

Inès CASSIMI

Critical Theory Program

**A New Political Extravagance¹:
an ethical politics of global starvation**

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SUMMARY

OPENING REMARKS	p.4
INTRODUCTION	p.5
Wider context: Humanitarian action, its necessity and its controversy	
The issue of global hunger: definition and implications	
Ethics and politics: shouldn't we promote madness?	
PART ONE:	
LEVINASIAN ETHICS APPLIED TO THE ISSUE OF GLOBAL HUNGER	p.10
1. Responsibility for the Other to the point of submission	
1.1 The anteriority and transcendence of the Other	
1.2 Responsibility towards the Other's mortality	
1.3 Useless suffering	
2. Ethics and global starvation: feeding the Other as "first requirement"	
2.1 A prime imperative	
2.2 A re-affirmation of singularity	
2.3 A transcendence of the ambiguity of the face	
PART TWO:	
REMEDIES TO STARVATION, FIGURES AND PROBLEMATIC ISSUES	p.15
1. Alarming figures: « tyranny of starvation »	
2. Aid delivery	
3. Results and outlooks	
PART THREE:	
FROM ETHICS TO POLITICS, BETWEEN CONTRADICTION AND EXTRAVAGANCE	p.19
1. Helping the Other : a singular action	
1.1 Singular by definition	
1.2 Singular as a beginning	
1.3 A singular "kindness" ("bonté")	
2. Reaching a global politics: a necessary evil	
2.1 A cosmopolitan politics : its essence	
2.2 A responsible politics: its (ethical) language	
2.3 A peaceful politics: its unfolding and overcoming	
3. Installing a global politics	
3.1 Principles	
3.2 Actions	
3.3 Dangers	
CONCLUSION	p.27
A new and extravagant Reason	
Two foremost objectives	
LE MOT DE LA FIN : « LE CHANGEMENT C'EST MAINTENANT »	p.29

OPENING REMARKS

« “Après-vous” : cette formule de politesse *devrait être*² la plus belle formule de notre civilisation »³. But look at us: some of us say « après-vous » several times a day, yet they are obliged to do so for they are tied down by good manners. This constrain is pure hypocrisy. The true “après-vous” is of a different nature: (a) it is inspired by a mild force that bends our own area (espace) towards the Other and (b) is singular. It is not an “après-moi” in the sense that I force myself to let the Other take precedence over my *ego*. Hence, we eventually are to acknowledge that few would understand the concept (in the heideggerian meaning i.e. *doing*) and build their actions on it. Here, there is no *medium* of any kind, this speech is directly addressed to the Other as “straightforwardness” (“droiture”). Caring for the Other and its suffering is neither about clear conscience nor about “diversion” (divertissement pascalien) but it is the result of a realization and a deliberate choice.

Uprightness (“droiture”) is the “urgency of a destination leading to the Other and not a eternal return to self”⁴, “the way *diversion* [my emphasis] comes back, incapable as it is of transcendence – a movement beyond anxiety and stronger than death”⁵

This *study* – that comes from the Latin word “passion”, “fervor”, “affection” – that I’m undertaking is not a mere “maieutics”⁶ that would uncontrollably lead me back to myself and would not learn me anything. This study is intended to be a “*welcoming*” of the Other that I want to express in my discourse. Levinas says in *Totality and Infinity* that I receive my capacity to write these very lines from the Other. This ability to write – this “teaching” – is given to me by the Other and it surpasses me : this discourse is written by and for the Other, it is the “expression of the Other”⁷.

« The *transcendence of discourse is bound to love* »⁶ Levinas states. Then I want my discourse to be love filled, being the reflection of the « hospitality » I wish to offer to the Other.

INTRODUCTION

Wider context: Humanitarian action, its necessity and its controversy

“L’action humanitaire sauve des vies tous les jours et partout dans le monde, et c’est bien là sa justification première »⁸

Consensual definition of Humanitarian action

Humanitarian effort is firstly to be understood as a relief action. This assistance can be about delivering care – chiefly medical care –, distributing a material aid, helping victims with the Justice... Humanitarian aid simply aims at saving lives: it shoots for the rescue of casualties either of natural disasters or damages and situations of shortage, by easing their suffering and distress. But perhaps that Humanitarian action would be far more ethical and right if instead of considering people it assists as *victims*, it sees them as *normal individuals* who *need* support at a given moment. We should admit that this conception of victimization derives from the idea that victims are suffering from and *under* something or someone passively. Therefore, victims are thought of as submitted, deprived of their autonomy as if human first characteristic was autonomy. This required shift in our philosophical understanding of human being will be discussed later in this thinking (réflexion).

The humanitarian temporal continuum

Because Humanitarian action does not and should not only deal with temporary crisis and emergency operations, but should also pursue its work to responding to long-term problems, the coordination of both actions is being established. Nevertheless, it is said that short-term interventions are still more efficient: the “temporal continuum” glossary proves that it was high time measures were taken and that has been done. When we look at figures, we see that today more than a half of Humanitarian funds are spent on crisis lasting more than eight years.

What about altruism?

There is very little consensus on the value of altruism because humanitarian work is not *dis-inter-ested* (désintéressé), as Levinas defines the inter-human relationship. Its action is obviously tinged with political interests and stakes although it should be tied to philanthropy and kindness as its latin etymology “humanitas” suggests.

“De l’aveu même des spécialistes et des praticiens, l’aide ne vise pas seulement à répondre à des besoins de base, à réhabiliter des régions en crise, à lutter contre la pauvreté et à garantir l’accès à des biens publics mondiaux, mais aussi à défendre des intérêts de politique étrangère, à pénétrer des marchés, à promouvoir les droits de l’homme et à faire étalage de sa solidarité, souvent en raison de liens historiques avec le pays destinataire de cette aide »⁷

The necessity to found a *novel politics* able to make the « *responsibility to protect* »⁷ a reality becomes already visible.

The issue of global hunger: definition and implications

Definitions of starvation

Chateaubriand, the founder of Romanticism, once said that a person is able to desire everything but hunger. This becomes clear when we try to put starvation into words.

What starvation really mean? We can capture two aspects of the concept which are best illustrated and expressed by Marc Crépon :

“Il est, dans le monde, de nombreuses formes de vulnérabilité qui affectent les populations, à commencer par les guerres et les épidémies (le sida, le paludisme et la

tuberculose), mais aucune n'est plus *récurrente, extensive et croissante* [my emphasis] que la famine » ; « organisée ou consentie [elle est] la plus cruelle des exterminations »⁹

The extreme form of vulnerability Marc Crépon defines hunger (*faim*) as "the final stage of precariousness affecting a growing part of the population"¹⁰. One can then grasp that we move one step further with starvation, in terms of assault in human life. Indeed, causes of starvation are various, but its unique consequence remains the same: greater vulnerability.

The extreme form of dehumanization Because food and water are essential to life, starvation is the extreme form of dehumanization of its *victims* – here we can use this word since people are dying of hunger. How can they be human when paralyzed by hunger? How can they be human when the only thing they are capable of is thinking of eating? How can they possibly *live* under the burden of starvation? They just can. Global hunger simply prevents life from existing as it reduces men to their animality. But, besides, the alarming question is why does this situation exist? And even more so, why do we let it happen?

Issues concerning starvation

The violence of anonymity One face of starvation is this power to make faces vanish. One particular individual starving to death will disappear within the starving masse. The "they" – the starving people – is dying anonymously and in silence. Just watching the news on TV proves that juicy stories related to our common consumerism, especially as we head into the Christmas season, far exceed "their" importance. Indeed, starvation destroys any singularity as it holds 'them' in the shadows of death, drowns "them" in an anonymous waning mass.

We murderers: a famished and famishing world¹¹ One can positively assess that our world does no longer and will no longer make sense until we truly address this pervasive problem. So far, we close our eyes and ears not to feel guilty about the issue. We do not want to hear

their cry in the darkness of their anonymity that we have created. We refuse to see that our world and its illusory unity are fractured along an “irreducible fault line”¹² that is called *hunger*. Our world is senseless for we do not *respond* to the others’ *vulnerability and mortality*. We let them starving to death as we decline to give ourselves the means required to save these populations, no matter what and how much it costs. Not only have we to stop depressing and *explaining* that starvation is a terrible and inalienable phenomenon, but we must also become aware of the fact that we can act on it and do all we can to tackle it. Otherwise, we are and will stay murderers:

“parce qu'il n'y a pas de forme plus extrême de l'abandon d'autrui à une mort programmée, le famine prive la mondialisation du monde de tout sens possible – sinon celui d'un meurtre de masse consenti. »¹³

This is the extreme form of dehumanization...

“Affamer les autres, se résigner à leur famine ou la justifier pour continuer à jouir ou jouir toujours davantage, en toute sécurité, en toute tranquillité, des nourritures terrestres. »¹¹

Ethics and politics: shouldn't we promote madness?

Ethics first philosophy (even pre-philosophy) that states the transcendence of the Other in every face-to-face inter-human relationship, that is Justice and openness to infinity

Politics *res publica* matters to the *polis* that includes all citizens; politics is both the thinking of a reasonable action and the development of an active undertaking

If we go deeper in the analysis of Humanitarian action, and in particular of the essence of work against starvation, an issue emerges. As it has to be ethical by definition and following Levinas' understanding of the concept of *ethics*, can't we maintain that humanitarian work against great vulnerability has to be *extravagant*? Indeed, this help should have two major characteristics in theory: it has to be (a) disproportionate and (b) in excess. First, humanitarian help is disproportionate because it expects nothing in return: its structure is a disproportionate asymmetry – coming from the Other's transcendence. Second, this support is in excess because this suffering for the Other cannot possibly be grasped by any framework of thinking. It cannot be recovered by any figure, neither by reason nor by religion... nor even by the moral law. Inter-human order is unidentifiable by any system of understanding. As Levinas underlines, it is *useless*: that is the foundation of its *madness* or *extravagance*.

“La bonté humaine dans la vie de tous les jours, [...] elle est, cette bonté folle [my emphasis], ce qu'il y a de plus humain en l'homme, elle est ce qui définit l'homme »¹⁴

Isn't this *extravagance* desirable? Then, is today humanitarian action extravagant enough? There is no doubt that *ethics*, as defines by Levinas, is structured by Grossman's *extravagance*. Therefore, an *ethical* humanitarian politics must follow the same pattern. We eventually need to deduce a *ethical* political... an *extravagant politics*!



PART ONE:

LEVINASIAN ETHICS APPLIED TO THE ISSUE OF GLOBAL HUNGER

“Life only has meaning through alterity, submission and sacrifice”

Daniel Cohen Levinas

Who else but Levinas would be better able to grasp the *raison d'être* of help and rescue of famished people? He is the one who places this *duty* above everything else. Ethics comes first, as the first philosophy, on top of which there is hunger and the responsibility to give a helping hand, feed and save the hungry.

1. Responsibility for the Other to the point of submission

1.1. The anteriority and transcendence of the Other

The origin: passing the threshold of infinity

One's relationship to the Other is a relationship with an unattainable otherness. As we open ourselves to the other, we have the experience of infinity, an infinity that absolutely cannot be grasped and comprehended – in contrast with “totality or “addition” (“totalisation”). The face-to-face with the Other, that is the ultimate form of inter-human relationship, is *ethical*, and as it is *ethical* it is *infinite*. Therefore, one could notice a paradox in this relationship as it contains *the presence of infinity in a finite action*¹⁵. As we respond to the Other, we transcend the separation between the him and us: that is what Levinas calls “*meta-physical passage*”.

Consequence: asymmetry, extravagance and “law of hospitality”

The Other precedes myself and my *subjectivity*, he transcends me. Thinking of infinity means thinking of inequality (“pensée de l'inégal”¹⁶): the relationship to the Other is essentially

structured by asymmetry. Besides, I only can call myself “me” once I am responsible for the Other, which begins by responding to him. How cannot my *duty* towards the Other be extravagant as I give myself to the other without receiving something back? Thus, my *welcome* of the Other is disproportionate as it derives from my asymmetric responsibility. This “immoderate measure”¹⁷ (“mesure démesurée”) is the core aspect of the “law of hospitality” that Derrida discusses in his “Word of Welcome”: it commands the ethical relationship.

1.2. Responsibility towards the Other’s mortality

Otherness and death

Our death has no importance – we cannot do anything about it. On the contrary, we are able to act on the Other’s death which matters to us. Where would we find death? Where would it strike us? Indeed, death simply appears to us in the *face* of the Other: death is readable in the Other’s face. As we usually *dialogue* with the Other, listening and responding to him, we understand why, for Levinas, death is a “non-response experience” (“expérience de non-réponse”) for the one who lives on. That is why the French philosopher always feared to lose communication when the Other on the phone stopped talking. That *fear* is a proof of friendship and *hospitality*. Furthermore, the question of passing (passage au néant) is not a matter of interest, “nothingness” (néant) is worth to consider as its expression is the imperative “You shall not kill” that prevents me from hurting the Other.

The call of the Other’s vulnerability and mortality

All can be summarized by this short phrase of Levinas:

“Je suis responsable de l’autre en tant qu’il est mortel”¹⁸

Responsibility is about responding to the Other, replying to his requests even before he has to ask for it. Our responsibility is due to the Other's face that brings to light his mortality and vulnerability. Because death – that is the almost possibility of the Other – seen in his face, structures one's relationship to the Other, this anticipated *morning* brings about the necessity of the *welcome* of the Other. We are aware of our responsibility towards the Other without feeling the weight of any debt. However, is it still possible not to be burdened by this debt when we let about 1 billion people starving to death each year? How cannot we endure the “trauma of the Other”¹⁹ (“traumatisme de l'autre”), coming from the Other? There is no greater *scandal* than that of the “indifference to the Other's suffering”²⁰.

1.3. Useless suffering

A double yes

The answer is always *yes*. We always tend to approach what is dissimilar to us, what is “other”, which is *justice*. Like openness, which is openness *to* the Other and *of* the Other since his face or his skin is bared to reveal his vulnerability, the *yes* is a *yes to* and *of* the Other. Which one precede the Other? No doubt: the *yes of* the Other is first. Nevertheless, the *yes* coming from the Other only comes first not to ask for an answer but to expect the answer that would bring it about:

« Un appel ne peut s'entendre lui-même, et s'entendre appeler, que depuis la promesse d'une réponse »²¹

What about a call left with no answer? What about the silence of the hungry? What about the *yes to* the Other, to the famished ones? Where is our promise?

My responsibility as a “hostage”

My responsibility is as infinite as my separation with the Other is. It is unlimited because I'm tied to an unconditional *yes*. I'm responsible: out of solitude, *I am*. That is what allows me to turn into a *subject*, understood as *subject to* the Other. *Subjectivity* and being myself is only thinkable if I take the responsibility of being responsible for the Other, which is being his *hostage*. This responsibility that precedes not only the perception of the Other but also myself is not transferable. There is no possible exit. I suffer with and for the Other. Without any *justification*, I'm responsible for his *suffering*: this *pure suffering* is “useless”.

2. Ethics and global starvation: feeding the Other as “first requirement”²²

2.1. A prime imperative

No justification of any kind

Feeding the other, as “first requirement”, has this transcendent quality not to be subject to anything. It's like that and not otherwise: no political, religious, economic or social conditions, justifications or limitations of this movement towards the Other. An attempt to explain the reason why nourishing the hungry is an absolute and imperative necessity would be already a sort of justification. Hence, nothing more has to be said.

« Aucun argument, aucun calcul, d'ordre économique, géopolitique ou stratégique, aucune raison idéologique ne sauraient prévaloir sur son impératif ».²³

The greater spirituality

This duty has nothing to do with *spiritual food (nourritures spirituelles)* indeed. Would a starving person care about it? There are reasons for skepticism. The Other's suffering calls us for us to save him, and for that, the first thing required is food and water. Thereby, the one who, as he has to, does whatever he can to rescue the Other and feed the Other, would experience or illustrate what “holiness” (“sainteté”) really is.

2.2. A re-affirmation of singularity

Ambivalence of hunger, ambivalence of terror

This ambivalence of hunger (faim) is understandable in Marc Crepon's essay in *La Revue des deux mondes*. Therefore, the latter distinguishes the two aspects of hunger which are *pleasure* (jouissance) and *deprivation* (privation). Privation comes first doubtlessly. And the terror triggered by hunger confines (enferme) the hungry within a wished pleasure and destroys him from the inside through deprivation at the same. Besides, as Levinas insists on, hunger has a "bewitching"²⁴ character. Either it captivates and subjugates the starving ones or it turns into an excuse for the *privileged people* not to hear or listen to the first ones.

End to the violence of anonymity

Obviously, if one addresses the issue of global starvation, he will first of all look at figures and statistics. Indeed, that is an important item to keep in mind. However, no one could ever truly *understand* this problematic question if he doesn't start with the starving individual – that is the "secret"²⁵. There is no genuine approach of starvation if it is not one of philosophy or ethics. That means an attitude of mere Justice rather than one of violence: an infinite conversation by listening and understanding the Other *vs* a "totalization" and categorization. Violence is categorization and categorization is violence for it creates a frontier between a privileged "us" and a starving "them". Thus the violence emerges from the exclusion of the Other and the fact that we no longer see him as a singularity but as a part of a collective "them". Death should remain an "exception"²⁶, a singular movement and anxiety towards the starving Other and the "unknown"²⁴ ("inconnu") of his death.

2.3. A transcendence of the ambiguity of the *face*

A Janus-like face

There is nothing more ambiguous than the *face* of the Other. On the one hand, it expresses an absolute interdiction: do not kill. On the other hand, its pure bareness and vulnerability breeds violence. The *face* is characterized by an “inviolable violability”²⁷ (“inviolable violabilité”).

Hospitality as the ultimate solution

If hospitality brings about the transcendence of this ambiguity through the welcome of the Other, the *face* and the Other will always transcend the first hospitality. The only way to approach the face and its vulnerability is through hospitality which is the *ethical language*.

“Il n'y a pas de visage sans accueil”²⁸

Then, what about those starving people dying every day without anybody being concerned about them? Which kind of welcome is offered to these people dehumanized by hunger?



PART TWO:

REMEDIES TO STARVATION, FIGURES AND PROBLEMATIC ISSUES

“Il n'y aurait qu'une seule race de meurtriers que le meurtre soit commis involontairement ou intentionnellement”

E. Levinas, *L'Au-delà du verset*

1. Alarming figures: « tyranny of starvation »²⁹

Many factors are responsible for the emergence of starvation and its persistence. To mention only a few, we have to recall economic causes (for example the development of export-oriented agriculture despite the fact that it replaces subsistence agriculture) or climate-

related causes (drought). There are also institutional and political factors (drop in foreign aid or “company-friendly” incentives) and media ones (lack of attention for the issue). Indeed, under-nutrition results from complex interactions between these various elements that are worsened by an unhealthy environment. The illustration³⁰ below draws possible shocks leading to malnutrition:

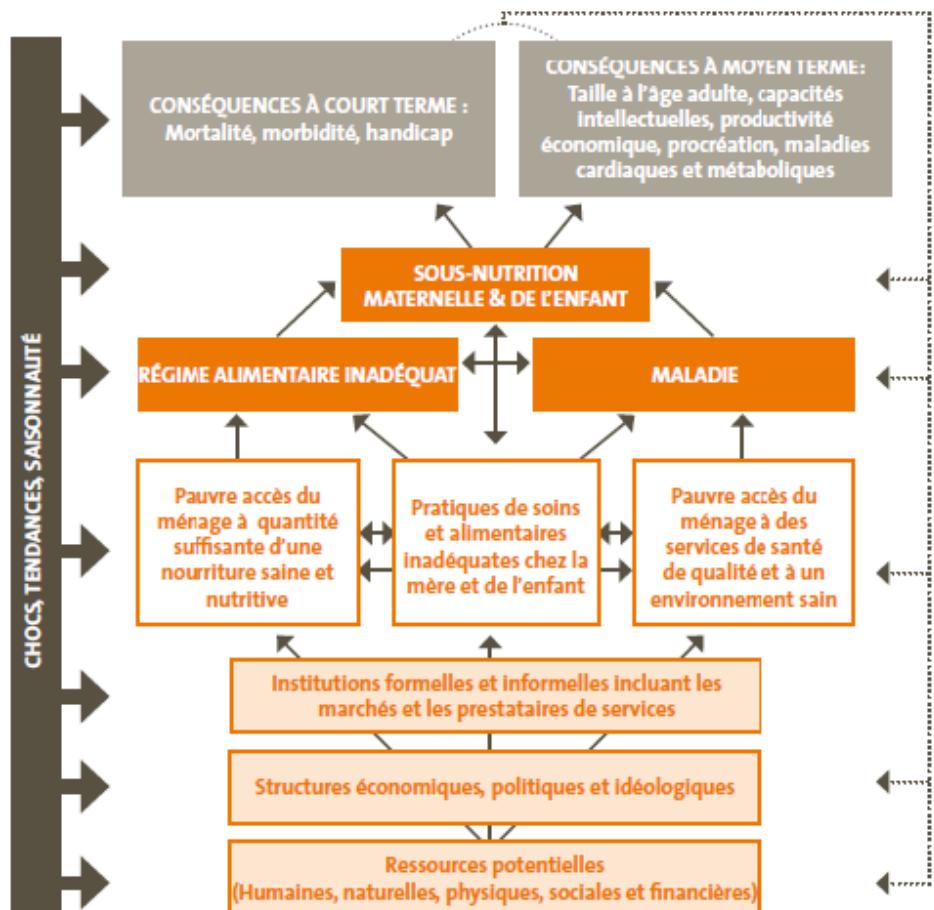


Figure 5: Cadre conceptuel des causes de la sous-nutrition

Consequences are dreadful. Starvation is the most deadly plague in the world. According to the UN World Food Program, starvation kills more people than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis brought together. Some striking figures help us to grasp the scope of the issue and the disaster it spells for life:

- **842 millions** of people are affected by starvation in the world: that means that 1 individual out of 8 does not receive enough food to have a normal life
- **Almost 600 million** of them live in Asia

- **Nearly 15% of the population** of developing countries are starving to death nowadays
- Each year **about 3 million of children under 5** from malnutrition which represents almost half of all children's death (children under 6 months are the most vulnerable)
- **80% of children who suffer from stunting** (caused by poor nutrition) live in 20 countries
- **66 millions of children** go to school hungry in the developing world, 23% of which live in Africa³¹

2. Aid delivery

We cannot deny that players are diverse and numerous in the fight against starvation. They tackle either morbidity or mortality knowing the mutual relation between the two. Besides, in order to have a coherent international food safety policy, similar qualitative indicators and quantitative results are used such as the rate of malnutrition or mortality, incidence of particular diseases, or even the rate of exclusive maternal breastfeeding. International and local organizations have to deal with "catastrophes" that can be of two kinds. It can be a sudden catastrophe that comes from a natural disaster for instance, or it can be a long-term progressive catastrophe due for example to drought. In any case, these catastrophes are urgencies that require immediate and appropriate responses in order to minimize further complications and death.

Action contre la faim, that deals with nutrition and secure health, people's livelihoods, clean water and awareness raising, has a three-in-one strategy that is put into practice through a four-step action – just as Tronto's *care* procedure (III 3.2). Thus, ACF has three main strategies concerning the fight against starvation: substitution, reinforcement and crisis management. There are demonstrated by a continuous action that goes from emergency

preparation to rehabilitation. Its *modus operandi* eventually goes from total substitution to full integration of local structures and staff.

United Nations' planning should be mentioned as well. They play a great role in fighting poverty and starvation in particular (through the *Food and Agriculture Organization*). It is one of their *Millienium Development Goals*, even the first one. It aims at “eradica[ting] extreme poverty and hunger”. But obviously, the eight goals are entangled and the resolution of each one has an impact on others' achievement.

Another player that seems essential in the struggle is the newly founded ***Cluster Approach*** that coordinates and gathers stakeholders a little more for a quick and effective humanitarian action.

3. Results and outlooks

Obviously breakthroughs are noticeable since a few years (a fall of 17% has been recorded since the 1990's). Yet, disparities and inequalities still persist or increase, separating even more privileged ones from those living in an absolute poverty. Too little progress has been made in Africa and Southern Asia, no improvement is seeable in Western Asia, and Eastern Asia as well as Latin America have a growing proportion of their population that is starving. This has to do with the lack of attention and concern about starvation in an increasingly individualistic and materialist global society that marginalize the practice of *care*. At last, there is one persistent lack of understanding: how cannot hunger disappear when we know that so little money, compared to daily monetary transactions for instance, is required to achieve it? How is it possible that we are incapable of providing the 3.2 billion per year needed to feed 66 million of children going to school hungry?



**PART THREE:
FROM ETHICS TO POLITICS, BETWEEN CONTRADICTION AND
EXTRAVAGANCE**

“Il faut ce rapport, il doit exister, il faut déduire une politique et un droit de l’éthique.

Il faut cette déduction pour déterminer « le meilleur » ou le « moins mauvais » ”

J. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

How can we consider this *hiatus* between ethics and politics? Thinking of a link between ethics and politics, especially in the case of global starvation, isn't it trying to establish standards that would limit a pure and infinite ethical relationship? Isn't it an attempt to “format” the essentially singular inter-human relationship? Knowing the necessity of ethics and the violence of non-singularity, the question seems essential. But, perhaps this politics is a necessary evil. Maybe it is the condition of god, justice and perfectibility. That is, indeed, what we are looking for: a politics – of Justice – able to make our world a better place that is listening to the famished ones. Thus, we have to “infinitise” (“infinitiser”) our responsibility though the invention of a new politics because we are responsible up to our lack of attention.

The goal is eventually simple:

“pour que la bonne hospitalité ait sa chance”³²

1. Helping the Other : a singular action

1.1 Singular by definition

By definition, ethics means our single and unique relationship with the “others” of the world I live in. Ethics starts with the face-to-face between two human beings. Because it is infinite, it

cannot be summarized (synthétiser) or totalized: it is single. Besides ethics must come first, so singularity must come first, subjectivity must come first... *secret* must come first.

1.2 Singular as a beginning

Thus the first step is a singular one: me and all living being, my responsibility and my action towards the Other. This movement must start by understanding hunger as *deprivation* in order to resist against a world of pleasure. The keystone is this “radical individualization” (“individualization radicale”)³³ of any situation of starvation.

1.3 A singular “kindness” (“bonté”)

“La bonté humaine dans la vie de tous les jours, [...] elle est, cette bonté *folle* [my emphasis], ce qu'il y a de plus humain en l'homme, elle est ce qui définit l'homme »³⁴

This sentence is everything. At first, we singularly need to be *madly extravagant, madly human* (follement fous, follement humains)! This “kindness” is ethics itself: it is the belief that I have the possibility to help. This “kindness” is a pure help that does not except anything in return, just as ethics and responsibility.

“Ces gestes de secours rendent droit à la responsabilité qu'appellent la vulnérabilité et la mortalité d'autrui. Ils retournent le sens de la faim en faisant de la demande de nourriture le premier des appels que nous adresse de partout la transcendance d'autrui »³⁵

Then comes the invention of a politics equal to the primary extravagance (folie). We need to develop an extravagant policy that forgets itself and forget its vested interests and its political calculations to give way to the Other, inter-human relationship - or Justice.

2. Reaching a global politics: a necessary evil

2.1 A cosmopolitan politics : its essence

Definition: extend the frontiers of responsibility

Can we think of such a politics that would cross and transcend the border of a limited social space, like a state? Indeed, what we really extend is not the states' border but above all it is the ethical responsibility. That is what should be called *cosmopolitanism*, that Marc Crépon defines as the “distinction, extension and legitimacy (legitimité) of the spheres of responsibility”. If a politics against starvation starts with the affirmation of a personal duty, this duty has to become a duty of the world itself.

Being “citizen of the world”

This last statement naturally leads to the concept of being a citizen of the world. That means “being-in-the-cosmopolitan world”³⁶ (“être-au monde cosmopolite”) so to say, using a heideggerian formulation. Therefore, that supposes to get rid of the frontiers, but it is not the only condition. That involves also forgetting one’s own interests and erasing them to prefer common interests with the whole world. That is an authentic “belonging to the world”³¹ (“appartenance au monde”).

2.2 A responsible politics: its (ethical) language

A responding politics

The foremost concept that has to be put into practice in a responsible politics is the *double yes* (I 1.3). As well as we are only able to say yes if the Other does it first, the new politics that we are trying to invent will have to come from the Other and come back to the Other. This is the

condition for the political decision to be responsible: it is marked by the inter-human relationship as opposed to an “egologic, autonomic and automatic immanence”³⁷ (“immanence écologique [...] autonome et automatique”).

A welcoming politics

Eventually, as we present ourselves to the world, the so-called globalized world, as we call ourselves “Men of the world”, we have no legitimacy at all if we are not responsible *of everything and for everyone*. I am responsible of my life, of my survival (survie), so I am obliged – or everybody obliges me – to be responsible for everybody’s survival. I’m being-towards-the-world, I am being a subject of the world as its host (before than as its guest) and even more so as its hostage.

“Le mot *Je* signifie *me voici*, répondant de tout et de tous »³⁸.

Therefore, before any political action there will always be an unlimited debt that politics has to accept as its pre-definition.

2.3 A peaceful politics: its unfolding and overcoming

Peace as a pre-original concept

If a politics that accepts starvation cannot claim to have peace as foremost principle, then placing peace as a pre-original concept would mean that we put starvation as the capital political goal. Besides, we can go further on in assuming that this peace needed for an extravagant politics against starvation is ethical on the condition that it unfolds in openness to hospitality. Hospitality is in fact a « declaration of peace, the declaration of peace itself.”³⁹

Thus, we need to abandon our guilty conscience to take action. However, peace as the fruit of ethics itself, is absolutely required. Otherwise, it will simply be an extra artifice:

« qu'un masque supplémentaire de cette force suprême de nihilisme qu'est tout consentement meurtrier »⁴⁰

A politics beyond pure politics

For this concept of ethical peace is not merely a political and juridical one, for “peace is the concept that surpasses the purely political thought”⁴¹, this ethical politics will cross the frontier of *pure politics* (le pure politique). How? Simply by being in a context of a reaffirmation of an ethic-driven thought. Passing the limit, our extravagant politics goes beyond politics, like we reach *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* through the relationship to alterity.

3. Installing a global politics

3.1 Principles

A new rationality

This new rationality can be grasped easily: it has to intermingle sensibility, hospitality, peace, responsibility, submission and welcome. That is what has to become *rational* in this *alternative politics*, this *extravagant politics*.

***A guiding principle: care*⁴²**

Care either means “solicitude” or “care, concern” which supposes a kind of engagement. It is beyond a short-lived matter of interest for its leads us towards something different than us and implicitly to lead us to take action. Thus, it means the opposite of “I don’t care” with a practical dimension going toward otherness. J. Tronto proposes a clear definition of her concept:

« une activité générique qui comprend tout ce que nous faisons pour maintenir, perpétuer et réparer notre “monde”, de sorte que nous puissions y vivre aussi bien que possible » et « en soutien à la vie »⁴³

The field is really vast – although in our case we especially focus on starvation. Besides, the basis of care is to grasp – as far as possible – the others’ preoccupations and needs: that is the “rationality of care”³⁸. Hence, two paths could be considered to reach this new rationality. First of all, we need to restructure our thinking of the human condition. We must forget about the traditional political and philosophical theory that states that the foremost characteristic of an individual is his freedom and autonomy and that all individuals are born equal. That is not true and an ethical politics has to acknowledge it:

“Tous les humains naissent dépendants mais apprennent à devenir autonome”⁴⁴

Indeed, in order to think out of an inter-subjective or intercultural politics we need to adopt an interpersonal stance as we consider human condition. Second, we have to redefine our political and social institutions and frontiers within which we will implement the new politics. This redefinition is as we said earlier a further extension of the attention and the responsibility.

3.2 Actions

A four-in-one “integrated”⁴⁵ process: explanation and remarks

As a first step, we can base our political procedure on Tronto’s four-in-one active movement related to the four ethical elements of care. Some remarks are been made to guide our political action:

- (1) *Caring about* and *attention*: this stage brings players into beginning their reflection from the Other’s *needs* and not in terms of individualistic interests; this has not only to

be a start but also an end – and never a mean. Besides, because ignorance is a *moral evil*, care has to become central in social life in order to foster *attention*.

(2) *Taking care of and responsibility*: as we have seen, responsibility does not suffice if we do not commit ourselves to respond to the Other's need. Obviously we have to acknowledge that we can act on the issue, but it would not be enough if it is a mere realization.

(3) *Care giving and competence*: for Tronto, this comes down to the “direct contact with the objects of *care*” but I find this phrase troublesome as neither the Other's preoccupations nor the Other himself cannot be grasped as *objects* can – we cannot grasp infinity. Yet, the concept of *competence* thought of as a “moral consequentialism” that cares that *care* is compatible with the problem or need. That prevents people from claiming to be concerned about the issue of starvation without doing any genuine action. Like Tronto, I am afraid that this behavior decimates bureaucracies' action.

(4) *Care receiving and capacity to respond*: this last step is one of the most important because it evaluates the effective results and promotes a long-term action and a real monitoring as opposed to a temporary action *sans lendemain*. A genuine example would be to verify that famished children's health has improved after they receive food. This *capacity to respond* is a capacity to *respond to the vulnerability* of the hungry which defines a true rescue.

A political potential

« La force ultime du *care*, en tant que concept politique, réside dans sa capacité à servir de base au changement politique et de proposer une stratégie pour l'organiser »⁴⁶

Not only is *care* – and in particular its denial – a power of privileged people who can easily close their ears to enjoy life, but also *care* and affirmation of *care* is a “power of the weak”⁴⁷. It is true that those who use *care* and dedicate their life to save others – which is what Levinas calls “holiness” (“sainteté”) – provide crucial support for life and international stability. Furthermore, their action allows a questioning of our social values and underline the necessity of a *change in paradigm*.

3.3 Dangers

“Tyranny of Justice” (« *la tyrannie de la justice* »)

Implementing a new politics is truly about making Justice possible, effective and natural. But this Justice presents some risks that have to be completely tackled. The first “peril” is our very first concern related to the issue of a lost singularity, which means even more violence than in the initial situation.

“La violence du politique maltraite [...] le visage en effaçant son unicité dans un généralité”⁴⁸

Moreover, two political deviations have to be noticed. One is “paternalism”⁴³ that is the fact that stakeholders think they are better able to evaluate needs of suffering populations than populations themselves. Paternalism leads uncontrollably to infantilization. The second is “localism”⁴³ which describes a situation in which we tend to give more importance to areas we act on.

Solution: a humble politics

How can we possibly *humiliate*⁴⁹ politics? To start with, it should imperatively be a *debt* before being an active process. It has to be a *mood (disposition)* first, and a practice then. Practice will not be valuable at all if no determined end is driving it. This is indeed the second

way of *humiliating* the “politician politics”. If it promotes *care* as a core principle, it has to be linked to a theory of justice in the sense that *care* has to be distributed in a democratic manner. Preliminary debates must be conducted with the populations concerned by starvation. Just like President Lincoln's famous phrase that defines democracy as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people”, an ethical politics against starvation is *the care of the (famished) populations, by the populations and for the population*. A new ethical extravagant politics is hostage of the world and submitted to it.



CONCLUSION

To summarize, the responsibility I owe to the Other is an unspeakable responsibility. Thus, wasn't it paradoxical to try to find words for the necessity of rescuing the Other? Isn't impossible? Was it essential? It should not be required, indeed, however it is. It is eventually this *necessity* of recalling the *necessary* duty towards the Other that *necessarily* prompted me to do so.

A new and extravagant Reason

At the end, this analysis was an intellectual and philosophical path to conceive a politics that would be on a par with Levinas' *first philosophy*. This only aimed at thinking of a new politics, a “turned over” or “shaken” politics (une politique “retournée”) modelled on the “shift” (“renversement”) arising from the ethical relationship. This is a mere return to ethics and to the “You shall not kill” imperative, through a “political invention”⁵⁰. This is the appearance of a novel reason that has to be interpreted as a “*welcoming responsiveness*”⁵¹, following Levinas' thought. Here is the keystone of the *extravagance* we must looking for and

which only is *extravagant* for it disrupts the logic of one's relationship to the Other. This *responsiveness* meets its ultimate meaning as it becomes the basis of a new rationality and entertains a new ethical and responsible, singular although cosmopolitan politics. Besides, this rationality *means* sensitivity, from and towards the Other.

“La raison même est accueil en tant qu'accueil de l'idée d'infini – et l'accueil est rationnel”⁵²

A politics able to address infinity must be irrational, extravagant. This politics must be a door, unconditionally opened, symbolized by a “speech” or “word” (“parole”) like a “main tendue en s'adressant à autrui pour lui donner d'abord à manger, à boire, à respirer”¹⁵.

Two foremost objectives

There were two main issues at stake in this speech after all:

First, the “hospitality” that I claim modestly in these words of mine only derive from the “attention” I try to give to the other, to its speech, or rather to the silence (mutisme) of *the* starving other.

“Elle [l'intentionnalité, la conscience-de] est attention à la parole ou accueil du visage, hospitalité et non thématisation”⁵³

This « intentionality » - and my ambitious – is a *realization* that itself strives **to raise awareness** about the concepts of welcome, hospitality, ethics, justice, singularity, cosmopolitism as they must found a new politics equal to the Other' infinity which precedes it.

Second, through prioritization of ethics and care in human life – and politics – we eventually aim at one thing: our world's reinstatement (rehabilitation). Doing so, we make the world liveable again. But again, this is unthinkable without a complete redefinition of our moral and political frontiers and the acknowledgment that starvation is not a *fatality*.

LE MOT DE LA FIN : “LE CHANGEMENT C’EST MAINTENANT”

Change is up to us, we must look for it to make it happen:

“Barrington Moore Jr a affirmé que l’injustice n’était perceptible que lorsque l’on reconnaît que les institutions sociales ne sont pas naturelles, mais artificielles.

Le changement se produit lorsqu’on comprend que la situation difficile où l’on se trouve a été créé par l’action humaine est qu’elle peut, de ce fait être modifiée »⁵⁴,

Injustice : The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt, 1978

NOTES

¹ (folie)

² My emphasis

³ Emmanuel Levinas' expression

⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, in the second of the « Four Talmudic Readings »

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, reaffirming Levinas' words in *Totality and Infinity*

⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

⁸ L'aide humanitaire en question, *La documentation française*, 2012

⁹ Marc Crépon, « Et toujours aucun secours », *Penser la désorientation* in *La Revue des deux mondes*, January 2010

¹⁰ « stade ultime de la précarité qui affecte une proportion croissante de [la] population », *ibid*

¹¹ un monde affamé et affamant, my expression

¹² « Dans notre rapport au monde, la famine inscrit une ligne de fracture irréductible », Marc Crépon in "Et toujours aucun secours" in *La Revue des deux mondes*, January 2010

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Vassili Grossman, *Vie et Destin*

¹⁵ « présence de l'infini dans un acte fini », in *Ethics and Infinity*

¹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Dieu, la mort et le temps*

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Altérité et transcendance*

²¹ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

²² « première exigence », Emmanuel Levinas in the preface of *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*

²³ Marc Crépon, « Et toujours aucun secours », *Penser la désorientation* in *La Revue des deux mondes*, January 2010

²⁴ From a lecture called "Don quichotte, l'ensorcellement et la faim" in *Dieu, la mort et le temps*

²⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

²⁶ Maurice Blanchot, "Connaissance de l'homme"

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ « tyrannie de la famine », Marc Crépon, « Et toujours aucun secours », *Penser la désorientation* in *La Revue des deux mondes*, January 2010

³⁰ « La nutrition en urgence », ACF

³¹ Wfp website

³² Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

³³ Phrase of Paul Ceylan

³⁴ Vassili Grossman, *Vie et Destin*

³⁵ Marc Crépon, « Et toujours aucun secours », *Penser la désorientation* in *La Revue des deux mondes*, January 2010

³⁶ *ibid*

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

³⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse*

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

⁴⁰ Marc Crépon, « Et toujours aucun secours », *Penser la désorientation* in *La Revue des deux mondes*, January 2010

⁴¹ "la paix est un concept qui déborde la pensée purement politique", Emmanuel Levinas in *Beyond the Verse*

⁴² Joan Tronto, *Un monde vulnérable pour une politique du care*

⁴³ B. Fisher and J.C. Tronto, « Toward a feminist theory of care », in E. Abel et M. Nelson (dir.), *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*

⁴⁴ Joan Tronto, *Un monde vulnérable pour une politique du care*

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ E. Janeway, *Powers of the Weak*

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

⁴⁹ Meaning « make it more humble »

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse*

⁵¹ « réceptivité hospitalière », Jacques Derrida in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

⁵² Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*

⁵³ *ibid*

⁵⁴ Joan Tronto, *Un monde vulnérable pour une politique du care*