

LEVINASIAN 'BARBARISM' AND THE CHALLENGE OF REINTERPRETING PAKIKIPAGKAPWA FROM DUSSEL'S LIBERATION ETHICS

KENNETH CENTENO

Emmanuel Levinas has introduced the Other as a form of barbarism that disrupts classical ontology, which is heavily dominated by the primacy of Dasein/Same. Though agreeing fully to the Lithuanian-borne philosopher, Enrique Dussel attempted, nonetheless, to go beyond Levinas by introducing his Architectonics of Ethics in view of putting into practice ethics as first philosophy. This Levinasian-Dusselian approach is being employed in analysing and challenging the Filipino concepts of Kapwa such as Virgilio Enriquez's classical notion Kapwa as Shared Self and Rolando Tuazon's proposed view of Kapwa as Iba at Aba. The triangulation of the three themes hopefully contributes in deepening the Filipino notion of Kapwa, as the elusiveness of l'autre summons one to heed courageously the plea of katungkulan (obligation) rather than pananagutan (responsibility).

INTRODUCTION

*The very difference between me and the other is non-indifference,
is the one-for-the-other. The one-for-the-other
is the very signifyingness of signification.
How can such a research be undertaken without
introducing some barbarisms in the language of philosophy?*

Emmanuel Levinas in *Otherwise than Being*

The next few years in the Philippines will be marked by a celebration of three important events in the life of millions of Filipinos. Come 2021, we will be looking back with nostalgia at the 500 years of the Christianization of the Philippines, which we consider as a legacy. As the only Christian (and Catholic nonetheless) nation in Asia, people will look with gratitude at how

our forefathers were liberated from paganism through the missionary efforts of the first Spaniards who came to our shores. Sadly, the cross was accompanied by the sword and forcibly made its way to the heart and soul of the entire archipelago. Our soil was drenched in blood as the *conquistadores* were forcibly driven away in 1898, only to be conquered by another colonial master for the next fifty years: the Americans. This liberation will be remembered in 2018 as we commemorate the 120th anniversary of freedom. Yet we continue posing this painful question: "Have we been truly liberated?"

Before these two great occasions happen, another immediate national "episode" will take place. The nation will visit next year (2016) the polling precincts in order to cast their votes and this will happen on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of People Power Revolution which ended the draconian rule of Marcos dictatorship. Everybody will watch with great interest as the entire nation decides who will be the next powers-that-be of the land. It means a change of leadership from the seat of the Presidency down to the office table of a local chieftain called *Barangay* Captain. As early as now, people are already asking the question: "Has the President who promised in his inaugural speech that '*Kayo po ang boss ko!*' (You are my boss!) really become a catalyst of change and liberation? Or has he been the 'boss' of the powerful businessmen and well-connected friends just like the dark dictatorial days of the Marcos regime?"

In these three events the theme of liberation will play a significant role in the life of the nation. Political scientists, sociologists, theologians, economists, and psychologists will weigh in to enlighten the people vis-a-vis the current and future direction of the nation. They will analyze and put under their own lenses the dilemma of the country. Fundamental questions will be thrown like "What is wrong with us Filipinos?," "What is in our belief that pulls us back into different forms of slavery?," "What can liberate us from the plagues of poverty, injustice and corruption?" or "Where do we anchor our hope for liberation?"

In this paper we will attempt to join the discussion by offering the philosophical perspective of liberation based on the

thoughts of two important philosophers of our time: Emmanuel Levinas and Enrique Dussel. The endpoint, however, of our philosophical engagement is to expound the Filipino concept of “*Pakikipagkapwa*” (relation with neighbor) in the light of these two contemporary thinkers. We shall argue that *Pakikipagkapwa*, read from the perspective of Levinasian-Dusselian philosophy, can be a powerful instrument in bringing real change and liberation in a country where the vast majority suffer different forms of exclusion and marginalization. Divided into three parts, we will begin our discourse (1) on Levinas' philosophy on Alterity and Infinite Responsibility and its implication in the field of ethics. We will also show that Levinas, in spite of the accusations thrown upon him as a philosopher of “pious discourse” (as Alain Badiou would say) and the seeming discrepancy between his thoughts and praxis, contribute so much to the advancement of thinkers who take up the discourse of liberation. At this point (2) we will explore the philosophy of liberation as expounded by its proponent Enrique Dussel. Exploring the terrains of his Anadialectics and Architectonics of Ethics as inspired from his “conversion” to Levinasian thinking, we will see how this Argentinian philosopher insisted that Levinas' thoughts do not have to simply remain in the books because it can create an impact in effecting the desired change, especially in the life of those who are at the margins of societies. At the end (3) we will evaluate, critique and reread the Filipino concept of “*Pakikipagkapwa*” (neighbor relations) from the perspective of Dussel and Levinas. It is our hope that this original Filipino thought can be truly transformative in bringing systematic and systemic change in the lives of the struggling Others.

EMMANUEL LEVINAS AND THE OTHER

It is no doubt that the prominence of Emmanuel Levinas in the field of philosophy has risen to such a stature, that no serious philosopher can simply ignore him. Given the prevalence of the postmodern discourses in the context of globalization where particulars are celebrated and, at the same time, used as platforms

of profits.¹ We just have to remember the slogans of transnational companies who are using catch-phrases of postmodern themes such as individuality vs. universality or local identity against global character. Daniel Bell's scathing criticism against postmodernity even led him to call it as the "new face of modernity."²

Although we never question the great contributions of the postmodern discourse in smashing the pretensions of modernity, it is nevertheless an undeniable reality that this philosophy was used and being used to propagate and expand self-interests that result to victimization of many people around the globe. The inner dynamics of the *conatus essendi* in Levinas' essay 'Secularization and Hunger' has been expounding for example the exploitation of people long before social scientists and concerned members of the society of our time complain on the current phenomenon of sweat shops and unfair trade.³ Because of the prophetic voice (so to speak) of Levinas, one cannot but give this man one's utmost attention as he brings the Other in the center of discussions in various fields. This phenomenon "Turn to Ethics" using the Levinasian lens has been presently the benchmark on the ongoing debates and discussions on alterity in the last twenty years across a range of disciplines.⁴ What makes Levinas' philosophy such an important tool? We will limit ourselves into three main points as we strive to answer this question.

¹ Multinational companies such as Nestle Company would explore local tastes in order to sell their product to their target consumers. They would always tell that in food business, the taste of the locality should be given importance. However, we always try to assess who emerges as the "winner" in this case. What seems to be real is that these companies explore local tastes in order to profit from them. They are not interested at all to celebrate particularities. Underneath the celebration is the motivation to gain. See Peter Gumbel, "Same, but Different," *Time*, June 25 - July 2, 2007.

² See Daniel M. Bell, "After the End of History Latin American Liberation Theology in the Wake of Capitalism's Triumph" in *Journal of Religion and Society* 2 (2000): 1.

³ Robert Bernasconi, "Globalization and Hunger: Kant and Levinas" in *Radicalizing Levinas*, ed. Peter Atterton and Matthew and Matthew Calarco (New York: Suny Press, 2010), 71-78.

⁴ David Boothroyd, *Ethical Subjects in Contemporary Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 3-5.

ALTERITY AND EXTERIORITY

In one of the groundbreaking works of Levinas which is entitled *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* he dedicated it “[t]o the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-semitism.” His personal experience of the horrors of Nazi persecution (from which he lost a large part of his family) transformed his philosophy from being follower of Heideggerian's ontology. Levinas saw that the Heideggerian philosophical project became an easy accessory of Hitler's pursuit of the Aryan race. For Levinas, the term being (as well as Being, beings, and *Dasein*) is tainted by its associations to Darwin, Hobbes, Heidegger and the ontological tradition, that in his eyes, too effortlessly slithered into bed with Hitler and the Nazis.⁵

He exposed the evil of being as he shook the foundation of western philosophy by letting his ax fall on Ontology that has been regarded since the classical Greeks as the first philosophy. What is ontology that makes it such a first philosophy? Based on the conviction that everything that exists is being, the fundamental reality then consists of what is. Heidegger however qualified this being not only as the heart of philosophical endeavors but also as the core of the very thing that thinks: the person. He wrote:

The being whose analysis task is, is always we ourselves. The being of this being is always *mine*. In the being of its being it is related to its own being... As a being, *Dasein* always defines itself in terms of possibility which it is and somehow understands its being. But for the ontological interpretation of this being, this means that the problematic of this being is to be developed out of the existentiality of this

⁵ Anya Topolski, “On Freedom in Athens and Jerusalem: Arendt's Political Challenge to Levinas' Ethics of Responsibility” in *The Awakening of the Other A Provocative Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Roger Burggraeve (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 218.

being.⁶

We can immediately detect in the very words of Heidegger that being is not a finished business, but rather a project pegged on the comprehension and possibilities. Levinas correctly observes how Heidegger transformed being from noun to verb⁷ At the beginning he was so convinced of Heidegger's profound ontological insight that he published an article entitled "Martin Heidegger and Ontology" in 1932. But the waves of terror of Nazism created an eternal impact on the philosophical stand and person of this Jewish thinker from Lithuania. What is seemingly a very positive development becomes a nightmare. The whole philosophy of being, which Levinas saw in the systematic extermination of the Jews by Hitler and his cohorts, terrorizes Levinas that he wrote at the very first section of his book *Totality and Infinity* his fierce resistance against ontology.

Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power.... Heidegger, with the whole of the Western history, takes the relation with the Other as enacted in the destiny of sedentary peoples, the possessors and builders of the earth. Possession is preeminently the form in which the other becomes the same, by becoming mine...A philosophy of power, ontology is, as first philosophy which does not call into question the same, a philosophy of injustice⁸

It is in this realization of the dominating and domineering act of being that Levinas would devote his life in protesting against Dasein. Instead of simply resisting the force of ontology, he turned the table around and challenged its dominance. He named this questioning of the dominance of being (which Levinas calls the

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 39, 41.

⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard Cohen (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), 38.

⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 46.

Same or “I”) ethics. As a matter of fact, he courageously calls ethics⁹ as first philosophy. How did Levinas arrive at this conclusion?

The first thing that may guide us into the intricate thoughts of Levinas might have something to do with the horrible violence during the Shoah. The brilliant minds of many scientists and leading thinkers of that time could not exactly comprehend how this terrible event ever happened. Carl Jung, in one of his essays after the Holocaust, dared to throw a question that others might have been pondering all along: “Where now is the sanction of goodness and justice, which was once anchored in metaphysics? Is it really brute force that decides everything?”¹⁰ Levinas' answer to this query is none other than ontology and the “comprehending” act of being.

In Heidegger's monumental work *Being and Time* the primordial phenomenon of truth is the foundation of Dasein.¹¹ Truth means the grasping of the phenomenon (being) or event in front of “me.” Levinas points to this understanding as the culprit behind the indescribable violence towards the mysterious Other who is, in fact, prior to the cognizing act of being. Before the cognition and comprehension, there is an encounter, where the “face” of the other thru manifestation welcomes and appeals to the “I.” The truth is, that the Other's exteriority appeals to me.¹² This other appeals to “me” not as a being but otherwise than being. It is transcendence that can never be grasped and resists any grasping because it is beyond the I. The statement of being's *other*, of the otherwise than being, claims to state a difference over and beyond that which separates being from nothingness — the very difference of the *beyond*, the difference of transcendence.¹³

⁹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰ Carl Jung, “Essay in Contemporary Events: The Psychology of Nazism” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 71., quoted by Robert John Sheffler Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger* (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1993), 2.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 201.

¹² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 291.

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. By Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Academic Publishers, 1991), 3.

The radicalism of Levinas' *Other* attempts not only to correct but even invalidates the primacy of being, which is, according to him, the root cause of all injustices. In fact, even the traditional notion of ethics is being challenged by Levinas as he pinpointed at the violence of ontology-based ethics. He wrote:

The terms must be reversed. For the philosophical tradition the *conflicts* between the same and the other are resolved by theory whereby the other is reduced to the same – or, concretely by the community of the State, where beneath anonymous power, though it is to be intelligible, the I rediscovers war in the tyrannic oppression it undergoes from the totality. Ethics, where the same takes the irreducible Other into account, would belong to opinion. The effort of this book (*Totality and Infinity*) is directed toward apperceiving in discourse a non-allergic relation with alterity, toward apperceiving Desire – where power, by essence murderous of the other, becomes, faced with the other, and 'against all good sense,' the impossibility of murder, the consideration of the other, or justice.¹⁴

Levinas, whose very words we quoted above, wants us to direct into a non-allergic approach towards the *Other* who is "beyond me". How do we approach the other who is beyond the "I"? We will limit ourselves into two very important elements in Levinasian philosophy: The Face and The Call to Responsibility.

THE FACE AS THE TRACE OF EXTERIORITY

One of the most difficult, albeit deep and profound, parts of the Levinasian thinking is his approach to the *Other*. In his insistence not to contain the other in a box of language, he developed alterity *via negativa*. When one asks "Who or what is the *Other*?" would be, from the point of view of Levinas, to engage oneself in ontology. To encounter the other is to be in the mode of

¹⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 47.

passivity, because the other “is not the other like the bread I eat, the land in which I dwell, the landscape I contemplate, like, sometimes, myself for myself, this “I.”¹⁵ Such is the distance (or shall we say the chasm) between the “I” and that Other that the Other commands respect. It is an infinity that resists any endeavor of definition; not even when the *Other* manifests as a face. Such is the unimaginable presence of the other that Levinas said that the best way to describe the other is not even to notice the color of his eyes!¹⁶

The face should not be taken as the whole reality of the other, whereby it becomes the defining point of the other. Levinas reminds his readers that the face is the manifestation of the other who, upon being comprehended by the “I,” is already gone. It is the exact opposite of the popular dictum “What one sees is what one gets”. The face is the idea of the other in me.¹⁷ The face is a trace of itself.¹⁸ It is a trace of an absence.¹⁹

What is the implication of this Levinasian perspective? First, it becomes clear that thematization of the other becomes a problem and an impossibility. It shakes the very foundation of ontological truth because the other is a fleeting reality. The *Other* is a complete Stranger. It slips the grasping, even if one might have already thought that the other has been finally subdued. It is like a prisoner who is forever free from its captors in spite of the chains and shackles. Levinas would use the term proximity to describe the constant break that separates the other as an infinite other, even as it appears.

Proximity as a suppression of distance suppresses the distance of consciousness of... The neighbor excludes himself from thought that seeks him, and this exclusion has a positive side to it: my exposure to him, antecedent to his appearing, my delay behind him, my undergoing, undo the core of what

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 85.

¹⁷ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 50.

¹⁸ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 91.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

is identity in me. Proximity, suppression of the distance that consciousness of ...opens the distance of a diachrony without a common present, where difference is the past the cannot be caught up with, an unimaginable future, the non-representable status of the neighbor behind which I am late and obsessed by the neighbor.²⁰

From the very words of Levinas, we can already see the asymmetrical relations between the "I" and the *Other*. The *Other* is always ahead of "me" and there will be no way that the "I" can finally catch up the other and transform it to be just like "me," such that the other becomes the Same. On the contrary, the "I" is always late and left. To be after the other is not so much about conquering the exteriority of the other that is an impossibility, but to respond to the calling of infinite responsibility.

LEVINASIAN RESPONSIBILITY: THE "I" AS ONE-FOR-THE-OTHER

At the core of Levinas' philosophy is the other who is calling the "I" to responsibility. In the previous discussion on Face as Trace, we have noted how the neighbor (the infinite other) is always in advance, in which "I am late and obsessed by the neighbor". What does it mean "obsessed by the neighbor?"

One enormous difference between Levinas and Heidegger has something to do with this term "neighbor." From the Heideggerian perspective *Dasein* cannot be authentic with itself if in its *Dasein*, if it neglects to be a *Mitsein* (being-with-other-being). *Dasein* is essentially being-with.²¹ Respect and care for the other forms an essential structure in the being of *Dasein*. Concern proves to be constitutive of the being of *Dasein* which, in accordance with its different possibilities, is bound up with its being toward the world taken care of and also with its authentic being toward itself.²² The "I" cares because it is its being to care.

²⁰ Ibid., 89.

²¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 113.

²² Ibid., 115.

One essential problem with Dasein as *Mitsein* lies at the very heart of Heidegger's assumption. The caring it shows stems from its being being. It takes responsibility of caring for the other because it needs to fulfill its being. The other becomes a cog in the machine called self-fulfillment and authenticity. It sees and takes the other not as another but as an instrument of self-actualization. One can surmise that there is nothing really revolutionary in Heidegger's Dasein. On the other hand, Levinas ties up responsibility in obsession.

Obsession is the desiring of the other but not in the sense of comprehension or possession by consciousness. It is a modality not of a knowing but of a shouldering of the human quite different from cognition.²³ It is a longing to be at the beck and call of the other but it is beyond that yearning because it feels that pang of guilt because the response to the other is never on time and never enough.²⁴ If it is to become delirious and distressed because of the excruciating suffering of the other, it will induce remorse because the response will never be sufficient. This very obsession is the 'substance' of Levinas' ethics.²⁵ Why? It is because this obsession is tied up with responsibility.

As the "I" encounters the infinite other, the other summons "me" into a responsibility. It is to be in front of someone who is beyond me; it is an imperative voice that commands the "I": Thou shall not kill.²⁶ The *Other*, who is more than "me" and who appeals not to be killed, becomes the lord and master, to whom the "I" should give.²⁷ However, the act of taking the responsibility implies two things.

First, the responsibility does not spring from the being of the "I". It is not an option that emanates from a personal decision. It is a responsibility put on the shoulders of the "I" even before it

²³ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Benda Hofmeyr, "Radical Passivity: Ethical Problem or Solution" in *Radical Passivity Rethinking Ethical Agency in Levinas*, ed. Benda Hofmeyr (UK: Springer, 2009), 17.

²⁶ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, 86.

²⁷ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 75.

becomes conscious of it. The neighbor concerns me before all assumption, all commitment consented or refused.²⁸ To be a subject is to be in a commitment. It is *subjectum*, responsible for everything.²⁹ It is a hostage older than the ego and prior to principles.³⁰

Secondly, the responsibility does not end because the other is an infinite other. The call remains an eternal one since one cannot put up a fence to reduce the other. Even before the "I" could open its mouth before the other, the other has already escaped. The act of comprehending becomes a useless game of ontology because the other resists the grasping. The subject is in front of a stranger who is different from "me" that any act of naming would be a futile attempt. What the "I" sees is a trace. The other does not appear in nominative, but in the vocative, or dative.³¹

How should we then characterize this responsibility? This commitment to respond to the other sees no finish line, because the other is always ahead of "me." The task at hand is a never-ending one because it is a call of the other who is already in the future; the call however to responsibility breaks into the present. That makes the response inadequate. This reflection on Levinas' mode of calling into responsibility seems to reecho the framework of theology professors Reimund Bierenger and Mary Elsbernd that they call "*Normativity of the Future*". Due to space limitation we will not exhaustively discuss it, but it will suffice to say that normativity here does not connote a fixed set of laws or rules to guide any ethical or moral response. Rather the other who is "located" in the future constantly summons the "I" in totally unexpected (and even shocking) ways. It exceeds expectations for expectations are comprehended visions of the "I." They describe this manner in this way:

²⁸ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 87.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

³¹ Jill Robins, "Visage, Figure: Reading Levinas' Totality and Infinity" in *Yale French Studies* 79, *Literature and the Ethical Question* (Yale University Press, 1991), 136.

Integral to our 'normativity of the future' approach are the interrelated concepts of future, an alternative world, in-breaking and vision...We use in-breaking to express significant features, namely direction and surprise. In-breaking indicates a future that reaches into the present, rather than an extension of the present possibilities, like goal-setting. In-breaking also serves to express our sense that the *future is an announcement of something more or a disjuncture from what is*.³²

In spite of the word “In-breaking” applied in the theological field, it enlightens us on how to reread and even perhaps to imagine (our apology for lack of fitting terminology) Levinas' call to infinite responsibility and accountability. It can lead us to re-imagine responsibility not as an engagement coming from the being's being, but from the asymmetrical relation with the other who is beyond “me.”

DISCREPANCY IN PRAXIS AND PHILOSOPHY?

It is without any doubt that Levinas has contributed much in re-landscaping the moral and ethical fields of various disciplines. From philosophy to psychology, social engagements to education, from theology to psychiatric therapy, his influence has been enormous if not mind-boggling. Nonetheless, one center of contentions between Levinas and his readers lies in the area of politics, especially in postcolonial philosophy. Difficult disputations have to be faced like “Who is the other?” Cultural Studies professor Dave Boothroyd throws a reality-check question as he wrote:

It causes me to reflect on the question of to what extent I am the other's Other...I only wish to reflect finally on whether Levinas' ethics could ever rightly

³² Reimund Bierenger and Mary Elsbernd, *Normativity of the Future* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 15. (Italics mine)

be expected to the realm of politics, or whether it anticipates such an extension as ultimately being impossible, or, at the very least, always prone to failure.³³

This problem is compounded when Levinas, during an interview by *Radio Communaute* on 28 September 1982, made a startling comment on the massacre of Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila in which Israel played a great role in the murder of more than 3,500 civilians. In that interview Levinas was told by the anchor's program Shlomo Malka that the 'other' for the Israel in this context is above all the Palestinian, to which Levinas replied: "[i]n alterity we can find an enemy."³⁴ This came as a shockwave to many of his listeners who were familiar with his works.

Levinas' seemingly uncharacteristic remark hounded him and tarnished his reputation as he also expressed in other occasions his Eurocentricity. Consider the following quotes from Levinas as compiled by Robert Eaglestone:

"I often say, although it is dangerous thing to say publicly, that humanity consists of the Bible and the Greeks. All the rest – all the exotic – is dance."³⁵

"When I speak of Europe, I think about the gathering of humanity. Only in the European sense can the world be gathered together... In this sense Buddhism can be said just as well in Greek."³⁶

³³ Boothroyd, *Ethical Subjects*, 43.

³⁴ Sean Hand, *Emmanuel Levinas* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 105-106.

³⁵ Raoul Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation* (London: Routledge, 1991), 18, quoted by Robert Eaglestone, "Postcolonial Thought and Levinas's Double Vision" in *Radicalizing Levinas*, eds. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (New York: State University of New York, 2010), 58.

³⁶ Jill Robbins, ed., *Is it Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 138. quoted by Robert Eaglestone, "Postcolonial Thought and Levinas's Double Vision," 58.

“I always say – but under my breath – that the Bible and Greeks present the only serious issues in human life; everything else is dancing... There is no racism intended.”³⁷

No matter how Levinas argues that there is no racism intended in his words, one can trace his prejudice against the non-Europeans. Eaglestone has even opined that Levinas' position “dismiss all culture outside the Europeanized Hellenism/Hebraism axis.”³⁸ Is this a great failure of the Levinasian philosophy, such that it has no redemption? Do we need to agree with Eaglestone who quoted Alain Badiou that Levinas' work is just a “pious discourse”³⁹ and that it has no teeth to clash against forces of discrimination, hatred and oppression. Can it be salvaged from the damage and become truly instrumental in bringing attention to the many marginalized faces in the real world?

Our task is neither to purely criticize nor defend Levinas, but we believe that in order for the Levinasian philosophy to be credible, it has to set out into the high and raging waters of everyday life. It has to face tough questions like: “Is the face so radically different that one becomes immobilized in front of it? How shall we imagine Levinas' responsibility alongside normative ethics? Or will this be a pure impossibility and a total departure from his thinking?” With the on-going violence and oppression in the world, an arm-chair ethicist may not contribute much. Levinas scholarship needs to be more emphatically political and its implications be explored in politicized space.⁴⁰ This is where we bring in the thought of a southern philosopher who, though a great critic of

³⁷ Ibid., 58.

³⁸ Eaglestone, “Postcolonial”, 58-59. Santiago Slabodsky wrote an article trying to salvage Levinas' philosophy from harsh criticism of racism and myopic semitism, but he also listed down in his opening statement the various thinkers who accused Levinas of such misdeed. See Santiago Slabodsky, “Emmanuel Levinas's Geopolitics: Overlooked Conversations between Rabbinical and Third World Decolonialisms” in *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (2010), 147.

³⁹ Robert Eaglestone, “Postcolonial”, 57-58.

⁴⁰ John Drabinski, *Levinas and the Postcolonial Race, Nation, Other* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), xvi-xvii.

Eurocentrism, was inspired by Levinas to reread and realign his Philosophy of Liberation from the perspective of the oppressed other.

ENRIQUE DUSSEL AND PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION

Born in La Paz, Argentina in 1934, Enrique Dussel, whose works with the margins almost cost his life when his house was bombed by a military group in 1973, had to flee and find refuge in Mexico (and later acquired the Mexican citizenship). Though the term Liberation in Latin America has been synonymous with radical theology, Dussel defended vigorously that his project as a philosophical endeavor although he acknowledged that it emerged (together with theology) "from same sociological problem of dependency."⁴¹ He made his case by rereading the crippling poverty of Latin America vis-a-vis the great philosophical thinkers such as Karl-Otto Apel, Karl Marx, Jürgen Habermas, Richard Rorty and of course Emmanuel Levinas. We will no longer dwell on this topic because it deserves another space.

The best way perhaps to open our short discourse on him is by citing one of his very personal encounters with Levinas, as he led students and young professors to meet the man of the hour at the University of Louvain in 1972. Let us hear the narration from the very lips of the Argentinian philosopher:

In 1972, at Louvain, I brought together a group of student to dialogue with Levinas, and posed the following question to him: 'And the fifteen million indigenous people killed in the conquest of Latin America, and the thirteen million enslaved Africans, are also *the Other* of which you speak?' Levinas looked hard at me and said: 'You must think about that.'... In this encounter, at the end, he revealed to us: 'I look at all of you as if you were

⁴¹ Enrique Dussel, *Ethics Is the Original Philosophy; or the Barbarian Words; Coming from the Third World: An Interview with Enrique Dussel*, trans. Fernando Gomez in *Boundary 2. An International Journal of Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 28.

*hostages....*A short time later, while reading the work (of Levinas)..., I understood his meaning: we, as young professors or students in Europe, obsessed by our Latin American victims, were perceived by Levinas to be hostages in the stead of our distant and oppressed peoples. I had thought that his statement might be an insult. Upon reading *Autrement qu'être* I understood that his had been an immense, unmerited judgment, brimming with hope.⁴²

Anchoring his work on this new-found confidence, Dussel embarked himself in developing his Philosophy of Liberation. Because it would be an impossibility to cover his entire philosophical undertakings, we will limit ourselves into two points, wherein Levinas made a great impact in his own attempt to find a solution in present evils which the Latin Americans and the poor in general are experiencing.

PHILOSOPHY OF LIBERATION: ENFLESHING THE OTHER

Enrique Dussel has been preoccupied throughout his life on how to reread the history of Latin America from the view-point of the people who suffered centuries of discrimination and exploitation first at the hand of the European conquerors and later from the American politicians and its cohorts. He attributed the loss of native culture and identity of the Latin Americans prior to the coming of the conquerors. The task at hand was to recover the authentic self. With this project in mind, he dug himself into the works of Heidegger whose ontology he found not only helpful but indeed enlightening.

The first two volumes of his work *Para una etica de la liberacion latinoamericana* explicitly take the Heideggerian ontology as his dialogue partner. Taking his cue from Heidegger, Dussel used to believe that every culture possesses a “pre-position” toward the

⁴² Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, trans. Eduardo Mendieta, et. al (Dunham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 591, endnote np. 466.

world exercised in every experience, manifesting itself in the anticipations and potentialities of the least perception of the most humble thing.⁴³ In other words, every being stands on a certain ground or horizon from which s/he perceives and comprehends the world. Dussel then portrays ethics as truly liberating when it leads one to bring out his/her own authentic self and take upon his/her own the hands the responsibility of realizing its own potentials. According to Barber (who is one of the authorities in Dussel's thought), "Dussel portrays this demand in the very Heideggerian terms, stating the moral conscience is the 'voice of being,' showing us our 'authentic possibility' and filling us with remorse when we fail to live up to it."⁴⁴ Then, a sudden transformation in his framework came.

In Rolando Tuazon's doctoral dissertation on Dussel's *Anadialectics*, he mentioned how Dussel realized the erroneous path he was treading. In his work he narrated the "awakening" of Dussel from an ontological slumber and how everything he learned so far has changed after reading *Levinas' Totality and Infinity: An Essay Exteriority*.⁴⁵ With Levinas as his present framework he began to see the domination and imperious side of being. Because of its ambition for self-fulfillment, it projects itself even at the cost of the other. Through this discovery a great change in Dussel's works ensued. It would be a tremendous task to cover this transformation but let us instead focus on two important developments in his thought: his Rereading of Latin America's history and his method called *Anadialectics*.

Just like Levinas who implicated ontology with Holocaust, Dussel saw the violent hand of ontology in the conquest of Latin America. The philosophy of being is not an innocent endeavor that

⁴³ Michael Barber, "Ethical Hermeneutics Rationality in Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation" (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 29. Even Dussel admits that he was indeed following the Heideggerian ontology although he seems to tone it down by saying that his "first ethics was a mixture of Levinas and Heidegger." See Fernando Gomez, 59.

⁴⁵ Rolando Tuazon, *Narrative Ethics of Liberation: Exploring the Role and Interplay of Tradition, Story, and the 'Other' In Ethical Practice and Reflection*, PhD diss., (Catholic University of Leuven, 2006), 234.

simply remained as a “harmless” passion among thinkers. Rather ontology is a philosophy of being who thinks about its own being, thus making its being the center of everything. Thought that takes refuge in the center ends by thinking it to be the only reality and that outside of it is nonbeing, nothing, barbarity, non-sense.⁴⁶ And it is in this very barbarity that Dussel started to rethink the meaning of liberation. This barbarity could be traced in the very words of Levinas who looks into the other as a “barbarian” who shakes the very world of philosophy.

The very difference between me and the other is non-indifference, is the one-for-the-other. The one-for-the-other is the very signifyingness of signification. How can such a research be undertaken without introducing some *barbarisms* in the language of philosophy? Yet philosophy has, at its highest, exceptional, hours, stated the beyond of being and the *one* distinct from being, but mainly remained at home in saying being, that is, inwardness to being, the being at home with oneself, of which European history itself has been the conquest and jealous defense.⁴⁷

It is through this barbarism that Dussel identified *ego cogito* with *ego conquiro*, wherein the latter is the practical foundation of the former.⁴⁸ Ontology, the thinking that expresses Being – the Being of the reigning and central system – is the ideology of ideologies, the foundation of the ideologies of the empires, of the center.⁴⁹ This is the reason why Dussel linked the very hand of ontology in Eurocentrism and, in extension, America's role as the “police power” of the world where all nations need to toe the line according to its definitions.

⁴⁶ Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 4.

⁴⁷ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 178

⁴⁸ Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

The domination of the radical exteriority of the other has been the ideology of the Same which led to the oppression if not the extermination of the alterity who is being considered as an enemy. In the presence of Being there is nothing to do but contemplate it, speculate on it, go into ecstasy into it, affirm and remain tragically in the passive authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) favorable to the dominator but fatal for the dominated.⁵⁰ Real liberation does not mean transforming one's self to an imposing master or conqueror, mimicking its ways and actuations. That is not liberation but incarceration. Liberation is the praxis that subverts the phenomenological order and pierces it to let in a metaphysical transcendence, which is the plenary critique of the established, fixed, normalized, crystallized, dead.⁵¹ Liberation is not the arresting dynamics of ontology.

Agreeing fully with Levinasian thought, Dussel sees the *Other* as an infinite other who will resist any grasping or comprehension. It demands limitless respect and responsibility. Nevertheless this is where Dussel departs from Levinas. While even describing the color of the eye of the face is already a form of violence for Levinas, Dussel refuses to accept this argument because it fails to bring responsibility into the real world. For this Argentinian thinker "Levinas is the genius of negativity, yet he cannot articulate a *positive* architectonic of the mediations in favor of the Other."⁵²

Although Levinas has frequently used the images of the poor, the widow and the orphan, Dussel found the position of Levinas vis-a-vis the reality of violence, discrimination, injustices and oppression wanting. His friend Walter Mignolo quoted Dussel's personal experience on how Levinas has never considered the non-Jews and non-Europeans as *Other*.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁵¹ Ibid., 58-59.

⁵² Enrique Dussel, *'The Politics' by Levinas: Towards a 'Critical' Political Philosophy*, trans. By Jorge Rodriguez in *Difficult Justice Commentaries on Levinas and Political*, eds. By Asher Horowitz and Gad Horowitz (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2006), 81.

Levinas told me that the great political experiences of his generation had been the presence of Stalin and Hitler (two dehumanizing totalities and a result of European-Hegelian modernity). But when I told him that the experience not only of my generation, but also of the last half millennium of human history was the *ego* of European modernity, a conquering *ego*, colonialist, imperial in its culture and oppressor of the people in the periphery; Levinas recognized that he never thought that “the Other” (*Autrui*) could have been an (Amer)indian, an African or an Asiatic....⁵³

Is it possible that Levinas' seeming “racist” lapses which we have quoted earlier did not truly sink into his consciousness given the fact the his conversation with Dussel took place in the early 1970's while his radio interview, which we have cited here for example, happened in 1982? We will leave this question to Levinas scholars and readers. What we simply want to point out is that Levinas played a great role in reshaping the Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation, although in contrast to his “mentor” Dussel dared not only to describe the color of the eye of the other, but even put a skin into this other. We will now turn our attention to another point where Levinas made a significant contribution to Dussel.

THE METHOD OF ANADIALECTICS AND THE ARCHITECTONIC OF ETHICS

We have noted above how Levinas presented the other who is beyond “me,” who is ahead of “me” and who resists noetic and other forms of grasping simply because it is an infinite other. Because the other is a radically other, there is an asymmetry

⁵³ Enrique Dussel and Daniel E. Guillot, *Liberacion latinoamericana y Emmanuel Levinas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Bonum, 1975), 8. Quoted by Walter Mignolo, “Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation: Ethics and Geopolitics of Knowledge” in *Thinking from the Underside of History*, eds. by Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 29.

between the "I" and the other. Even if the other manifests itself as a face, the face remains as an idea of the other in "me". The face of the Other – *under* all the particular forms of expression where the Other, already in a character's skin, plays a role – is just as much as *pure expression*.⁵⁴ There is transcendence and height that serves not only as a barrier but also as an order whose first command is "thou shall not kill."⁵⁵

It is from this asymmetry that we can sense Dussel's apoplectic rage in his words as he described the desecration of the face that has been reduced to mere object.

(T)he the face of the other is manipulated as a mere thing without transcendence or mystery; the other is considered an instrument. The face of the other is exchanged for an ugly mask, weather-beaten and rustic...One passes near the other and says simply: "A worker!" or "A native!" or "A black!" or "An undernourished Pakistani!" (one of those illustrated in posters to beg alms from Europe and the United States for the poor countries; thus Europeans and North Americans have a good conscience, not asking themselves why the peripheral peoples have rickets and specially what the center has to do with hunger in the periphery.)⁵⁶

Dussel's scornful remarks remind us of the on-going projects of some First World countries bringing for example aids to the author's country (the Philippines) like teaching the fisher folks the effects of dynamite fishing to the ocean that contribute to its destruction and eventual acidification or how we are being lectured on the importance of planting trees and preserving our mangroves in helping us cope with the rising ocean waters and stronger typhoons due to climate change. Although thankful for their help, we wonder whether these organizations also confront their own

⁵⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and The Other*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 107.

⁵⁵ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, xii.

⁵⁶ Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 54.

governments that refuse to sign the memorandum of agreement that will reduce their carbon footprints or to make their own people realize that due to their “first world” lifestyle, their nations belong to the top polluters of the world. The sad part is, we tend to “idolize” and strive to copy their pattern of development that actually destroys the world and makes other people suffer the rant of nature. And they, who have been conscious of the maladies brought by present definition and blueprint of progress, need to beg like a weeping child during the United Nation Climate Talks to let the powerful nations be conscious and concerned not only of their own welfare but of the other nations.⁵⁷ Given this dismal scenario the Anadialectics of Dussel becomes timely and relevant.

The basis of Dussel's method that he calls Anadialectics is the radical otherness of the other. It is obvious from the term itself that it was borrowed from Hegel. Nonetheless, he revolutionized the Hegelian dialectics wherein the “Same” negates itself in order to arrive to a progression. Dussel differentiates his ana-dialectics from the dialectic by allowing Levinas' Other to have an essential role into it:

The method of which we wish to speak, the *ana*-lectic, goes beyond, above; it derives from the higher level (*ana*-) than the mere *dia*-lectic method. The *dia*-lectic method is the path that the totality realizes within itself: from entities to the fundament and from the fundament to the entities. What we are discussing now is a method (or the explicit dominion of the conditions of possibility) which begins from the Other as free, as one beyond the system of the totality; which begins, then, from the Other's word, from the revelation of the Other, and which, trusting in the Other's words, labors, works, serves, and creates.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See “Philippines Plea at UN climate talks,” accessed September 3 2015, <http://www.rtcc.org/2013/11/11/its-time-to-stop-this-madness-philippines-plea-at-un-climate-talks/>.

⁵⁸ Enrique Dussel, *Metodo para una filosofia de la liberacion: Superacion analectica de la dialectica hegeliana*, 3rd Edition (Guadalajara: Editorial Universidad de

What we see in this method is the contestation of the Other against the Same. In this dialectics the tension is an on-going activity, but the Other has the upper-hand so to speak because it puts into question the very grounding of the "I." By engaging the "I" into asymmetrical communication, pretensions are unmasked, thereby compelling the "I" into genuine responsibility that springs not from its own being, but from the voice of the one who is always ahead of "me." And because Dussel dared to name the Other, the repercussion of bringing the plight of the oppression of the other into the real world becomes indeed plausible. The Other does not become an ambiguous term from which it might be used to sweep the issues under the rag or even downplay forms of injustices. Barber affirms Dussel in his method by saying that "[p]erhaps Dussel's most original surpassing of Levinas lies precisely in this notion of analogy, which does not tolerate the equivocity of Levinas' totally Other and questions the univocity of the critic who shields himself from the challenge of the novel by striving to show that there is nothing new under the sun."⁵⁹

We now come at the closing part of our discussion on Dussel. Here we will attempt, though conscious of our limitation and the danger of oversimplification, to have an overview on how Dussel tried to bring the discourse alterity and responsibility with Anadialectics as a framework into practical terms. One may object and howl with protest since it may appear as a thematization. Aware of this critique we nevertheless take the risk because we affirm in what we have already said from the start. Levinas has to engage into conversation with the realities of life, if it has to have an impact and avoid his work to be branded as a philosophical musing on top of an ivory tower. Dussel is very much aware of the risk of systems of totalization, but through the ever continuing ana-dialectical process of establishing, questioning, and transforming systems that one may be able to truly respond, no matter how inadequate it might be, to the other.

Guadalajara, 1991), 181-185, 186. Quoted and trans. Michael Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics*, 27.

⁵⁹ Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics*, 56-57.

The satisfaction of the 'I am hungry' is the fruit of a process of ambiguous and necessary 'mediations' of every political, social, and economic strategy; it is necessary for the construction of a 'new' Totality that, necessarily, will become 'old' Totality, whereby *Totality and Infinity* starts. Levinas remains in the *negative* critique of politics. He does not face analytically, the ambiguity of the positive construction of the 'new' Totality, which I call 'liberation...'.⁶⁰

Dussel envisions this liberation in terms of an ethics that does not only appreciate the other, but responds to the groaning of the other. It is not only an ethics that commands the "I" to respect its infinity. He envisages it to be an ethics that heeds and alleviates the sufferings of the *Other*. In other words, it is not simply a negative ethics that criticizes but a positive one that steps into responsibility in concrete terms. His is "an ethics of life; that is to say, human life is the content of ethics."⁶¹ It is an ethics with contents, in the sense that it deals with corporality, through which I am retrieving the intricate world of partially conscious drives (*pulsiones*), the world of desire, the affects."⁶²

What Dussel wanted to achieve with his philosophy of liberation is to give the platform of communication, discourse, and progress to the marginalized other. Dussel, who has reread Marx from Levinas' perspective, has historicized the other as the oppressed who are sidelined at the edges and peripheries of societies. The *Other* pleads with real voice and weeps with real tears out of pains, yet they are more than their voices and pleadings. They are exteriority that is more exterior than how they are perceived. But it is an undeniable fact that they manifest their trace.

Others reveal themselves as others in all the acuteness of their exteriority when they burst in

⁶⁰ Dussel, *Critical Political Philosophy*, 88.

⁶¹ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 55.

⁶² Dussel, *An Interview with Dussel*, 33.

upon us as something extremely distinct, as nonhabitual, nonroutine, as the extraordinary, the enormous ("apart from the norm") – the poor, the oppressed. They are the ones who, by the side of the road, outside the system, show their suffering, challenging faces: 'We're hungry! We have the right to eat!'.⁶³

The other asks for a response. For Dussel who dared to name the *Other* in order to concretely respond, a mediating system must exist so that it may carry out this responsibility. Despite this claim, Dussel acknowledges that systems should always be contested by the other because every system tends to exclude and totalize the other. The infinite other will demand an infinite evaluation of the placed mediations. Any system will inevitably produce "victims," who are those who bear the unintentional negative effects, imperfections, errors, exclusions, dominations, injustices and so on of the empirically imperfect and *finite* institutions of existent systems; (thus), [t]he re-cognition of the *Other, as an other*, and as a victim of the system that produces him or her...is the point of departure for the criticism that follows.⁶⁴

In order to facilitate and implement any system that caters to the *Other*, Dussel proposed a working framework he calls Architectonics of Ethics. Like plates underneath the ground, the four principles of Architectonics of Ethics may serve as optics on how to respond to the *Other*.

The first is the **Material Principle**. This principle questions the system on its efficiency in addressing the material ethos of the good life in terms of pleasure and happiness. However, this principle should not only be understood in terms of basic material goods that will ensure the physical survival of the other. Rather, it also refers to the entire environment surrounding the dimensions of human life – physical, emotional, economic aesthetic, political, intellectual, and religious. Each human culture is concerned with

⁶³ Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 43.

⁶⁴ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 279.

the good life as such and with production, reproduction, and development of human life.⁶⁵ It is “the principle of corporeality as a ‘sensitivity’ that contains the instinctual, cultural-valorative (hermeneutical symbolic) order of every norm, act, microphysical structure, institution, or system of ethical life, from the criterion of human life in general.”⁶⁶ Dussel even calls the first principle as a *practical truth claim*. Just as the bread calms down a hungry stomach, the material principle supports the very existence of the other. Of course, the meaning of the “satisfaction” is contestable, but Dussel places the voice of the Other as the one who defines what satisfies.

Material principle is however not enough. There should be the **Formal Principle**. This principle gives voice to the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, and the marginalized. Their real practical needs allow them through this principle to bring them into the table of discussion. However, this table of discussion is not to be dominated by those who are in power whose interests are at stake. This is by no means a communication but determination and control. It will be the dominated and the excluded themselves, the victims, asymmetrically situated in the hegemonic community, who will be in charge of constructing a new symmetry.⁶⁷

Dussel has to engage with John Rawls, Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas in order to defend his position. The discussion however merits another separate discourse. Perhaps it may serve our purpose to simply say that Dussel's concern is to save the “goodness claim” of the oppressed other from falling into irrationalism by bringing this into the table of community of communication, whereby the *Other* has the privileged floor. The vocation then of a philosopher is to receive a “marching order” to defend the *Other* in this engagement. One who lives out the ethos of liberation locates herself in the “hermeneutic position” of the oppressed and takes on their interests, thereby discovering previously unnoticed values and emphases and opening the horizon of the possible constitution of objects of knowledge often invisible to those ensconced within

⁶⁵ Tuazon, *Narrative Ethics of Liberation*, 275.

⁶⁶ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 104.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

the Totality.⁶⁸

The third criterion of the Architectonics of Ethics is called the **Feasibility Principle**. The principle of ethical feasibility determines the sphere of what can be done (feasibility: what is technically and economically possible to carry out) within the horizon of (a) what is ethically allowed to be done, and from there to (b) what necessarily needs to *be put into operation*.⁶⁹ It is the process of institutionalizing what has been discussed and brought up in the communication.

The institution will be tasked to carry out that the oppressions of the other, the poor, the margins, and the voiceless will not simply vanish into thin air. This will ensure that the excluded will not receive mere lip service. The institutionalizing process is guided by four criteria – logical, empirical, technical, and ethical. The ethical will have the final say on whether the institution about to be established should be continued or not. It may pass the three aspects, but if it fails the last, then the project has to be shelved and come up with another one that will satisfy the last criterion. What consists the ethical brings the discussion back to the *Other* vis-a-vis the first two principles. Thus, if a system of ethical life (or an institution) performs an act with a “goodness claim,” it is only in relation to the human act or with the ethical subject itself (the *Other*), that in the final analysis it is “good.”⁷⁰

The final Principle is termed as the **Liberation Principle**. Dussel opened the chapter on Liberation Principle with “This is an ethics of life, a critical ethics from the victims... Victims, when they irrupt in history, create new things.”⁷¹ It is as if to remind his readers that his undertaking has been until the end about the *Other* who has been forced to be the Same. Genuine liberation can only be experienced by the oppressed when their consciousness are raised to what the dominant has been doing to them. This can only happen however when authentic participation of the margins is fulfilled. Thus, a truly liberating mediation has to answer the

⁶⁸ Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics*, 69.

⁶⁹ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 190

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 356.

question: “Whose interest is really being considered here?” It acts as if it is the final sieve that meticulously looks at the first three principles.

By putting into question any act of exclusion, new ways of thinking and looking at things will prevail. The constant tension therefore between the institution that is established to answer the needs of the other and the other who is excluded, whether directly or indirectly, by the same institution contributes to the irruption of something novel. Ethical critical consciousness of both the oppressors and the oppressed come into light, thus exposing any totalizing structures. In spite of these benefits, Dussel cautions us that the praxis of liberation is the most “dangerous” of praxes because it confronts illegitimate *power* with the weakness of the indefensible human bodily reality (or of means that are always inferior though legitimate) of the victims.⁷² Shifts in perspectives and critical paradigms are key liberating moments.

These four ethical principles are to be taken in the context of a search for concrete responses to the “cries of the poor.” It uses the very power of reason not to dominate the other in the ontological sense, but to allow the reality of oppressed other be exposed. Dussel even asserted that Levinas never abandoned reason as such, but rather demonstrates the importance of rationality, but does not tire of seeking to show its *origin* and *meaning* in the context of resisting totality and taking up responsibility.⁷³

Let us end our discussion on Dussel by listening once more to his very words he wrote to describe his goal:

“The ethics of liberation is a radical ethics of responsibility, since what it is intended to address is the inevitable consequence of the very unjust order: the victims. Its sense of responsibility is not only systemic (Weber) or ontological (Jonas), but also pre- and transontological (Levinas), because it assumes this responsibility from the perspective of the *Other*, and from the standpoint of the victims.”⁷⁴

⁷² Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 421

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 277, 596-597, endnotes no. 542-546.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 428.

**REREADING “PAKIKIPAGKAPWA”
FROM THE LEVINASIAN-DUSSELIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Levinas and Dussel have contested the claim of ontology as first philosophy. Because of Levinas' scathing critique of being, the Other as radical Other who was subjected to Totalization has awakened the minds of many thinkers; among them is Enrique Dussel. In spite of great admiration for Levinas, Dussel made his own contribution by giving it flesh and bone and skin. The other is a mother who begs for bread for his hungry child, a laborer who lost his job, a child whose siblings and parents were killed in war and so on. They are the others who are “my” neighbors. It is from this Levinasian-Dusselian perspective that we will attempt to reinterpret *Pakikipagkapwa*.

Kapwa is a Filipino term that easily captures the minds and hearts of the people of the Philippines. *Kapwa Ko Mahal Ko* (which might be roughly translated as “I love my fellow person”) for example is so popular that it is now one of the longest running public service programs (if not the longest) in the history of Philippine television. Since its inception in 1975, it has never stopped helping poor sickly Filipinos being helped by their fellow Filipinos and other people by featuring their stories. But how do we understand the term *Kapwa* (fellow human being) in its *Pakikipagkapwa* (the act of relating to another person) in the light of the Levinas' and Dussel's philosophy? In as much as we want to exhaustively locate *Kapwa* in a different discourse, we will limit ourselves to two current treatises, namely: *Kapwa* as Shared Self and *Kapwa* as *Iba* (Different) and *Aba* (Poor or Person in Abjectness).

KAPWA AS SHARED SELF

Dr. Virgilio Enriquez, the acknowledged Father of Filipino Psychology, counts as one of the pioneers in exploring the meaning of *Kapwa*. He rejected the English loose translation of *Kapwa* as “others.” *Kapwa*, from Enriquez's point of view, surpasses the impersonal meaning of other. Rather, he sees *Kapwa* as someone who mirrors my very own being. A person is capable of compassion

or empathy because it sees itself in the very being of the other. Corollary to *Kapwa* is *dangal* (dignity) which the person recognizes in the other person.

[T]he Filipino word *kapwa* is very different from the English word “others”. In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the “self” and “others.” The English “others” is actually the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others.⁷⁵

Enriquez's interpretation of *kapwa* is an echo of the earlier work of another scholar Leonardo Mercado who dared to break new grounds by doing away with Western Philosophy and trying to discover and bring out into the open the elements of Filipino Philosophy. Enriquez was able though to evade the exclusivist-leaning interpretation of *kapwa* of the latter that we will present later. Leonardo Mercado argues that *kapwa* is defined along the meaning of *sarili* (self) that sees its own being not as an isolated individual but in the context of *sakop* or reference group. *Sakop* might range from family and kinship up to a whole neighborhood.⁷⁶ Being a native speaker of the Filipino language that is largely based on *Tagalog*, the author would even extend the meaning of *sakop* on the level of relationship between *Panginoon* (lord or master acting as protector and/or “meaning-maker” of the group) and *Nasasakupan* (persons who enjoy the protectorate of the lord). Therefore no matter how Mercado tried to define *kapwa* as consciousness of the others to whom the *sarili* is called to responsibility, his definition is still enchained in the exclusivist treatment of *kapwa* because he tied the self with *sakop* that is none other than collective self.⁷⁷

Enriquez, on the other hand, defined *kapwa* not from an

⁷⁵ Virgilio Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology The Philippine Experience* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1992), 43.

⁷⁶ Leonardo Mercado, *The Filipino Mind Philippine Philosophical Studies II* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 33.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

exclusivist point of view because he recognized it with two distinct Filipino terms for person in terms of relations: (a) *Ibang-tao* or "Outsider" and (b) *Hindi Ibang-Tao* or "Not-an-Outsider" or "One-of-Us". It is a "superordinate" concept because it embraces both the categories of "outsider" and "one of us."⁷⁸ A Filipino watches his/her decorum and maintains a good conduct when s/he is in front of *Ibang-Tao* as a sign of respect. One also becomes very attentive to an unknown *Panauhin* (visitor) by bringing out from one's kitchen the best utensils and cooking the best food in trying to anticipate the needs of the visitor. The host normally would not eat, but rather stands at the side of the *Panauhin* in order to serve and be ready to answer questions. In contrast to *Hindi Ibang-Tao*, no special treatment is accorded to him/her because s/he is considered a familiar household member. One may come in and go out of the house and say to one another "*ang akin ay sa iyo rin*" (what is mine is yours) because they have already become *Kapalagayang-loob* (mutual trust/support/respect). The work of Enrique has captured the imagination and passion of different scholars who embarked on their own explorations using his notion of *Kapwa* .

One of them for example is Katrin Müller de Guia, a German artist who is married to a Filipino filmmaker. Affirming her mentor's perspective on *Kapwa*, she wrote in her dissertation which was later published as a book:

The core of Filipino personhood is *kapwa*. The notion of a "shared Self" extends the I to include the Other. It bridges the deepest individual recess of a person with anyone outside of him or herself, even total strangers. 'People are just people in spite of their age, clothes, diplomas, color or affiliations.'⁷⁹

What is novel in de Guia's work is her rereading of *kapwa* in the light of the fight against environmental destruction. In a rather poetic language, de Guia extended the sense of

⁷⁸ Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 39-43.

⁷⁹ Katrin de Guia, *Kapwa The Self in the Other Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture-bearers* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2005), 28.

Pakikipagkapwa in the way nature should be approached. Using the concept of *Sambilog*, a contraction of two words *isa* (one) and *bilang* (circle), de Guia saw in her research how Filipinos, who are very much aware of their connection with nature, consider themselves as mere part of one whole creation.

Invocation of a sacred name (referring to mother nature) implies respecting the other being's existence from the bottom of the heart. It means sharing the same space, the same breath, the same heartbeat. *Pakikipagkapwa!* Fusion overrides all contrasts. No killing, no biting, no poisoning. Only oneness, *pakikiisa*. Joining force. Combining vitality. Adding potential. Together as one. *Sambilog*.⁸⁰

This perspective of considering nature as *kapwa* has also been appropriated by several thinkers in addressing the pressing environmental issues vis-a-vis the native Filipinos' animistic beliefs on *Anito* (might be roughly translated as the souls of the forefathers still residing in forests, streams, mountains, etc.) prior to the pre-colonization period. This belief still persists among Filipinos who would pray to *anitos* asking for forgiveness prior to cutting down trees or passing through some wild bushes as they might be disturbing the peace of fellow unseen beings. On this stance Jose Hernandez concluded:

Therefore we can surmise, there is a deep relationship between *Anito* and *Pakikipagkapwa*. *Pakikipagkapwa* acknowledges another person as “*hindi iba*” (not an outsider). And because s/he is not an outsider, s/he belongs to a family and takes part on the goodness and striving of the family to achieve *kaginhawahan* (may be roughly translated as *Wohl* or well-being). Corollary to this position is the recognition that a departed one as *Anito* remains not

⁸⁰ Ibid., 140.

as “*hindi iba*” (outsider).⁸¹

In spite of the positive meaning of *kapwa*, we still throw this question: “how will it explain the paralyzing corruption in Philippine society?” De Guia agrees with Enriquez that the disintegration of the sense of *kapwa* is traceable to the arrival of individualism brought about by the waves of colonization of the entire country first by the Europeans and later by the Americans.⁸² For more than 450 years of being treated as second-class citizens who needed to be educated and converted into the “civil” and “cultured” ways of the West, it seems that self-survival became the mode of thinking. The *kapwa* as the Shared Self started to lose its grip on the Filipino consciousness. That makes the retrieval of this important indigenous concept also relevant and pertinent to the issues of globalization and environmental abuse.

As well, this is also the position of another Australian-based scholar Merlinda Bobis who sided with Enriquez when he argued: “Once *ako* (I or ego) starts thinking of himself as separate from *kapwa*, the Filipino 'self' gets to be individuated in the Western sense and, in effect, denies the status of *kapwa* to the other. By the same token, the status of *kapwa* is also denied to the self.”⁸³ Taking her cue from this assertion of Enriquez, Bobis reimaged the discourse of *Kapwa* as The House of Self-and-Other. In trying to counter the effects of colonialism, Bobis would like to bring into the national consciousness the notion of *Kapwa* that evokes responsibility. To care for the well-being of the other is to care for the self. She advocates to move *kapwa* (noun) to *nakikipagkapwa* (verb form which means the act of “plural, dialogic, and interconnected worlds”⁸⁴ of relations. She wrote:

⁸¹ Jose Rhommel Hernandez, “*Manipulasyon o Pakikipagkapwa: Ang Ugnayang Tao-Anito sa Sinaunang Pananampalatayang Pilipino/ Manipulation or Pakikipagkapwa: Person-Anito Relationship in the Ancient Philippine Religion*” in *Malay* 27, no. 1 (2014): 92. (translation mine).

⁸² De Guia, *Kapwa* 251.

⁸³ Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 43.

⁸⁴Merlinda Bobis, “*Confounding Identities: Subversion and Transnational Sympathy*” in *Social Identities* 19, no. 2 (2013): 153.

I wish instead for a national transnational sympathy in which self and other do not 'house each other' in the traditional colonial paradigm, but function together as different rooms in *one house*. In this organic and embodied configuration, the agency of the one empowers the other, and the anguish and/or loss of one, equally hurts the other. Thus, everyone not only feels for the other when s/he is hurt, but also takes extreme care not to hurt each other, otherwise the house would collapse.⁸⁵

We definitely appreciate the efforts of these Filipino scholars who devoted their time and effort to retrieve and expound the meaning of *kapwa* in the context of national transformation. We nevertheless saw a critical question that they failed to address: "Is *Kapwa* a mere extension of the self?" Or do we make this query in the case of Bobis' *Kapwa* as "The House of Self-and-Other": "Whose paradigm of house are we talking about? From whose image are we molding this House?"

Kapwa seems to have been relegated to the horizon of the self. It appears that the liberating aspect has been dictated by the terms on how the self evaluates itself. One can immediately detect the Heideggerian tone in this particular reading of *Kapwa*. We will expound this critique as we turn to another scholar who tried to approach *Kapwa* from another point of view.

KAPWA AS IBA AND ABA

Rolando Tuazon, a scholar from the University of Louvain, also threw himself into the discussion of *Pakikipagkapwa* by mapping its terrain. In a journal published by Asian Christian Review he divided the literature of *kapwa* into two categories: the exclusivist and inclusivist perspectives. Those that belong to the exclusivists consider *pakikipagkapwa* as a domain of the ruling *principalia* who defines this concept of *kapwa* in terms of kinship and blood consanguinity in order to protect their interests and

⁸⁵ Ibid. 152.

maintain their oligarchic rule. Tuazon painstakingly traced this oppressive way of thinking from the expositions and early works of Filipino sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists like Vitaliano Gorospe and Landa Jocano.⁸⁶

He proceeded then to introduce Enriquez and de Guia as among the proponents of the inclusivist "readers" of *kapwa*.⁸⁷ He even linked this with another very Filipino concept that is *loob* (self or more precisely inner self in adjective) by revisiting the works of Filipino philosopher-theologians Albert Alejo and Dionisio Miranda. *Pakikipagkapwa*, considered from the axis of *loob*, is a moral and ethical response to the other who possesses the same *loob*. They found their inspiration in the works of Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber, Paul Ricouer and Martin Heidegger. Following the path of Enriquez, the aim of these scholars is to rediscover meaning of *kapwa* and other Filipino beliefs that we lost as a nation under colonization.

It is from these two standpoints that Tuazon carved out his own contribution. Armed with Levinas-inspired Dusselian method of Anadialectics, he argued that *Kapwa* may become a transformative tool in bringing the needed change to the character of the nation if it explores beyond the claim that *Kapwa* is a shared self or a self which sees itself in the other. In the first part of our paper, we saw how Levinas devoted his time in emphasizing the radicalness of the other's other. To subsume the other into the Same is not only a great disrespect, but it entails violence. Inspired from this radical exteriority of the other as other, we have shown how Dussel made a 360-degree turn as he tried to reflect and search a framework that could explain the abjectness of Latin America. But at the same time, he departed from Levinas in order to concretely respond to the suffering other, the victims, who had to succumb to the will of the imposing "I." By reinterpreting Hegel's dialectics into ana-dialectics, whereby the Other contests the "I" from an asymmetrical position, Dussel privileges the Other to call the "I"

⁸⁶ Rolando Tuazon, "Pakikipagkapwa and its Transformative Potential: An Anadialectical Interpretation" in *Asian Christian Review* 5, no. 1 (Summer 2011), 12-13.

⁸⁷ Tuazon, *Pakikipagkapwa*, 13-19.

into responsibility.

Tuazon, working along this framework, made the same remark. He asserted that the danger of excluding the marginalized becomes manifested when the basis of the evaluation of what is “good” and “transformative” is the Same (*sarili* or self) who judges. This is not only the problem of the exclusivists, but also among the inclusivists. He reasoned out:

In relation to the inclusivist perspective, the anadialectical perspective transcends the universalist vision of the inclusivist perspective which grounds itself on the commonly shared identity and which focuses on and is entrapped on the ontology of being... (T)he anadialectical perspective makes it aware that in the process of such retrieval of one's cultural identity and its affirmation of its greatness, it may also in the process exclude the marginalized and the excluded voices within that culture.⁸⁸

In his reinterpretation of *Kapwa* as a transformative tool, Tuazon associated it with two Filipino words: *iba* (different) and *aba* (poor). By recognizing the Other as totally different (*iba*) which is a Levinasian reading and as marginalized (*aba*) which is evidently from Dussel's historicizing of the Other, Tuazon bids to read *Pakikipagkapwa* as “*malasakit at paglilingkod sa abang iba*” (compassion and service for the excluded other).⁸⁹ In other words, the Other is actually *Kapwang Iba at Aba* (the Other who is Different and Poor). There are three points we would like to bring up at this point of our discussion.

KATUNGKULAN SA IBA AT ABA

First, we see the introduction of (using Levinas' word) “barbarism” in the Filipino language. Enriquez was right when he mentioned in passing that *Kapwa* might also be translated as

⁸⁸ Tuazon, *Pakikipagkapwa*, 27.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

“both”.⁹⁰ But “both” here has the connotation of “equality” as one may say “*kapwa kayo aba*” (both of you are equally poor). In other words, to bring together the words *kapwa* and *iba* as *kapwang iba* produces a tone of paradox. It sounds strange to a native speaker of the language because both words contradict each other: *kapwang iba* (the same who is different). This is also how Jaime Guevara interpreted Levinas and *pakikipagkapwa*. He saw the equality between the “me” and the “*kapwa*” since both of us are infinite. He concluded in his paper:

The term “equality” refers to the fact that both the self and the other are not “totalize” or “reduce” each other to anything that would deny their essential differences. As an “infinity” they are equal. Thus, I recognize that other as an other because he, “like me,” resists definition. “Equality” then is not about “sameness.”⁹¹

What is intriguing is that, Guevara wrote this at the end of his argument: “Whereas, *pakikipagkapwa* entails respect for, and the recognition of, the other as being different from the pack, from oneself, in *pakikipagkapwa*, we are the 'same' by virtue of being different.”⁹² If we are to truly stick to Levinas' philosophy, we will never be able to trace any point of equality. There will always be transcendence that produces asymmetry, where the other is always ahead of “me.” We do of course appreciate well the novelty of the term *Kapwang Iba* but one has to elevate the consciousness of those who will introduce and use this term if it is to be brought into the discourse of liberation. This is due to the problem and limits of semantics. We might be falling back to the same Heideggerian thought where the “I” recognizes the infinity of the Other because it sees itself as infinite. By simply calling the other person as *Iba* like

⁹⁰ See Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 43.

⁹¹ Jaime Guevara, “*Pakikipagkapwa* Sharing/Merging Oneself with Others” in *Filipino Cultural Traits Claro R. Ceniza Lectures*, ed. Rolando M. Gripaldo (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005), 14.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 15.

“*tulungan mo yong iba*” (help the other person) might already be perfectly understood as the other who is totally other.

Secondly, we want to retrieve the chasm between the *Loob* (inner self) and the *Iba* (other), in the context of responsibility. Enriquez talked about the different levels of relations between *Ibang Tao* (Outsider) and *Hindi Ibang Tao* (One-of-us).⁹³ The following Categories of Relationships are accorded to an “Outsider”: *Pakikitungo* (level of amenities/civility), *Pakikisalamuha* (level of “mixing” with other people), *Pakikilahok* (level of joining or participating), *Pakikibagay* (level of conforming) and *Pakikisama* (level of adjusting). The degree of relationships intensifies and gets deeper with the Categories of Relationships in *Hindi Ibang Tao*. This is revealed in the following forms of interrelations: *Pakikipagpalagayang-loob* (level of mutual trust/rapport), *Pakikisangkot* (level of getting involved) and *Pakikiisa* (level of fusion, oneness and full trust).

The basis of the degree of relationship is hinged on the level of interconnection between the self and the other. The relationship between the self and the other is heightened depending on the “fusion” of the *loob* (inner self) of two individuals. The sociologist Clemen Aquino confirms our observation as she consciously observed in her field-work the dynamics of these categories that are “structured according to the ‘closeness’ of *kalooban* (inner self in noun form) of the researcher and the participant.”⁹⁴ Though we value this insight, we still question the transformative aspect of *Pakikipagkapwa* when it is read from the intensity of relationship between the self and the other.

We propose that in order for real transformation in society to take place, the other as radically *Ibang Tao* (Outsider) may be maintained. We have noted earlier how Filipinos would bring out the best from their kitchen when an unknown visitor comes. The host wants to anticipate the needs of the *Ibang Tao*. They tend to behave and observe good manners in front of *Ibang Tao* not only

⁹³ Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 39-41.

⁹⁴ Clemen Aquino, “Mula sa Kinaroroonan: *Kapwa*, *Kapatiran* and *Bayan* in *Philippine Social Science*” in *Asian Journal of Science* 32, Issue 1 (2004):107.

because of the angst of losing one's face, but because the other might be disturbed. A politician would not dare to do any misdeed while in office when there is *Ibang Tao* observing him/her. It would be a source of *Hiya* (shame) not only because s/he did something wrong, but primarily because s/he did not meet the standard demanded from him/her. In other words, the *Ibang Tao* becomes the point of reference.

By using this lens, the retrieval of the exteriority of the other as other from the self becomes transformative. The present predicament of the Philippine government is that, it is said to be riddled with politicians accused of corruption and plunder and yet they can stay in office because their "territory" becomes filled with *Hindi Ibang Tao* (one-of-us). They thrive because of nepotism, patronages and *sakop* (reference group) mentality. They play their game of "*pare-pareho lang naman tayo*" (we are just the same). We are afraid that people become predisposed and cynical because this reality becomes *Hindi na iba* (no longer different/strange).

Thirdly, we have noticed that neither of the current discussions on *Kapwa* dwells on Responsibility. Enriquez discussed for example *Pakikisangkot* (Being Involved), *Pakikibaka* (Resistance/Struggle against someone or something), *Katarungan* (Justice), *Kalayaan* (Freedom), *Katotohanan* and *Katwiran* (Truth and Reason), *Kapayapaan* (Peace) and *Pagkakaisa* (Unity) in the context of *Kapwa*. However we have already voiced out our reservation in adopting *Kapwa as Shared Self* because it will ultimately lead to Shared Responsibility, a responsibility that sees itself in the other. On the other hand, Tuazon took the stance of Levinas and Dussel and advocated that the *Kapwang Iba* at *Aba* be served as a superior or master. But he seems not to explore responsibility itself vis-a-vis *Pakikipagkapwa* as "Transformative Potential." Did he simply take this for granted as a term understood among Filipinos?

There are two similar words for responsibility in the Filipino language: *Pananagutan* and *Katungkulan*. *Pananagutan* comes from the word *sagot*, that means to reply. This type of responsibility then is rooted in the ability of the person to give his/her answer. This is also true with the German's *Verantwortung*.

The seat of commitment is in the very being of the self. We have seen however how Levinas argued against the Heideggerian *Mitsein* that locates responsibility from being's being. The danger lies on how the responsibility is being interpreted from the perspective of the *Dasein*. This is also the problem of the term *Pananagutan* in relation to *Pakikipagkapwa*. The response might be measured from the point of view of the "I". The other is lost and becomes a mere recipient, a mere project. Thus, the response is based on the perception of the viewer. Boothroyd would call this as part of the "culture of pity" where the audience forms an image of the poor based on what appears on televisions or posters and respond from the comfortable seats of their living rooms.⁹⁵ It has been the author's experience of receiving donations like thick comforters and formal dress like coat and tie for the fire victims at an evacuation center reaching a temperature of 38°C in the summer. But this is how *Pananagutan* may work. It is *aking sagot sa aking kapwa* (my response to my fellow).

Rather than *Pananagutan*, we propose that *Pakikipagkapwa* be read in the light of *Katungkulan* that is Duty or Obligation. It is derived from the root word *tungkol* that means "about". It points to someone or something other than itself like "*tungkol sa nakaraang bagyo ang usapan*" (the topic is about the recent storm). It may also mean "authority". Yet it does not point to the person alone, but it is about the position one holds. When *Pakikipagkapwa* is linked to *Katungkulan*, the *Ibang Tao* is being truly listened to because responsibility here stems not from the self but from the other. The other commands "me" to respond because "my" obligation is not dependent on how "I" want to give "my" reply or answer, but on how the other calls "me" and how "I" should respond based on the voice of the other. This is what Levinas calls the "I" in the accusative form "*Me Voici*". *Katungkulan* obliges "me" to direct my attention to the other, because it is "*tungkol sa iba na abang kapwa*" (about the other who is poor). The responsibility comes from the other and is about the other. *Katungkulan* rules out any option of not fulfilling an obligation. This is why every government position in Filipino

⁹⁵ Boothroyd, *Ethical Subjects*, 146-148.

term is called *Kinauukulan*. The demand of their office does not depend on whether they will fulfill their duty or not. It is imperative that they do their job well. In fact, *Katungkulan* comes first before *Pananagutan*. One is called first into something before s/he can respond.

With *Katungkulan* as our chosen stance, Dussel's Architectonics of Ethics becomes more sensible in terms of obliging the system to truly take its duty for the Other, especially the victims of oppressive structures. *Pakikipagkapwa* becomes an ethical imperative that can overhaul the corrupt system embedded in the cultural, political, economic, and social fibers of the nation when the system imbibes the framework of *Katungkulan sa Iba at Aba* (Obligation/Responsibility to the Other Poor). Again we have to be cautioned that any system brings marginalization; thus the task is a never-ending responsibility, a never-ending *Katungkulan*.

CONCLUSION

Our exploration brought us from the West (Europe) to the South (Latin America) to South-East Asia in the context of the Philippines. We have seen how Levinas challenged the long tradition of ontology as the first philosophy. His boldness to shake the foundation of Western philosophy brought in the open the Other who has been long relegated at the sideline (*am Rand*) of the whole western philosophical discourse. By exposing the dominating and domineering tentacles of the "I" which reduces everything into itself as part of its self-actualization and search for authenticity, the other is revealed as a trace of the face that is always fleeing because it is beyond what it is perceived as to be. It pleads and commands the "I" not only to respect its radical otherness but it summons the "I" to an infinite responsibility.

The novelty and severity of Levinas' philosophy converted Dussel from his Heidegger-inspired project of recovering the lost selfhood of the Latin Americans to a Liberation Philosophy that questions the whole paradigm of colonization from the vantage point of exteriority and alterity of the other. Yet Dussel came to a point of dissatisfaction as he could not find any concrete solution

that Levinas could offer to the real sufferings of the Latin Americans. He fully agrees with Levinas that ethics is the first philosophy but ethics, according to Dussel, is also life, life that breathes and suffers pains. From this he moved forward in developing his own method of doing ethics from the perspective of the margins.

Coming from the Marxist and Hegelian tradition but now with an eye from Levinas, Dussel developed his Anadialecical Method where the interlocutor of the Same is no longer the Same in the process of dialectics, but the Other who is above and beyond the Same. Thus, the term *ana* (higher) is used to highlight its departure from Hegel. In order to effect the longed-for change, Dussel advanced his Architectonics of Ethics where his four principles (Material, Formal, Feasibility and Liberation) find their grounding from the Other.

It is from these two great philosophers that we tried to re-interpret *Pakikipagkapwa*. Our main dialogue partners here were Virgilio Enriquez who pioneered the reinterpretation of *Kapwa* as a Shared Self and Rolando Tuazon who elucidated *Kapwa* as *Iba* and *Aba*. The former argued that *Kapwa* should be seen in the light of the self. Emancipation can take place when one understands *Kapwa* as someone who is like the *sarili* (self) who suffers. Tuazon pointed out that this inclusivist perspective might truly lead to the recovery from the moral degradation of the country but he also showed the danger of how this viewpoint could push people to the edges and peripheries of societies when others do not share the same vision. Instead of Shared Self, Tuazon offered that *Kapwa* be read from the vantage point of *Iba* (other) and *Aba* (Poor): *Kapwang Iba at Aba*.

Responding to these two current discourses on *Pakikipagkapwa*, we noted three aspects that one should consider with respect to the mentioned topic. First, the problem of semantics arises. Although we admire the introduced “barbarism” in the language, *Kapwang Iba* should be clarified well, lest it falls back into ontology. Secondly, we want to maintain the chasm between *Ibang Tao* and *Hindi Ibang Tao* in the light of moral and ethical recovery. We have argued how essential this difference is in order to bring

back *Hiya* (shame) as a force in preventing abuses of the other, especially the excluded. Thirdly, we have proposed to reread *Pakikipagkapwa* from the perspective of *Katungkulan* rather than *Pananagutan*. The former locates responsibility not from the personal answer but from the outside other that calls someone to responsibility.

Given the different points we brought into the table of discussion, we go back to the painful questions in the light of the three future big events that will take place in the Philippines: "Are we truly liberated?" Where shall we anchor our hope for true liberation?" To which we reply: "*Ang pag-asa ng kalayaan ay nakasalalay sa ating katungkulan na tumugon sa kapwa.*" (The hope for liberation comes when we learn to take responsibility for the other). "Not to respond is to impute the guilt not to anyone else but to one's self. Quoting Dostoyevsky, Levinas gave us the parting words: "Each of us is guilty before everyone for everyone, and I more than the others."⁹⁶

Kenneth Centeno

St. Vincent School of Theology
221 Tandang Sora Ave., Quezon City
Email: kmasong@ateneo.edu

⁹⁶ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 146.