



Deconstructive Turn of Ethics: Subversion of Self-identity in Derrida and Levinas

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Abstract

Differing from the mainstream notion of deconstruction as a differential reading of texts, the paper views it primarily as a process of subversion of self-identity of a person who faces the 'alterity' of the other in a concrete ethical situation. Thus, it is seen more as an existential experience of the individual rather than a socio-political process. It seeks a pathway from Derrida's deconstruction of texts to Emmanuel Levinas's trial of individuality by the 'face' of the other. The face of the other that calls for the ethical responsibility of the 'I', challenges his autonomy. As human self-identities are unreal constructs produced by ontology through the integration of multiple experiences of phenomena into a uniform apperception of consciousness, its rupture alone will guarantee a passage to the realm of 'otherness'. 'Otherness' manifested in the deconstruction of self-identity in ethics is viewed as more intense and radical than the subversion of identity that has taken place in textual experience.

Keywords: poststructuralism, text, self-identity, otherness, ontology, alterity

1.1. Subversion of the self in Deconstruction

What is the conduit from deconstruction to ethics? Deconstruction is primarily understood as a strategy of differential reading of texts. Thus, literary critics, political theorists, and artists shall be

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considered true deconstructionists. Can ethics, then, come into the domain of deconstruction? Ethics is primarily concerned with the interaction between human beings in various social contexts where no text comes into the scene. Is it then about doing a deconstructive reading of ethical texts? To find an answer to this question first we have to discard our perception of deconstruction as something solely happening at the level of texts.

This paper presents deconstruction mostly as an activity happening at the level of human consciousness by which the unity of a person's self-identity is ruptured. Though self-identity is broken to a certain extent in the deconstruction of texts, it happens most radically, as Emmanuel Levinas demonstrates, in the ethical moments when a human being encounters with the 'alterity'² of 'the other'. This study seeks to find the deviation of deconstruction from the domain of text to ethics as seen in the philosophies of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas.

This investigation, however, differs from the idea of the 'ethical turn of deconstruction' put forth by Simon Critchley and Peter Baker. Critchley attempts to insist on the need of assuming ethical responsibility while reading a philosophical text in a deconstructive manner. One, according to him, has to take into account the philosophical context of the text (Critchley, 2014). Baker on the other hand only invites our attention to the continuing importance of deconstruction for ethics and politics in the contemporary world (1995). Both these views are not fully free from viewing deconstruction primarily as a textual activity connected with human socio-political engagement. I, on the other hand, move away from its textual and socio-political context and come to highlight it primarily as an existential experience undergone by the individual who engages a concrete ethical moment.

Although the chief exponent of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, presents deconstruction primarily as a textual strategy, what resulted from of the process is the scattering of human subjectivity. Derrida conceives writing as constituting a field which is subjectless (1989: 88). Derrida perceives this as a great merit of deconstruction. Self-identity for human being is not innate and is not present at all times. Poststructuralism perceives self-identity as a construct. Self-identity for humans is formed through the

constructivist program of homogenization of various human experiences, whose history has been unraveled in the genealogical investigations of Nietzsche and Foucault³. Levinas provides another explanation of formation of self happening through the integration of multiple experiences of a person into a unitary apperception (2002). The enlightenment project wanted to mould all human beings into universal rational selves. Poststructuralism raises a strong criticism against the attempt to preserve a uniform self-identity for human beings. It calls for dismantling the self and enabling mankind living multiple subjectivities. Its attack on the ontological bias of western metaphysics and particularly the enlightenment-modernity is meant to liberate human beings from the hard shell of selfhood, to which they are tied. The poststructural criticism of enlightenment has gained more momentum in the deconstructive project of Derrida because it puts forth effective ways of scattering human selfhood. A unified world experience centered on 'self' is made possible through the reduction of the experiential plurality, which is represented by 'otherness'⁴, into familiar modes of thinking. Human self-consciousness is thus the result of the 'totalisation' of various experiences of the world into the self. Deconstruction while scattering self, pluralizes human experience.

But, is the deconstruction of the self at the level of texts sufficient for opening the realm of otherness? Emmanuel Levinas has shown a more radical means for breaking self-identity in the inter-subjective relationship. It is the ethical moment where human being faces the other as an alterity (Levinas, 2002: 33-40). This happens without any recourse to texts or language. In the realm of ethics, one's ego is questioned by the other person. The other beckons the 'I' to respond to him and to be responsible for his life. Responding to the other's call produces a rupture of the 'self' that opens a door to infinity⁵ (Levinas, 2002: 48-52). The paper develops this as a deconstructive turn in ethics.

2. The ethical in the enlightenment and postmodern contexts

Deconstruction is quite often associated with the post-modernist project of philosophy due to its preoccupation with the question of

self-identity. Therefore, there is a tendency to classify the thoughts of Levinas and Derrida under the category of postmodern theory. Is Levinasian Ethics really a postmodern Ethics as some of the thinkers have estimated? Levinas's stance against the enlightenment idea of self-unity may have made him to be identified as a postmodern ethical figure. Levinas actually speaks about the fundamental structure of human consciousness of all times, whose nature consists of turning towards the other, motivated by the desire for infinity.

Ethics is essentially an enlightenment discipline. According to the enlightenment tradition, one is ethical when one does good services to humanity over and above self-interest. To be ethical is to act morally and to be able to distinguish right from wrong and good from evil by application of one's reason. Enlightenment project in thinking is erected by philosophers of the eighteenth century for "human being's emancipation from their self-incurred immaturity" (Kant, 2006: 17). People of the earlier period were seen as immature because they were relying on the authority of religion and the state for getting guidance for thinking and acting in various situations of life. For the enlightenment philosophers, people's incapability to think by the application of reason is seen not as something imposed on them from outside. Instead, it is their lethargy and their lack of resolve in taking responsibility for their life, which keep them in the immature state. An individual, Immanuel Kant says, has to shed his dependence on external authorities to get guidance for action and knowing what is right and what is wrong (2006: 17-23). Like all other enlightenment disciplines, ethics also trains individuals to reflect rationally and understand humanness. Such reflections lead to the formation of ethical theories that explain the meaning of good, evil, and the right human conduct. It also prescribes norms for actions in concrete practical situations. The aim of enlightenment, as Kant conceived, was the formation of a better cosmopolitan world order where perpetual peace prevails (2006: 67-107).

The enlightenment philosophy holds that when one reflects rightly through reason, without anybody's assistance, one will be able to understand all the founding concepts for practical action. Modern ethics thus consists of such reflections on justice, good, right,

virtuousness, and so on. In ancient philosophy also there were reflections on truth, justice, virtue, and goodness as we see in Plato and Aristotle. But they were never brought under the banner of a discipline called ethics because that term was not prevalent in earlier times. In Indian tradition also we do not see anything similar to the modern idea of ethics. Indian texts speak about dharma and this is considered mostly as the moral order of a cosmos, which includes all animate and inanimate phenomena. Dharma does not consist of the individual self finding the appropriate action in a moral context, by the application of its free will. The very idea of the individual is a contribution by enlightenment modernity. Individuality comes into being through carving selves and out of human beings. It is instituted in the process of creating self-identity for human beings. The working of ethics is tied to the self-hood of a person. The 'decentering' of that self is what poststructuralism aims at. Deconstruction is the tool to be employed for it, both at the level of text and in inter-human relations, which is the domain of ethics.

Levinas challenges the enlightenment notion of ethics for its shallow attitude about inter-subjective relations. Levinas does not present ethics as a body of norms that prescribes guidelines to individuals to act when they face each other. Ethical responsibility for him does not come from rational reflection of an autonomous self. On the other hand, for Levinas ethics is an event, a happening taking place in a particular concrete situation of a person when he/she meets with the other. Moral response arises in a person by "being affectedness by the other" (Levinas, 1981: 84) rather than by rational willing. In a genuine ethical relationship instead of the self, it is 'the other' who triggers action and makes 'a person' an ethical subjectivity (Garza and Landrum, 2010: 1-12).

Levinas's ethics thus challenges the enlightenment idea of individual autonomy on matters of morality. Though postmodernists also do the same, which alone is not sufficient for affixing the label of postmodernism on Levinas's ethics. The deconstructive nature of his ethics makes him more of a poststructuralist than a postmodern thinker. The deconstructive feature of his thought can be located in the dispersal a unified self-identity in his ethics. Deconstruction always subverts the self-unity

of a human being. The maintenance of a rational self is fundamental to the success of the project of modernity. The history of the formation of self-identity unraveled by Foucault's genealogy reveals how strategies in the domain of schooling, health care, and administrative institutions imprint a self upon the body that acts based on a plan and design. Such a self always acts, works, and decides in a structured manner. The actions of the self are not the manifestation of its inner human nature, but are programmed, and implanted into 'the body of the human beings by the official power structure of the society. Foucault explains the techniques, strategies, and markings deployed on human bodies by modern institutions for the formation of human beings into useful selves (1979).

But is not self-identity a virtue rather than a vice? Why cannot it be seen as a positive faculty of human beings that enables them to act responsibly in society? The problem with selfhood is that it always restricts and limits the possibility for spontaneous action. It totalizes the meaning of various entities. It also prevents humans from the possibility to reach vast realms of experiences, which for Levinas consists of the domain of infinity.

The notion of the self has already been in circulation from the seventeenth century since Descartes conceived it as the rational essence of human consciousness⁶. At that time selfhood was considered a positive asset that enables liberation of the human beings from the dogmatism of the medieval era. It is believed that humanity becomes enlightened by gaining subjectivity therefore it is linked with the project of modernization. In the perception of modernism, people remained in darkness in many parts of the world in the absence of selfhood. The protagonists of modernism thought that unless people acquire selfhood, they will remain in bondage put on them by external authorities. Their own bodily instincts too create bondage. For the reformists, if the people still remain in ignorance and superstitions, it is due to the absence of a self-identity for them. The proponents of the enlightenment considered it their task to deliver people from darkness and bring them to the daylight of reason. To help people to find a self thus becomes, the project of modernity and that has been continued in

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in all parts of the world through spreading education and reformation.

However, the poststructuralist critics of modernity for the first time attempted to expose the arbitrary nature of 'self'. They have shown that the self is not the inner essence of the human being as conceived by philosophies but is merely a construct to mould human thinking in certain specific ways⁷. They viewed the self as a device deployed by modernity to force people to behave rationally in all walks of life. Self is employed as a censoring agency to put a check on their desires and instincts. It is expected that the people then will move, act, and think according to the interests of the prevailing social order. Thus, the self-identity acts as a regulating agency of the body and its desires.

However, poststructuralist criticism is not solely directed against enlightenment-modernity. Its criticism is against all types of foundationalism in thinking. The enlightenment idea of self is only one such foundational concept. The roots of foundationalism go much deeper, even back to Greek metaphysics. Foundationalism begins with the conceptual manner of thinking instituted by Greek thinkers such as Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle. Derrida's deconstruction of Plato's theory of forms as 'presence' provides the best exemplification of poststructural criticism of foundationalism.

Postmodern view of self on the other hand is not radical as it only reinstates certain forms of identities. Instead of dismantling self-identity, it defends pre-modern forms of identities with regard to ethnicity, gender, religion, and language. Postmodern position thus rather than helping for subversion of identities, shrinks merely into a movement for defending identity politics in our times.

3. The Ontology of the Self-formation.

Levinas's endeavour to establish ethics as the first philosophy required dismantling of ontological way of approaching reality, which is spread throughout the history of Western philosophy. Ontology is a driving force that is not merely confined to the realm of philosophy and human sciences but it has become our everyday approach to the world and other human beings. Ontology is not a modern phenomenon. Its origin can be traced back to early Greek

philosophy and for Levinas it begins with Parmenides and continued even in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger in the twentieth century.

Ontology as a branch of metaphysical philosophy is a search for essence of existing entities. Ontology aims at grasping their meaning, thereby converting them into themes of our consciousness. Knowing of a thing involves gaining a totalizing grasp over it. Levinas writes that “to know amounts to grasping being, removing from it its alterity” (2002: 44). Actually, a thing can be conceptually known only by neglecting the plural dimensions of it, that constitute its ‘alterity’. Ontology accepts only what appears to be the most essential character of things, thereby reduces them in terms of their most general properties which are shared by other objects of its kind to form a class or category. However, certain aspects of entities elude our intellectual grasp and such aspects constitute the sphere of ‘alterity’, which is the non-thematizable part of our experience. Many of our experiences in every sphere consist of that. From a poststructuralist perspective, such experiences constitute the sphere of otherness.

Poststructuralism in general and deconstruction in particular is meant to retrieve the otherness which was discarded as untruth by traditional thinking. Otherness has to be brought back to the forefront of everyday experiences and social reality. The fullness of human life requires frequent visitations to otherness, which is available to us in the spheres of religious, mystic, aesthetic and so many other domains of experience. Otherness is the realm of multiplicity, the realm of unthematizable plurality that cannot be delivered in by logical and scientific methods. The attempt to capture them in propositional language fails. Such kinds of experiences surpass and disrupt self-identity. Knowledge always involves reduction of multiplicity. Knowing an object means containing it to human intellectual grasp. This is what ontology does. Human self understands things ontologically, thereby integrating them into consciousness. Such understandings are conceptual where alterity and otherness disappear. It is through such conceptual grasp of things that self-identity for human beings comes into being. Conceptual grasp and self-identity always co-exist, and in the absence of one the other will not happen. Thus,

self-consciousness arrives to human being by knowing world as a unitary experience, thereby the self integrates things into their consciousness as familiar objects, discarding their alterity and otherness. Thus, the self can be posed only through a well-organized experience of the world.

4. Deconstruction of self from Kant to Derrida

As told above, certain experiences do not yield to our conceptual grasp. They surpass human intellectual capacity to measure and determine their nature. Such experiences are not considered knowledge by traditional epistemology because they challenge the unity of our self-identity. They form the sphere of otherness. Kant in his third critique speaks about sublime experiences as an instance for transcending ontological grasp. Among the two sublimities, dynamically sublime experiences created by roaring oceans, storms, thundershowers, wars, etc. says Kant, are not containable in the conceptual categories of the self (1961: 109-117). Therefore, ontologically driven philosophy places them outside the realm of knowledge. Metaphysics will discard them as illusions or insignificant. Kant instead of totally discarding them, includes them under the faculty of feeling which constitutes the realm of aesthetics.

Kant speaks of the sublime as a phenomenal reality that transcends the bounds of human self-consciousness. In Critique of Judgment, he does a re-examination of his earlier stance on cognitive judgments. There he admits that all phenomenal experiences of the world cannot be contained in cognitive judgments. Here he says that we cannot bring our 'feelings' of phenomena under the concepts of knowledge. Sublime experience elevates us to wonderment or awfulness thereby making us more than mortals. Experience of the sublime breaks the boundaries of the self.

In the ontological approach of western philosophy experience of the beautiful and sublime does not come under the legitimate bounds of our everyday life. They are separated from daily life and assigned a separate realm of art and beauty. Kant gives legitimacy to them under the aesthetic, which for him is a realm of subjectivity, separated from daily experiences. Expression of the

beauty of phenomena would be possible only through artistic, and poetic creations. They break the unity of our 'self' and the normal linear experience of time as past, present, and future. Thus, they enable us to have a glimpse of infinity (otherness). Thus, aesthetic moment ruptures ontology and destabilizes the unity of the 'self'. Though the aesthetic can be actualized in art and literature, religious experience is still remains inexpressible and thus is considered either mystic or something reached in the life after death, when the soul reaches the almighty. Thus, Kant here provides us with a glimpse into the nature of infinity and otherness.

It is left to Derrida and Levinas to explore further possibilities for the subversion of self-identity. Levinas confronts our ontologically guided civilization for disallowing those experiences that transcend the rational explanation. In modern civilization, art, religion, femininity, dreams, and fantasies are some of the realms of experience that are relegated to the sphere of 'otherness' or madness. The purpose of deconstruction is to retrieve the discarded otherness from their suppressed territories so that it can be brought back to mainstream life and the social sphere. Derrida's deconstructive writings and Levinas's ethics break ontology and enter into the realm of otherness.

Otherness may not be expressed in the propositional form of language. However, language is not entirely ineffective in its articulation. Deconstructive writings explore the possibilities of language in articulating the so far unrepresented otherness by extending the margins, contours, and resonances of words and signs of language. For that, the limit set on linguistic signs as self-contained units of meaning has to be discarded. Structural linguistics of Saussure showed how linguistic signs are arbitrary and meaning is not the property of a sign or word. Derrida illustrated how meaning is merely the differential effect of signs within a system or a sentence. This perception enabled deconstruction to argue that signs and words possess the possibility to create an infinite play of significations depending on the context in which the signs are grasped or employed (Derrida, 1990: 278-293). The methodological source of Derrida's deconstructive re-readings and textual practices thus lies in the

structuralist perception of language. In a bid to capture otherness in language, Derrida in his deconstructive writings has created plurality in significations as seen in the works like *Glas* (1974) and *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (1986). For Derrida deconstructive writings create a 'trace' in language, thereby turning them into the experience of 'differance'⁸. Differing from the conventional practice of language, it extends and extracts the fullest possibilities of language.

Meaning exists only in language. The creation of meaning is always a linguistic activity. This is the great revolution, which is also identified as the linguistic turn, brought about by Saussurean linguistics. Before this, it was naively assumed that language is a mere means, an instrument to represent already existing concepts. Since Saussure, meaning has come to be recognized as a creation of an arbitrary organization of more or less a scattered world experience. The human being, then, have no access to meaning without recourse to language. Derrida echoed this statement when he said that human relationship to the world is a relationship with that of a text and we have no escape from textual reality (1997: 163).

If the human ability to know the world through conceptual categories is very minimal, it is because we totalize our experience in signs. Derrida's deconstruction however demonstrated that we are not so limited by language and that there are ways to come out of the prison house of language. The doors to vast realms of experience can be opened up through language itself. This is the task taken up by deconstruction in our times so that otherness can be captured, communicated, and experienced by humans to a certain extent.

But deconstruction is not a method or a planned activity undertaken by a human self. Instead, deconstruction is what happens to human consciousness when it engages a text or a human face. Deconstruction is automatically taken place over and above our knowing and wanting. Thus, for post-structuralism in general and deconstruction of Derrida in particular, otherness is a realm brought about through language and text. A text is mostly generated through human interaction with the material world, phenomena, and other texts. Deconstruction takes place in our

every encounter with the world or a written text. As a result of this, along with the text, human subjectivity is also got deconstructed. Derrida criticizes the philosophical notion of transcendental subjectivity. For Derrida there is no subject who is agent, author and master of *différance*. Subjectivity for him is an effect of difference, in a system of *différance*' (Derrida, 1981: 28). Derrida conceives writing as constituting a field which is subjectless (1989: 88). Consequent to the rupture of the unity of self-consciousness, one passes over to the realm of otherness. Such a realm of otherness is opened up in the experience of *différance* in works of art, literature, and music.

Derrida's deconstruction always revolves around language and text except for a few later works of him such as *Of Hospitality, Politics of Friendship, and Gift of Death* written under the influence of Levinas. Therefore, radical otherness is not manifested in all deconstructive engagements of him.

5. Levinas and Deconstructive turn of Ethics

At this point Levinas takes a departure from Derridean deconstruction and the general poststructuralist stance. For Levinas, otherness is revealed most radically in the inter-human relations than in textual experiences. The origin of radical otherness has to be sought in human interaction with other human beings. The other person is not a phenomenon or a text, so cannot be approached as we approach material things or written discourses. As inter-subjective relation is a relation of self with another self, this is the domain of ethics where the epistemological or aesthetic approaches do not work. The other person has to be approached as an alterity rather than a theme. Without any mediation of language or texts, the experience of otherness happens directly there. Otherness revealed in such moments would be more intense than any experience of otherness brought about by one's contact with the material world or works of art.

Levinas has reasons to argue why the ethical relation is more primary and fundamental than the ontological relation and why ethics should be considered the first philosophy. Levinas's objective to establish ethics as the first philosophy over other

branches of thought rests on the claim that desire for the other is the highest desire of a person. This “desire is the desire for the absolutely other” (Levinas, 2002: 34). Endeavours, achievements, and gains of one’s life will not be of any significance if there is no one to share, listen and appreciate them. All statements one makes, even discourses of art and science are utterances addressed to the other. Beyond all, the other person is the gateway through which alone one can enter into the experience of infinitude in empirical life. Therefore, for my very existence, I owe to the other. Since interaction with the other is the primary thing in life over and above knowledge and riches, ethics gets a priority over epistemology, ontology, and other branches of science. Therefore, he argues that ethics shall be made the first philosophy over and above epistemology and ontology.

Emmanuel Levinas finds in the face-to-face relationship with the other human being a site of radical otherness, which he introduces as more intense than the one revealed through language. Philosophy as ontology has never considered the other person as someone who could not be known, grasped, and understood as we understand and know entities of the world. We do not possess any means to ‘understand’ a human other. But still, ontology thematizes the other in terms of human essence and makes it a part of discourses of human sciences, philosophy, psychology, morality, and so on. Even traditional ethical discourses are not free from ontology as they also define the essence of the other in terms of goodness and virtue. Ethical principles of goodness, duty, compassion, and virtues have been prescribed through objective moral laws which are claimed to be applicable universally. To the deontological theories of ethics, ethical action in a moral context is willed by rational choice and duty consciousness, where the ‘self’ prescribes moral rules. Here the other person who is the desired object of our action is never encountered as radical alterity, as absolutely different from the agent. To accept the alterity of the other is to accept the other as immeasurable and as someone who eludes our attempt to totalize, comprehend and grasp.

Levinasian ethics chooses to distance itself from ontological ethics by affirming the irreducible singularity of the other human being. But in our everyday interactions in business, commerce, office

dealings, and even in friendship, we first measure and assess the nature and characteristics of the other before entering into a relationship with him/her. Knowing the other is a precondition for us for inter-subjective relations to begin. Levinas speaks of the necessity of adopting a different attitude to the other in our interactions. Our approach to the other shall be unconditional, without keeping any interests and expectations. This is essential for the other to be revealed as an alterity that invites us to participate in the mystery of epiphany of face that signifies infinity. Levinas writes:

This gaze is precisely the epiphany of the face as a face. The nakedness of the face is destituteness. To recognize the other is to recognize a hunger. To recognize the other is to give. But it is to give to the master, to the lord, to him whom one approaches as YOU in a dimension of height (2002: 75)

Indeed, the other is alterity and immeasurable. But we reduce him/her to a theme in our understanding without recognizing it.

But the other resists all attempts of the self to make him/her into a 'being' and thereby reduce him/her to a theme. Levinas claims that our relation to the other goes beyond comprehension. The other does not come to us as a theme, a concept, or a being, instead, he/she would always be 'otherwise than being'. But when one conceptually understands the other, s/he reduces one's relation to the other as a relation of knowledge.

According to Levinas when a person conceives the relation to the other in terms of comprehension, correlation, symmetry, reciprocity, and equality, then he appropriates the other to the web of totality and reduces his meaning to the 'same'. But, in the ethical relation, a person's ego and autonomous status will be challenged by the other's face that looks at him. The face is the metaphor Levinas uses to represent the alterity of the other. Simon Critchley writes that "the face is not something I see, but something I speak to. In speaking and listening to the other I am not reflecting upon the other, instead, I offer myself to the other" (2004: 12).

To accept the alterity of the other is to accept the enigmatic character of the other. To Levinas, the face of the other is revealed

as an epiphany. It suggests the divine nature of the other in the ethical moment. Ethical relation with the other is not one of equality, but asymmetry and difference. The other is estimated highly in the eye of the self. The revelation of other as divinity provides preeminence to the other above oneself, thereby it could break the totality and ontology. Thus, ethics becomes an event of being in relation to the other's pre-eminence.

The origin of genuine ethics in the opinion of Levinas takes place with putting one's ego, the self-consciousness, the 'same' into question by the other. Along with that, one's autonomy and liberty are also being challenged. In the face-to-face contact, the other places an obligation on me and beckons me to be responsible to him.

...calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ... The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics" (Levinas, 2002: 43).

Ethics is the location of the encounter with otherness where the 'I' comes out of its finitude and solitude and passes toward the experience of infinity.

It is not difficult to see that the philosophical tradition from Parmenides to Heidegger consists in suppressing or reducing otherness by transmuting it into the 'same'. As a result, human beings so far could not come out of their solitude and open themselves to others. Hitherto all discourses of man were merely monologues addressing only to themselves. So, humanity so far could not break its finitude and come to experience infinitude.

The inter-subjectivity in the new sense as shown by Levinas neither lies in the exchange relation between two autonomous egos based on equality and reciprocity. Nor ethics is a discharge of duty to the other person in terms of moral laws of traditional ethics. As observed by Critchley:

Levinasian ethics is not, therefore, an obligation towards the other mediated through the formal and procedural universalisation of maxims or some appeal to good conscience. Rather.....ethics is lived in the sensibility of an embodied exposure to the other(2004: 21).

Emmanuel Levinas's ethics proposes a new program for deconstruction by moving beyond Derrida's deconstructive process carried in the medium of language and texts. Levinas cast deconstruction as the process of subversion of self-identity that happens in the face-to-face relation of the self and the other. It offers a more effective means for breaking human self-identity than it has been in the literary-aesthetic-and textual domains. For experiencing infinity and otherness the arbitrarily constituted human self-identity has to be disrupted. In it, man lives time diachronically, which is different from the ontological experience of time as a linear progression of past, present, and future. Levinasian ethics thereby consummates the deconstructionist project of subversion of self-identity commenced by Derrida and takes it to more radical subversions and domains of otherness.

End Notes

1 Difference is a neo-logism of poststructuralism that stands for defending the uniqueness and singularity of meaning and experience without they being made identical as done by traditional philosophy.

2 Alterity is the immeasurable and unbounded aspect of a human being that does not yield to intellectual grasp. Levinas says all entities have it. But in the act of knowing they are reduced into familiar objects by human intellect.

3See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second essay, Vintage Books; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Vintage Books and *History of Sexuality*, Vintage Books.

4 Otherness denotes certain inexplicable realms of human experiences, that are counted as unwanted by the modern rational civilization.

5 Infinity is the experience of unboundedness, often compared to religiosity, that is opened up in the ethical response. One is felt as unbounded due to rupture of self-identity.

6 Descartes through his method of doubt establishes human self as a pure rational thinking substance devoid of all alterity (In the case of Descartes alterity includes, dreams, doubts, madness, emotions and fantasies) as seen in Rene Descartes (2006), *A Discourse on Method*, Oxford University Press.

7 Foucault's works *Discipline and Punish*, *History of sexuality*, and Judith Butler's work *Gender Trouble* exemplifies this in detail.

8 Derrida says all signs leave a trace of other signs. Trace surpasses the predetermined meaning of a sign and signifies meanings in a series of differential play. (See, "Difference" in *Margins of Philosophy*, (Derrida, 1982: 12-27).

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