond human consciousness. Levinas' notion of non-phenomenal experience is also deeply Biblical. As a result, rather than subjective thinking (noesis) being the foundation of objective knowledge (noema) as in Kant's case, ethical responsibility (the immemorial Word of God coming to humanity through time on the face of the Other [*L'Autrui*]) is the foundation for unconcealing, however only as traces, what has never been consciously known.

[12] Levinas writes: I cannot describe the relation to God without speaking of my concern for the other. When I speak to a Christian, I always quote Matthew 25; the relation to God is presented there as a relation to another person. It is not a metaphor; in the other, there is a real presence of God. In my relation to the other, I hear the Word of God. It is not a metaphor; it is not only extremely important, it is literally true. I'm not trying to say that the other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God. Levinas, *Entre-Nous: Thinking-Of-the-Other*, translated by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 109-110.

[13] Anthony Kelly, *The Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God*, New Theology Series 4 (Wilmington, Delaware,: Michael Glazier, 1989) 228.

[14] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 87-9.

[15] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 87.

[16] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 89.

[17] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 88.

[18] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 88.

[19] Baird, "Revisioning Christian Theology," 351.

[20] Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 87.

[21] Levinas' experience of Hitlerism has shown *par excellence* how the Jewish people's "collective soul and destiny [in the drama of Sacred History] would be wrongly understood as limited to any sort of nationalism". For Levinas, Hitlerism further marks the end of theodicy: "The disproportion between suffering and every theodicy was shown at Auschwitz with a glaring, obvious clarity." See Emmanuel Levinas, "Useless Suffering," in *Entre Nous*, 97.

[22] Emmanuel Levinas, "Signature" in *Difficult Freedom*, 291.

[23] Baird, "Revisioning Christian Theology," 350.

[24] Baird, "Revisioning Christian Theology," 350.

[25] Baird, "Revisioning Christian Theology," 350.

[26] For example, Levinas responds: "It is incontestable that in every philosophical reflection, in every philosophical essay, there are memories of a lived experience [*vécu*] which is not rigorously intellectual". See Emmanuel Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, edited by Jill Robbins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 96. See also Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso

Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 31-34 where he emphasises, for example, that the sensible qualities such as sounds, colours, hardness and softness are not revealed in temporal lived experience. As a result, intentionality is time itself. Further, he connects lived experience with the temporality of time and the verb to be.

[27] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 97.

[28] Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 136.

[29] Only as an anonymous (God-forsaken) dead man may Christ witness truly to the dead damning themselves before God. Further, in the light of the Resurrection, Holy Saturday is also a proleptic (immemorial, diachronic) act of Creation. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, A Theological Aesthetics, VII. Theology: The New Covenant*, translated by Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989) 231.

[30] Andrew Tallon, "Foreword," in Michael Purcell, *Mystery and Method: The Other in Rahner and Levinas* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998) vii.

[31] Purcell looks to Karl Rahner's work, Ward turns to Karl Barth's thought and Ford engages the writings of Eberhard Jüngel and Paul Ricoeur and the lives of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. See Purcell, *Mystery and* Method, Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of* Theology and Ward, *Self and Salvation*. Further, Marie Baird speaks of the possibility of how "revisioning of Christian theology" with Levinas' thought can lead to a more practical understanding of the life and works of, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Edith Stein, Maximillian Kolbe, Etty Hilleseum, and countless others whose primordial stance of responsibility for the other was enacted in a subsequent existential commitment to the other to the point of substitution and expiation for that other". See Baird, "Revisioning Christian Theology," 350.

[32] In describing Levinas' phenomenology, Peperzak writes: "As a brilliant phenomenologist, Levinas offers us an original rewriting of Heidegger's ontology, on the basis of which he shows that some simple but extraordinary "experiences" or "facts" of everyday existence cannot be "placed" or understood within the horizons of any ontology. Thus, he sets up a nonontological, non-"comprehensive," non-properly-phenomenological, "transphenomenological" and" transontological" view of an enigmatic beyond, which is more radical, "more" originary or "pre-original" than the categories, principles, or *archai* of the ontological constellation." See Adriaan Peperzak, *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999) 83. The use of the prefix, "meta" (Greek for "over"), in the term, "meta-phenomenological," would imply that the purpose of "meta-phenomenology" is to examine the true nature of a phenomenon, which in Levinasian terms is described in terms of diachrony. Having the term, "meta-ontology," would seem to confer with much of what Peperzak describes about Levinas' enigmatic phenomenology. See Marcel Danesi, *Encylopedic Dictionary of Semiotics, Media, and Communications* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 144-7 for other examples where the term, "meta," is used in conjunction with other words to construct meanings.

[33] Levinas, *Existence and Existence*, translated by A. Lingis (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995) 92.

[34] Medard Kehl and Werner Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1982) 113.

[35] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 93.

[36] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 93.

[37] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 93.

[38] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 93.

[39] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 93.

[40] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 97.

[41] Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 113.

[42] "Otherness" (or the "trace of *illeity*) refers to the trace of God in the Other that seeks, from an immemorial time, to create a responsible, personal relationship with and for all. *Illeity* is a neologism derived on the French third person singular (*il*) and Latin (*ille*). *Illeity* itself represents "the Infinite" in concealed terms, namely as a past that has never been present. Levinas writes: "The subject is inspired by the Infinite, which, as *illeity*, does not appear, is not present, has always already past, is neither theme, telos nor interlocutor." See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 148.

[43] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[44] Kehl and Löser, *The von Balthasar Reader*, 149.

[45] Levinas' important work, *Otherwise than Being*, presents an emerging non-phenomenality of the face articulating a life of holiness in the midst of the neighbour's destitution. His notion of the face of the Other articulates the disincarnate or non-phenomenal trace of the Other. However, if the trace is non-phenomenal, is the face phenomenal? For Levinas, in no way can the face of the Other be seen; it is a non-phenomenal phenomenon that signifies the locus where God or the Infinite might be heard.

[46] Levinas refers to the fear and horror of Being as an anonymous and depersonalised state of existence, which he names as the *il y a* (the *there is*).

[47] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 243.

[48] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 243.

[49] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 243.

[50] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[51] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale. The mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1990) 216.

[52] The noesis of a noema (being conscious of what is consciously known).

[53] Noesis (Noèse): "being conscious of" (thought). Noema (Noème): "the consciously known" (knowledge).

[54] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 72.

[55] Seán Hand, ed., *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 247.

[56] Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, 247.

[57] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 60.

[58] "The undephaseable simultaneity of representation" refers to an existence without responsibility and possibly in Christian terms to an existence without redemption.

[59] Levinas points out that the Word of God is heard in the face of the Other. See Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 108.

[60] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 114; Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Essais Sur Le Penser-A-L'Autre* (Paris: Libre de Poche, 1991) 124.

[61] Levinas writes: This endless desire for what is beyond being is dis-inter*estedness*, transcendence – desire for the Good". Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998) 163.

[62] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 114.

[63] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 115.

[64] Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 114. Levinas writes: "… the ideal of holiness is what humanity has introduced into being. An ideal of holiness contrary to the laws of being." The statement here provides an important frame for perceiving a Trinitarian and Christological conception of "otherness".

[65] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 78.

[66] von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, Vol. I*, 78.

[67] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[68] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[69] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[70] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[71] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[72] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242.

[73] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 242-3.

[74] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 243.

[75] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 243.

[76] von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. VII*, 243.

[77] The Saying [*Le Dire*]: The term is referred by Levinas as the face, testimony, the approach of the Other and as exposure to another. It is also the locus where the glory of the Infinite comes to pass. The Saying possesses the quality of an ambiguous unheard-of obligation that gives rise to the possibility of ethics.

[78] Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996) 102.

[79] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 102.