



LEVINASIAN CRITIQUE ON NĀGĀRJUNAIN ABSOLUTE NON-BEING

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Abstract

Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995), a French Philosopher, who was well-versed in existentialism, ethics, phenomenology and ontology, argues that in case of ethics is searching for existential ground, prior to any deliberation on efficacy, virtue, or duty, it determines intersubjective enactment of responsibility, as declared in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, all ethics come from an encountering with an other, where the universal Other is denounced. For Levinas, irreducibility of the face-to-face encounter has to be taken into account; aligning to transcendence with exteriority, in the sense of what lies outside myself but eludes my comprehensive knowledge: the other person is with paramount importance. Nāgārjuna, is extensively considered one of the most significant Buddhist philosophers, who developed central concept around the notion of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) explicated that emptiness is always the emptiness of something, absence of its *svabhāva*. But Nāgārjuna endorses an absolute non-Being (in Heideggerian sense, in accordance with his conception on ontological difference, there is a concrete distinction between Being and beings); the negation of Being, which would be absolute nothingness. This absolute nothingness is unarisen and unstopping (*anutpannāniruddhā hi nirvāṇam iva dharmatā*) as per *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. At the same time, Nāgārjuna does not give up objective moral values. In Levinasian notion ethics begins in face-to-face experience, as his “beyond understanding” is still material with intersubjectivity, and not in a stereological dictum or reference to universality. Here, Nāgārjunian soteriological transcendence will be problematized in the lens of the Levinasian philosophy.

Keywords: Levinas, Nāgārjuna, Śūnyatā, Being, Intersubjectivity