

**FECUNDITY AND THE BANALITY OF DEATH, A CASE OF GOODNESS  
BEYOND BEING: A LEVINASIAN READING**

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**Abstract**

*This essay investigates the implications of fecundity for death in the thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas deals with the notion of fecundity in his first major work, Totality and infinity where he refers to fecundity as any act of goodness on behalf of the subject towards the Other that bears a future relation. He forwards two perspectives of fecundity: Firstly, as abstract biological description, e.g. a teacher fathering his student; and secondly, a non- biological construct e.g. a public officer discharging of his duties in a good way or a writer or philanthropists that affect the lives of other people. In these two perspectives, the actions impact some goodness on others. On the other hand, Levinas thinks death in three views: Firstly, as time because it occurs in time and it is a suffocation of the individual in the impossibility of the possible. This asserts the fact that the deceased loses his virile ability as death invades him. Secondly, death as a totality for when one dies, he is counted among the dead- the totality of the dead. At this time reference is made to him in the accusative. Lastly, death as will for death is not an object of one's own will though it occurs as murder and suicide, the apex of irresponsibility, for life needs to be protected not to be destroyed. Since death is the end of physical existence, like the son that is the trans-substantiation of the father, so do abstract sons and people's deeds immortalize the abstract fathers and progenitors respectively. This act of immortalization expresses fecundity and it guarantees goodness in and beyond being.*

**Keywords:** Fecundity, Immortalization, Goodness, Death, Otherness, Beyond, Being.

**Introduction**

In Levinas's ethics, one posthumous characteristic that eulogizes moral subjects is fecundity. Fecundity refers to any act of goodness on behalf of the Other that bears a future relation. In this essay, fecundity engenders a metaphorical explanation of the ethical life in human existence. Fecundity is applicable to all professions in so far as human relationship and ethical evaluation is possible. To this effect, Levinas construes all professions and trade as actual fecund roles. He forwarded two perspectives to fecundity firstly, as an abstract biological

construct and secondly as a non-biological construct. The aim of the two perspectives is a search for ethical determination but precisely, the generating of good actions by the subject, in being, and beyond being, which impact goodness on the Other. Fecundity, therefore, is an existential theory that implies the immortalization of one's actions and deeds during and afterlife.

An afterlife is the time after the death of a subject. Death according to Levinas is the patience of time (Levinas, *God 16*). Could this mean that all existents merely await that time? Death is a truism but for Levinas's ethics, what is more important is the fecund roles that live on. For him, our possibilities will be made impossible at death. This agrees with his characterization of death he offered elsewhere. Death is the "impossibility of possibility" (Levinas, *Time 8*). Death being the limit of one's virility renders the subject no more capable of his possibilities. It is a radical destructive otherness and the impossibility of having new projects after it strikes (*Ibid. 74*). Levinas forwards three perspective of death. Firstly, as time because it occurs in time and suffocates the individual in the impossibility of the possible (Levinas, *Totality 57*). This asserts the fact that the deceased loses all his ability as death invades him. Secondly, death as a totality, for when one dies, he is counted among the dead- the totality of the dead. At this time reference is made to him in the accusative (*Ibid. 56*). Lastly, death as will for death is not an object of one's own will though it occurs as murder and suicide, they are the apex of irresponsibility because life needs protection not destruction. This essay defends that death does not absolutely destroy life because fecund roles immortalize human beings that are the moral subjects.

This investigation is presented in five steps of which the introduction is the first. Secondly, the notion of death, viewed in the three perspectives (as time, totality and will) as a destructive otherness that renders all human possibilities impossible by the utter reduction of human virility is investigated. Thirdly, an exposition of the notion of fecundity from the two viewpoints as abstract biological and non-biological constructs is rendered. It argues that the two views explain how individuals can live, act and relate ethically with the alterity. Fourthly, implications of fecundity for death is presented where it argues that fecundity aims at immortalization of the subject as a son carries on the father's name after his death. Lastly, goodness in and beyond being is posited as the aim of our ethical life. It argue that one's role - fame or notoriety follows beyond life. It concludes that goodness beyond being is the implication of fecundity for the death of a moral subject.

### **The Levinasian notion of death as non-human otherness<sup>1</sup>**

For Levinas, death is a destructive non-human otherness. In *Totality and Infinity*, death could be understood from three perspectives: (1) As temporal, (2) totality, and (3) as will. In *Time and the Other*, however, death ends human existence, i.e., as the extinction of man's possibilities. Elsewhere, Levinas notes the uncanniness of death, "death crouches like a question with no givens and which is irreducible to any doxic form of the Kantian categories" (Levinas, *God* 38). Death is a radical other that destroys the human life. This investigation begins with death as time.

As time, death is the "suffocation in the impossibility of the possible" (Levinas, *Totality* 57). Death is destructive because it terminates human existence and robs him of time which must be understood in its duration and its diachrony as difference to the unknown. Levinas maintains "Being for a time that would be without me, for a time after my time, beyond the famous "being -for- death" – this is not a banal thought that extrapolates my own duration; it is a passage to the time of the other" (Levinas, *Humanism* 27). These two ideas designate and identify time as temporality within which death occurs. Death is a destructive and radical otherness that intrudes the human life and expunges him from the time of his existence. Death is neither an adventure nor an event of which one could ordinarily, expect at a specific time, nor does one have a personal experience of his own death. Whereas one could experience impending mortality and finitude through one's depreciating capacities, personal experience of death is impossible, for we can only witness the death of the Other. Death comes to an Other as a radical and destructive otherness. Death is neither in the present nor in the past, for it belongs to the future because it is remote, ungraspable, and ubiquitous. It is imminent, but elusive because the more one tries to evade it, the more elusive it is. Nevertheless, one cannot escape death because it is always forthcoming, and it strikes when it wills.

According to Levinas, death is accompanied by an extremely prolonged physical, emotional, and mental pain and dread. Humans cannot take death so lightly because it frightens and reveals our tragic and irresolvable finitude. The anonymous force of death holds a tragedy that death itself cannot resolve (Levinas, *Time* 5). Death is an enigmatic force of human existence. Death is

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<sup>1</sup>An Other is one who has a concrete existence. This idea seems multiple in Levinas as he refers to death as destructive non-human other whereas it is nontangible. He specifically refers to death as a non-personal other (*l'autre*), rendered with ('other') as distinct from the personal other *d'autrui* (rendered with 'Other'). We shall use "Other" for human otherness and "other" for non-human otherness throughout this essay.

certain, but its temporality is in the uncertain future. Levinas claims that “death’s agony is precisely in this impossibility of ceasing, in the ambiguity of a time that has run out and of mysterious time that yet remains; death is consequently not reducible to the end of a being” (Levinas, *Totality* 56). Levinas means that death is not really an absolute end of the subject’s life because there is a possibility of transcendence via fecundity. We shall draw on the existential dimension in *Time and the Other* to supplement the previous analysis to show how death thwarts the subject’s possibilities.

In *Time and the Other*, Levinas describes death as the impossibility of possibility’ which makes possibilities possible by making them possibilities of a finite subject (8). Death truncates the movement towards subjectivity because it terminates the possibility of a relationship with an Other as well as confirms our finiteness and strips the individual of his finite powers. Our relationship with the material things of the world does not reduce us to totality, but despite this, the subject still maintains his subjectivity. Despite his daily activities, the Other is absolutely irreducible to them. This means that in his relationship with the things of the world and with otherness, man can neither be absorbed in them nor into the anonymity of the Other, a view which is opposed to Heidegger’s notion of “*Dasein*” as being-with.

For Heidegger, the relationship of man to the world is characterized by inauthenticity. Anticipating authenticity, Heidegger claims that “any *Dasein* that is in this distinctive possibility of its own self, it has been wrenched away from the ‘they’” (307). This implies that authenticity entails disassociation from the otherness of the Other. A further implication is that man is not (absolutely) irreducible and that relationship with Others makes the *Dasein*’s inauthentic. Heidegger claims that death absolves man from inauthenticity because at death, *Dasein* ceases to be being-with, thereby absolving itself from all relationships that impede authenticity. This informs the Heideggerian conception of death as that which makes man authentic and his impossibilities possible as he defends, “death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*” (ibid. 298). The Heideggerian view of death as well as his notion of man as being-with as that which absolves *Dasein*’s authenticity are in opposition with Levinas’s. For Levinas, death truncates the subject’s possibility and reduces him to nothingness. Thus, the Heideggerian claim is opposed to Levinas’s justification of the individual’s absolute irreducible Otherness. In refuting the Heideggerian conception of death as ‘my own’ death, and as that which enables one’s possibilities and authenticity, Levinas claims that death is always an experience of an Other and not of the I, and could not be that which makes our

impossibilities possible (Time 7-8). No one has ever experienced his own death. Furthermore, Levinas establishes death as a destructive non-human other whose temporality is futuristic. The tension between Heidegger and Levinas lies in their different conceptions of death and the view of an individual in the world. However, Levinas's logic is a plausible and a robust defense of the absolute and irreducible Otherness of the human subjectivity. In any case, death is always that of an Other whom we think unconscious of his dying state. In Levinas's view, it does not seem possible that an inauthentic man becomes authentic at death when his possibilities are stripped off. Rather, death makes impossible a subject's possibilities including the opportunity of authenticating his inauthenticity. In what follows, Levinas advances a complementary reading of death and its notion as totality.

Totality in Levinas refers the collectivity of people that is detrimental to individual qualities. The death of an individual is the inception of that individual in this collectivity where he becomes a part of historical annals. Levinas defends, "in the totality of the historiographer the death of the other is an *end*, the point at which the separated being is cast into the totality" (Totality 56). An individual becomes an integral part of totality at his death where he loses his individuality, becomes alienated to himself, and could only be remembered in the past because he has assumed his place in the totality of historical events which was not the case in his own lifetime.

Against "I" which is the self-address of the subject while alive, and who can also contradict the possibility of his life through apologetics or counter behavior, protest to defend himself, but he cannot do so when he becomes a part of the totality. Therefore, as part of totality, an individual's possibility could only be accomplished by an Other who could be his 'son'. The son represents what Levinas calls the transcendence. He is the new radical non-destructive Other that immortalizes the father- the subject.<sup>2</sup>

Death's reductive impact on an individual existence, makes him absolutely passive, and creates the need for representation by an Other. The reduction occasions a transition in language from the 'I' which the subject refers to himself

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<sup>2</sup> As used in this text, transcendence refers to: 1) the son who takes the place of the father after his death. In relation to the subject, (man) and his son, it means that his son (trans-substantiation), would continue the father's earthly existence (immortalization). Another sense of transcendence is: 2) in connection with the ethical life, transcendence refers to taking responsibility for the Other. Transcendence could be understood as a positive movement or a positive progression.

to 'he,' which an Other addresses him. It is the Other who speaks of the subject in the third person 'he' and in this sense death as totality bears out. The subject is passive because his inner life, which is a condition for his infinity, has been ruptured by death and correlates it as time and as totality. This means that death as time precedes death as totality because the individual has to die first in time before his inception into totality. A point to note here is the reduction, the robbing of the individual's inner life that guarantees his 'finiteness' and thus, sweeps the individual into totality leaving him as a constituent of historical facts/events. Thus, the loss of selfhood (*ipseity*) is the fate of every separation occasioned by death. A second complementary reading of death is death as the will.

There is one central idea that crosscuts the hermeneutic of death in philosophy, and in most religious circles, i.e., the interpretation of death as a passage from mortality to immortality. While the philosophical tradition might interpret this as a passage to nothingness, religions posit another existence – eternal life (Levinas, *Totality* 232). However, death as will could be interpreted in two ways based on ordinary assumptions: (a) death as an event in which the subject is incapable of willing for himself for an individual only will that which he has the capacity to do. Death is outside an individual's capacity and so he cannot will it. It is a destructive non-human other, although close to the individual, yet remote from him. Death is enigmatic and strange to the subject, and hence, it frightens him. The horror of death is too grave for the subject to will it for himself.

Death threatens me from beyond. This uncanny and enigmatic force frightens man. The silence of the infinite space that terrifies, comes from the other, and this alterity, precisely as absolute, strikes me in an absolute design or in the judgement of justice (*ibid.* 234). Death is exogenous to the subject and as such cannot be an object of an individual's will. Death "strikes as an evil design or in the judgement of justice" (*ibid.* 234). The horror, violence, evil and the fear of death removes it from the purview of the subject's will. Death is lonely because everyone has a personal and individual experience and no person can share the consciousness of dying with another. To flee from the destruction and the radicality of death, one opts for a non-harmful Other, his friend, a doctor for assistance. This description offers compelling conviction that an individual can only will what is in his capacity thus, cannot logically will death in normal conditions. We can understand murder as an alternative reading of death as will.

(b) Murder is a compelling emotion towards reducing the life of the murdered to nothingness. Levinas abhors that "the spontaneous intentionality of this passion

aims at annihilation" (ibid. 232). Since no one can possess the knowledge of death, murder, therefore, is both annihilation and nothingness. It is annihilation because it is the complete destruction of life and nothingness because it yields no knowledge, rather it exterminates a subject of knowledge. A murderer neither gains nor possesses the knowledge of death, and so, murder is nothingness. Death is anonymous, elusive and ungraspable. A stronger folly and emptiness than murder is suicide. Suicide represents a phenomenon of nothingness and the possibility of oneself on one's life.

By suicide, an individual exercises power over himself and reduces himself to utter nothing. Since death is absolutely and radically destructive, the subject cannot comprehend it. Suicide is contradictory, for Levinas, because it involves the taking of one's own life; a life which the subject is obligated to protect (Levinas, *Time* 73). If Levinas conceives of killing as absolute negation, obviously, suicide is more antithetical to life and represents the height of irresponsibility to the self. Death as will opens up to murder and suicide, which ends up in that unethical act. This is because the ethical is hospitality and unconditional responsibility to the Other.

As a brief recap, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas argues that death as time and as totality could be explained from an ontological perspective, for as death confronts the subject, the notions of totality and time reveal the *quiddity* of death in relation to life, and thus, how different people are considered after their death. For instance, as totality, the subject becomes part of history after his death. As will, (murder and suicide), death assumes the highest expression of nihilism. This is because the face of the other is a face in need of love and care, therefore, murder opposes the unconditioned responsibility that is our duty. For this reason, Levinas condemns suicide and murder. *Time and the Other* provides an alternative to Levinas's ontological and moral analysis of death. It presents death as an aspect of life and the extinction of the subject's possibilities. It is "existential" not only because it is a possibility of an existing subject, but also because its impact turns man's possibilities into impossibility (ibid. 8). That is why, for Levinas, only death could reduce man (who is an absolutely irreducible Other) to nothingness. In reference to the notion of death in *Totality and Infinity*, as man shows his strength as an absolutely irreducible Other, death as time warns him about the possible reversal – his absolute reduction to nothingness and absorption in the totality. Is death the absolute end of the subject's life? Levinas does not think so. There is a possibility of immortalization through the son via fecundity.

### **Fecundity: Notion and meaning**

Fecundity is Levinas's metaphor that explains the human act of engenders goodness that endures infinitely. It also refers to an individual living a good life - being good and perpetuating goodness for its sake, that which Levinas refers to "good beyond being" (Levinas, *Existence* xxvii). Fecundity explains goodness that has a future relation as he renders "fecundity engendering fecundity accomplishes goodness" (Levinas, *Totality* 269). Fecundity is a metaphor that firstly, refers to abstract biological description of the human life, and secondly it explains a non-biological description human of life in relation to carrying out good deeds. The first interpretation is the abstract biological terminology that parallels procreation - abstract paternity. This view refers to procreation and transcendence in which the child immortalizes the father. Levinas describes this point of view as accomplishing transcendence to the pure future, which is infinite time, a notion that abstractly identifies fecundity with paternity (*ibid.* 247). Secondly, fecundity is also understood in a non-biological sense and it connotes the generation and transfer of goodness from the present to the infinite future in a non-biological way, as he claims that philosophy a discourse that is always addressed to another represents a moment in fecundity (*ibid.*, 269).

In its abstract biological concept, fecundity is significant to all professions. This is because leadership roles include fathering one's subordinates as biological children. In doing so leaders must relate in such a way that they generate good deeds in and beyond being. 'In being' refers to one's lifetime, and 'beyond being' refers to the afterlife - death. The claim here is that after one's death, it is one's deeds that speak for and represent him. Specifically, we apply to the public officers and the people they serve; trade/ craft masters and the apprentices. This bipolar relationship of the: teacher-student, public officer-people, master-apprentice explains abstract paternity that fulfills the promise of the future. The children create the role of paternity in which they are the product of the father. The children are not a property of the father like his car or his house but a special unique gift among the other possessions - his transcendence. The children's relationship with the father is that of fecundity, which is neither political nor religious or social: "The child-father relationship is friendly, without force, but it guarantees infinite posterity" (Levinas, *Totality* 268). The significance of the father-children relationship and indeed the above described are intended for immortalization. This accords Levinas's metaphor of fecundity multi-phenomenological and existential relevance not only in philosophy, but in concrete situations of life. This implies that following the interpretation of Levinas's theme of fecundity as generating and transmission of goodness from

the present to the future and the future yet to come, the term goodness could be applied to everyone and at all times, ethically, socially, politically, economically, religiously, etc. This goodness speaks about the subject in time and infinitely, in the sense that posterity judges an individual more after his earthly existence. Levinas's phenomenological description fecundity and its allusion to death implies an investigation into the reason for living good life, defending justice, perfecting just and ethical structures, creating enabling societal structures and moral interhuman relationship among people in the society.

The non-biological view of fecundity complements the first and mirrors the goodness accomplished by human agency. We can also understand this perspective of fecundity as role modeling or mentorship. Levinas writes that "the *"personality"* of a being is its very need for time as for a miraculous fecundity in the instant itself, by which it recommences as other" (Levinas, Existence 95). The above recalls the time the subjects needs for generating and transmitting goodness by mentoring the Other. The accomplishing of goodness in the Other is viewed as a miracle of being because it consists of transcendence in a mysterious mode. The metaphor of fecundity does not express biological embodiment, though it could also be understood from that perspective in so far as acts of goodness are accomplished by the human agency.

However, there is tension between the real paternity and the abstract paternity. How should a subject treat his biological son, relative and a stranger? This question strikes at the ethical in the fecundity construct for, fecundity represents engendering of goodness and the good is unconditional but always good. Therefore, what is good for the subject's biological son is also good for the abstract son. Thus, preferential treatment of either of the biological son or the abstract son is excluded from the ethical. Therefore, Levinas's notion of fecundity rekindles hope for a better relationship between peoples in lieu of the good life. Derrida captures this sentiment well when he characterizes Levinas's work as ethics of ethics remarking, "let us not forget that Levinas does not seek to propose laws or moral rules, does not seek to determine *a* morality, but rather the essence of ethical relation in general. But as this determination does not offer itself as a theory of Ethics, in question then is an Ethics of Ethics" (Derrida 138). This means that the uniqueness and novelty of Levinas's thought lies in investigating and determining the ethics of our human relationships, the *raison d'être* for performing good actions that contribute to the good life for people for a better society. The above analysis offers us the significance of fecundity which shall be the requisite for the end-time judgment.

Future relation introduces us to time to which Levinas describes as infinite existence: “to be infinitely--infinite – means to exist without limit” (Totality 281). This definition is important for the two characterizations of fecundity because it underscores the duration between fecund actions, their results and judgement by posterity.

The notions of eschatology and judgment concludes the metaphor of fecundity. In Levinas, eschatology is not to be understood as historicity or historical, or end time, but as a judgment that brings people out of the totality of history to their individuality in order that they take up the full responsibility of their actions. Eschatology is a double-speak moment that exudes the opposition between morality and immorality, the ethical and the unethical, good and bad. Therefore, the passion, dedication and sagacity of the good people are in opposition to vices and the selfishness of the bad ones. It is a moment of judgement, not legal but ethical by posterity.

The moment of judgment is the time when individuals are spoken of and by which their deeds are revealed and evaluated by others. Levinas queries: “For does not judgment the act of situating by reference to infinity, necessarily have its source outside the being judged; does it not come from the other, from history?” (ibid. 240). This query has two implications for the subject (a) That public office holders, those on authority and everyone will be judged for their exercise of roles in relation to other people, and (b) that (posterity) history will be witnesses to the deeds of all. Levinas places responsibility as well as judgment on the individual deeds. For this reason, he defends that individuals cannot escape the consequences of their deeds. For, the temporal judgment of history is an other to the individual, and history is detrimental to the human will because it alienates the will (ibid. 240-1). Judgment by history is mediated and imperfect because it is based on human evaluations. Thus, Levinas claims that the alternative and supreme judgment by God is not only fair, but also comprehensive and excellent.

Judgment by God is different from, and preferred to, judgment by history because it accounts for all our deeds. God is omniscient and omnipresent, yet invisible and Levinas extols these Divine characteristics by maintaining that “the idea of a judgment of God represents the limit idea of a judgment that, on the one hand, takes into account the invisible and essential offense to a singularity that results from judgment (even a judgment that is rational and inspired by universal principles, and consequently is visible and evident) ...God sees the invisible and sees without being seen” (Totality 244). The Divine judgment is

superior to the judgment of history because God sees and knows everything including the intentions of actions. Judgment in Levinas reiterates and consolidates his concept of ethics. He is exploring the conditions that offer people practical reasons for being ethical. This objective is significant for everyone but particularly, leaders, public officers, masters are in the searchlights of this essay.

### **Implications of fecundity for death**

As a recap, fecundity brings to light its abstract biological and non-biological narratives that justifies ethical life but culminates in judgement. The implications of these for death is the focus in this section. Death arrogates a twofold implication on fecundity: objective and subjective. Objectively, fecundity impacts on the engendering and accomplishing of goodness on behalf of humanity. Subjectively, firstly, it immortalizes the subject by offering him a trans-substantiation, secondly, it offers him materials for judgement by posterity. Before going into discussing the above implications, it is good to note a foundational attitude to fecundity, namely, consciousness - "the urgency of a destination leading to the other person and not an eternal return to the self" (Levinas, Talmudic 48). This consciousness entails the understanding that every good deed should not and must not return to the self but for the good of the Other. When consciousness crosses from the subject to the Other, it transcends, and this transcendence is acclaimed righteous because it is not self-seeking. This transcendence is the ethical which is the expression of fecundity as engendering of goodness. We can also read this notion "consciousness" in a different construct. William Desmond calls it "agapeic service" because altruistic service and suffering is involved. He contrasts agapeic services between erotic action that returns to the self. Unlike the erotic, <which is egoistic and a return to the self, agapeic services go beyond the ego. "Beyond" is very important in the explication of goodness and so attracts special attention. "'Beyond" means "preceeding" as well as "exceeding" something "before" as well as after, something "prior" to self-determination as well as more ultimate" (Desmond 347). The importance of beyond in accomplishing fecundity is so axiomatic that it is a redundant stress because every fecund action follows the analysis of beyond above. It is in this trajectory that fecundity can be intelligibly rendered in relation to death. At this juncture, focus returns to the objective and the subjective implications of death on fecundity beginning with the objective implication.

The objective implication of fecundity for death explains the value of the good deeds of the deceased person toward other people. The interest is on the goodness of the deceased subject to posterity. This implies that the objective

impacts of fecundity on behalf of the deceased is nothing else than the social dimension of his life and its impacts on the society. For it underscores the legacies left behind for his memory. So construed, the objective implication follows the analysis of “beyond” we offered earlier. The objective influence of fecundity offers material for testimony on behalf of the life of the deceased subject. The non-biological fecundity notion generates goodness to the pure future by way of models and mentorship. Role models and mentorship are very familiar concepts and their impacts help our understanding of fecundity. The engendering of goodness that infinitely endures offers an apt response to the following anxiety: “If the existence of one Other already condemns me to unlimited responsibility and dedication, how, then, can I cope with the fact that I, during my life time, am confronted not only with one or a few men, women, and children but with innumerable others? How would I be able to be totally dedicated to all others” (Peperzak 30)? This curiosity presupposes the fecund life of every subjectivity that finally impacts objectively on universal Otherness. It can be construed as intersubjective existence in so far as it bears out the ethical. Therefore, what is entailed here is that everyone is a moral subject whose action and role has infinite social dimension. This means that moral actions are not restricted to particular experience, but universal view, not temporal nowness but infinitely, for infinity is the future that is always coming. This explains how individual good actions result to universal influence and judgements. For this reason, fecundity which can also be construed as the grooming of goodness offers and serves as the *raison d’être* for which every moral subject must impact on the alterity since such influences are universal and infinite. Fecund roles are inclusive but in the public opinion, stricter in relation to public officers, leaders, masters and administrators since they are either elected or appointed on trust and they also have many subordinates. “Administration and politics have their true source in high esteem of individuals for other individuals. All social tasks are consequences of, and preparations for the possibility of adequate face-to-face relationships and good conversations” (ibid. 31). The axiomatic truth of this claim from the Levinasian perspective is that every individual and offices are for services for the people and that negligence of these services is antithetical to the ethical and absolutely un-Levinasian. From this perspective, Levinas adds up with the tenets of classical philosophy that conceptualizes individual and people and defines them as integral, real or potential parts of the social order as well as functionaries, citizens and varied social formations and role takers (ibid. 30). It is no coincidence at this juncture, that the objective perspective of fecundity parallels mentorship and role model. In these two strands, goodness is

transmitted to the pure future – after the death of a moral subject whose good deeds immortalize him.

The subjective view of fecundity on the other hand offers two-folds impacts: Firstly, immortalization via trans-substantiation and transcendence, and secondly, judgment of the subject from his deeds by posterity. In ordinary parlance, the children of a dead man represent, immortalize and offer “apology” for their deceased father. This is a pure existential narrative. This view also explains the ancient African *weltanschauung* which almost considers childlessness a taboo and lack of a male child in a family almost unacceptable. The reason simply is that the child is a trans-substantiation of the father that will carry on the father’s name at the event of his death (though we do not often take into consideration what sort of name is carried on)! Nevertheless, the interest is that the family line does not end with the death of the father. Interestingly, the attention is on abstract biological construct - abstract paternity which implies more than biological paternity because it is not restricted to biological fatherhood. The view of abstract biological construct includes basically every professions and vocations of life. Various trades where people undergo formation as apprentice cohere with this construct. This is so because those apprentices that under formation are purposed for the continuity of the trades, occupations and vocations respectively. Therefore, successful apprentices are trans-substantiations of their respective trade and the continuing of their respective trades is transcendence. Trans-substantiation will ensure the immortalization of the respective trades and vocation thereby preventing their dearth. Trans-substantiation partially answers the question regarding what one has left for posterity. The popular cliché “leaving marks on the sands of times” accurately expresses what I call subjective perspective of fecundity, though in part. Jacques Derrida made the following remarks at the funeral ceremony of his friend and colleague, Emmanuel Levinas “the secret or intimate exchange that always links one, deep inside, to a dead friend or master, those who make themselves heard in the cemetery end up addressing directly, straight on, the one who, as we say, is no longer, is no longer living, no longer there, who will no longer respond...To say to him adieu, to him, Emmanuel, and not merely to recall what he first taught us about a certain Adieu” (1-2). The above remark reechoes the marks of Levinas on the sands of time, for, to others, he was a professor, colleague, a father whom many have come to know posthumously. However, the remarks resound the impacts of his teaching profession. Elsewhere, he protests “I cannot, nor would I even try to measure in a few words the oeuvre of Emmanuel Levinas. It is so large that one can no longer glimpse its

edges” (ibid. 3). The two quotes above express the subjective impacts of fecundity for the death of Levinas. Whereas the former underscores his person as Levinas, the latter refers to what he has left to posterity. Basically, we could say that the views are the marks Levinas printed in the sand of time. With these we remember him, and this concept of “remembrance” leads us to the idea of judgement.

Judgement complements trans-substantiation as subjective impacts of fecundity to death. Judgement is an apology in the accusative – where an individual and his deeds are spoken of by an other. Levinas refers to judgement as an act whereby one is placed in the infinity by reference by another, evaluated and responded to completely by (an) other (s) (Totality 240). Posthumous judgments are banal, and its banality and universality depend on the status quo of the deceased person. Two striking points about this judgment are: Firstly, it is made by reference, by an Other and in one’s absence and without any designated advocate. Secondly, “by reference” inclines us to think that the object of judgment could be whatever the deceased left behind since it is not a court suit. In this regard, one can think of the deceased’s deeds – the mark he printed on the sands of time. It is by reference of the good deeds one is judged good and similarly, by reference to evil deeds one is judged with condemnation. Posterity remains the judge, but Levinas thinks that Divine judgment is the excellent and the accurate for, God knows everyone and their intentions and judges justly (ibid. 244). Going down the historical lane even Biblically, regardless of nationality and race, there are some names that recall benevolence, goodness and blessedness and some that are notorious, demonized and damned. Some of these figures especially political leaders were not personally known to many that evaluate them today, but history immortalizes them for posterity to constantly judge them. Judgment, therefore, is one but with double faces. Some are judged good and others are judged bad, but the basis for the judgment is what is known about the deceased. Based on this view, fecund roles immortalize the moral subject.

### **Goodness in and beyond being: Conclusion**

The subject must be good in being and beyond being. Goodness beyond being seems contradictory in terms or impossible in meaning because logically and phenomenologically, what is, is in being and what is not, is without being. However, as we have argued and upheld that goodness is in being and beyond being, for, goodness beyond being as applied to the ethical subject who is ‘out of being’. The ‘in being’ refers to the subject’s lifetime whereas ‘beyond being’ refers

to his afterlife, death- which also signifies the 'beyond being'. The concept of the good may gratify many meanings for, what is judged good if often assessed individually and in relation to other things. In this piece, I have used the expression "engendering goodness" severally, but what does it mean? It is an ethical judgement that asserts what is desirable either in itself or in relation to other things. For instance, one could say 'I ought to do a good deal' and another, 'You ought to study in a good school' and a third, 'Mr. Adolf is a good man'. To what does 'good' in each of these statements refer? These statements raise ethical issues and each of them may have sufficient reasons for deciding the truth of the claims. What is 'good' or what is 'goodness'? Attempt at any such definition ends in frustration for the aim is to identify that an object or idea held whether rightly or wrongly is what 'good' generally stand for (Moore 6). According to Moore, *good* cannot be defined otherwise one lands in a naturalistic fallacy, but we can talk about *the good*, that which is good. However, by the good or goodness, we mean that quality which we assert to belong to a thing (ibid. 9-10). This is the meaning of the good and goodness we have upheld in this essay. Therefore, goodness is a quality of a morally good or virtuous person, it is a belief in the basic goodness of a human subject. Goodness is possible in being, but it also follows beyond being. For in being, a man acts and out of being actions follow man. Thus, goodness in and beyond being, the moral subject must be.

In the last section we borrowed the analysis of 'beyond' from William Desmond. A short recap: Beyond means preceding and proceeding; exceeding, before and after; prior and anterior to. From this analysis, it follows that goodness permeates being. In investigating the implications of fecundity for death, a quick response is that fecundity implies being good or goodness in and beyond being. Goodness is a quality possible in existential subjects. It is also a truism that the living and not the dead can characterize goodness, though it can reflect the dead if he was good while alive. Levinas used metaphysics of desire to explain the infinite possibility of generating goodness and the infinity of goodness itself. He demonstrated that first by distinguishing desire from want and explained that wants could be satisfied whereas desire cannot (Totality 33). Therefore, the impossibility of satisfying a desire entails the infinite possibility of engendering goodness and the infinity goodness itself ought to be. Wants are elemental objects whereas desires are metaphysical concepts. Goodness can be construed as virtue which is metaphysical, and the meaning derivable is that the virtues of life which are goodness are metaphysical, that is why they follow life and beyond. Thus, the good actions of a man are metaphysical and immortal, though the subject dies, his virtues are fecundated - they are beyond being and are

immortalized. Furthermore, there is a connection between the elemental with the metaphysical.

The elemental materials could serve as a source to the metaphysical realities. We can understand this better in the Levinasian analysis of the Dwelling. Interpreted as the utilization of an “implement” among “implements”, the home serves as habitation as other instruments serve their purposes (ibid. 152). For example, as a pen serves as instrument for writing, the home serve as instrument for habitation. The home provides the most essential rudiment for one’s moral existence for, it is the place where one comes out and reclines after his daily toils. The home shelters the subject from the inclemency of the weather, his adversaries and other oddities of life that can affect the disposition of the subject in good relationship and deeds toward others. The home is an elemental that serves as a sturdy support to the metaphysical- virtues (goodness). On another take, the welcome of an Other to the home is already in itself a virtuous deed because the Other being welcomed is a face in need. This welcome is made possible by man’s engagement with labor in order to acquire one’s daily needs and for charity. “No human or interhuman relationship can be enacted outside of economy; no face can be approached with empty hands and closed home. Recollection in a home open to the Other – hospitality” (ibid. 172). An analysis of the habitation reveals the intersection of the elemental and metaphysical. Firstly, elemental because like any other instrument, the dwelling serves for habitation. Secondly, within the dwelling, the metaphysical takes place, namely hospitable acts of welcoming the Other, of feeding and clothing him. Furthermore, the dwelling also serves as the place where the subject prepares himself for work where he impacts goodness on the society and his colleagues at the workplace. This last point is very important because the workplace is the duty post where responsibility places immense demand on good deeds. To this effect Levinas’s prescription of absolute, infinite, unconditional and asymmetrical responsibility for the Other whom one serves at work and with whom one works implies the goodness in and consequently, beyond being.

Death is banal but certainly not an absolute end because fecundity immortalizes the dead. Beyond any religious connotations, beyond any monumental immortalization of persons, there is always an immortalization by posterity. Posterity keep memories consciously or unconsciously; about the good, the bad and the ugly. However, memories are always object of knowledge. Sometimes, current situations or events recall past memories and thus brings certain people and events into picture. This compels us to remember many famous and notorious people alike in the world’s history. Like death, memories are banal.

Historical figures are not the living but the dead. What is operational is their works while they were alive, and they follow them beyond. This is a case for goodness beyond being: An implication of fecundity for death.

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