



Ethical Readings of the Self and the Other: A Comparative Analysis of the Possibility of Peace in the Thought of Schmitt, Liberalism, Mouffe, and Levinas



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Abstract

Achieving peace in contemporary societies has become a fundamental issue in political and ethical thought due to complexities in identity, cultural pluralism, and political challenges. This article focuses on how the concepts of the "Self" and the "Other" are defined, and examines the impact of ethical readings on the possibility of achieving peace. The main research question is: How can ethical readings of the "Self" and the "Other" contribute to achieving peace in contemporary societies? This article explores the dominant frameworks for confronting the "Other" through a comparative analysis of the ideas of Carl Schmitt (friend/enemy

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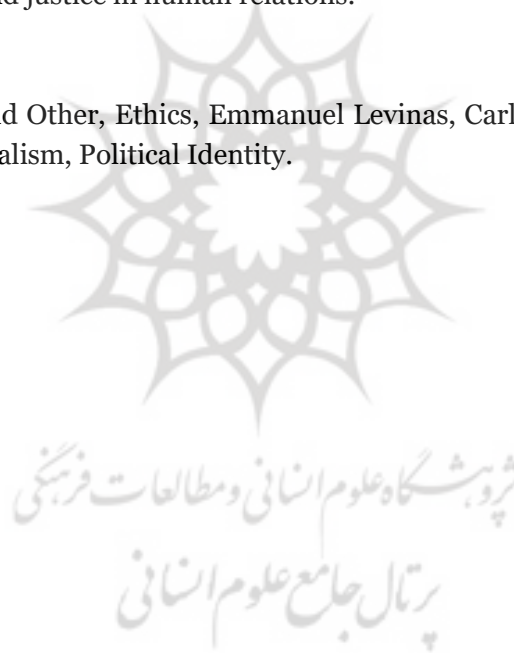


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dichotomy), Liberalism (rational consensus), and Chantal Mouffe (agonistic pluralism). Then, in contrast to these approaches, it introduces the responsibility-centered ethics of Emmanuel Levinas as a fundamental alternative. The hypothesis is that although each of these approaches offers a way to manage differences, stable peace is only possible through understanding the "Other" as an ethical existence that has precedence over the "Self," and establishing a relationship based on empathy and asymmetrical responsibility, as explained by Levinas. Using a qualitative content analysis method, this research shows that the transition from a purely political logic to an ethical logic is a necessary condition for peaceful coexistence and can lead to the development of theories related to dialogue and justice in human relations.

Keywords

Peace, Self and Other, Ethics, Emmanuel Levinas, Carl Schmitt, Chantal Mouffe, Liberalism, Political Identity.



Introduction

A: Generalities

In the contemporary world, the achievement of sustainable peace faces increasing challenges such as identity crises, structural inequalities, and cultural tensions. At the core of these challenges lies the manner in which two key concepts, the "Self" and the "Other," are understood and defined. The way an individual or a collective defines its identity in relation to others—who think or live differently—plays a decisive role in shaping either peaceful or hostile relations. This article argues that the root of many conflicts lies not in inherent differences, but in our "reading" of these differences and the ethical or political load we attach to them.

Contemporary political and philosophical thought has offered varying responses to this issue. Carl Schmitt, with his radical distinction between "Friend" and "Enemy," defines politics as an arena of existential conflicts, where the "Other" is a potential threat, and peace is merely a temporary interruption in this constant state of struggle. In contrast, Liberal theories attempt to contain differences within the private sphere and neutralize them in the public sphere through an emphasis on "rational consensus" and legal procedures, thereby making peaceful coexistence possible. Chantal Mouffe, critiquing both views, proposes a model of the "politics of difference" or "agonistic pluralism" (Agonism). In her view, the complete elimination of antagonism is neither possible nor desirable; instead, the "Enemy" must be converted into an "Adversary"—an other with whom we disagree but whose right to exist we nonetheless recognize.

In contrast to these viewpoints, which all remain, in one way or another, within the framework of political logic, this article focuses on the theoretical framework of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas

fundamentally transforms the relationship with the "Other" by proposing a "First Philosophy" based on ethics.

From his perspective, the encounter with the "Face of the Other" is a foundational ethical event that, prior to any political definition or knowledge of the Other, calls the "Self" to an unlimited responsibility towards them. Peace, in Levinas's thought, is not a social contract or a balance of power, but the product of this ethical responsibility. The goal of Levinasian ethics, which interweaves duty and responsibility, is to achieve a world in which tranquility is realized not through the elimination of the Other, but through the acceptance of the Other in their totality.

Therefore, the main research question is: How can the various ethical readings of the concepts of the "Self" and the "Other" affect the achievement of peace in contemporary societies? And specifically, what unique solution does Levinas's ethical approach offer in this regard?

The main hypothesis of the article is that while the Schmittian, Liberal, and Mouffeian readings each contribute in different ways to the management of conflict and the realization of "minimal peace," the achievement of "sustainable peace" is only realized if one transcends political logic and attends to fundamental ethical principles such as empathy, acceptance, and especially responsibility towards the Other. In other words, a profound understanding of the "Other" not as a political rival or an existential threat, but as an "ethical existence" that calls us to accountability, is the key to sustainable peace.

To test this hypothesis, the present research utilizes the qualitative content analysis method and employs Levinas's ethical framework to examine the relationship between the self and the other. The theories of Carl Schmitt, Liberalism, and Chantal Mouffe are used

as a basis for comparative analysis to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each reading concerning the possibility of realizing peace. The results of this research are expected to show that, despite deep theoretical differences, the effort to open a space for an ethical and empathetic encounter with the Other can contribute to the development of theories related to dialogue, coexistence, and justice in today's pluralistic world.

B: Theoretical Preliminaries: The Political, the Self and the Other, and the Concept of Peace

This section is dedicated to clarifying the theoretical and conceptual framework of the research. First, by focusing on the concept of the "Political" (*das Politische*), we will specify the context in which identities and human relationships are formed. Subsequently, we will analyze the foundational concepts of the "Self" and the "Other" through three political readings (Schmittian, Liberal, Mouffean) and one ethical reading (Levinasian). Finally, we will redefine the concept of "Peace" in light of these conflicting viewpoints.

B-1: The Political and the Definition of the "Self" and "Other" Relationship

Understanding the nature and essence of the Political (*das Politische*) in a community is a precondition for recognizing the logic governing it (Kazemi et al., 2017, p. 30). "The Political" refers to that fundamental dimension of human coexistence in which collective identities are formed and the mode of social togetherness is organized (Tavana & Azarkamand, 2014, p. 28). This dimension both affects the mode of action of political actors and determines the framework of the political society (Rabiei Kohandani, 2021, p. 42).

At the heart of the Political lies the relationship between the "Self" and the "Other." The "Self" refers to the identity, values, and self-conception that an individual or group holds for itself; in contrast, the "Other" symbolizes the individuals or groups in distinction to whom the "Self" is defined. The mode of confronting the "Other" can be categorized into two general approaches: Violence, meaning the use of force and coercion to eliminate or subjugate the Other; and Tolerance (or Madaara), meaning forbearance and patience towards different thought and behavior, which is made possible through the effort to know and understand the Other.

Political and ethical thinkers have offered different readings of this confrontation, which can be examined within the Schmittian, Liberal, Mouffean, and Levinasian frameworks. The first three readings are fundamentally political, while the fourth proposes a radical ethical foundation.

B-2: Political and Ethical Readings of the "Other"

Political readings of the Other define identity within the context of power and antagonism. The Schmittian reading, with its absolute distinction between "Friend" and "Enemy," views the Other as an existential threat. In contrast, the Liberal reading attempts to confine differences to the private sphere and reduce the Other to an equal but neutralized citizen by emphasizing "rational consensus" and impartial procedures. Chantal Mouffe, offering a reading of the "politics of difference," critiques both and suggests that the "Enemy" be transformed into an "Adversary"—an other with whom we disagree but whose right to existence and legitimacy we recognize.

In direct opposition to these political approaches is the ethical reading of Emmanuel Levinas, which forms the main theoretical framework of this article. From Levinas's perspective, the "Other" is

not an epistemic object or a political rival, but an existence that "resists every kind of internalization." The "Other" is a transcendental matter that cannot be contained within the conceptual frameworks of the "Self." In his belief, ethics is born in the face-to-face encounter with the Other; this encounter calls the "Self" to an asymmetrical and unlimited responsibility towards the Other. Therefore, while in the political readings, the "Self" has priority over the "Other," in Levinas's ethics, the "Other" is the condition for the possibility of the formation of the ethical "Self."

B-3: Rereading the Concept of Peace: From Political Contract to Ethical Duty

Our definition of "Peace" is deeply dependent on how we understand the relationship between the "Self" and the "Other." In a common view, peace is a state in which war is absent. This definition, which has its roots in the Roman and legal tradition, considers peace equivalent to a "pact" for avoiding mutual harm¹. This negative view (defining peace by the absence of war) was later transformed by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas into a more positive definition, namely the "tranquility of order," which formed the foundation of many modern definitions. In this view, peace is a state in which security, justice, and fairness are established, and concepts like violence, oppression, and conflict are absent.

However, Levinas offers a fundamental and different definition of peace. In his view, peace is not a political status or a social

1. The Latin word pax is close to the word pacisci, which means "to conclude a contract." However, this same word was used by a philosopher like Cicero to also mean "tranquility of the soul, integrity, and lack of anxiety," which indicates the duality in the understanding of peace from the very beginning.

contract, but an ethical duty that arises from accepting responsibility for the "Other." Levinasian peace is established when the "Self" ceases the attempt to dominate the "Other" and recognizes their dignity and right to life. Therefore, true peace is not the product of a balance of power or rational consensus, but the fruit of an ethical opening towards the Other and the acceptance of their vulnerability. This peace is not merely the "tranquility of the soul" (in Cicero's terms), but a tranquility that results from fulfilling an endless ethical duty.

1. The Logic of Antagonism: Analyzing the Schmittian "Friend-Enemy" Relation and the Possibility of Peace

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To understand the structural obstacles in the path of peace, it is essential to analyze the thought of Carl Schmitt (1888–1985), the German political theorist. His thought is centered on the concept of "The Political," which he defines through a fundamental distinction: "Friend and Enemy."

Schmitt believes that just as ethics is defined by the distinction between good and evil, and aesthetics by the distinction between ugly and beautiful, the Political derives its identity from the existential opposition between "We" (Friend) and "They" (Enemy) (Schmitt, 2014, pp. 24-25).

This distinction is not merely a difference of opinion or economic competition, but an existential antagonism in which the "Other" is perceived as the negation of "Our" identity and way of life, and inherently contains the real possibility of physical struggle and killing.

From this perspective, the political identity of a group or nation is formed in opposition to an antagonistic "Other." As Mouffe

states, for Schmitt, understanding the political is impossible outside of the "friend-enemy grouping" (Mouffe, 2012, pp. 21-22). A political community is born when a group, by creating a distinction between itself and non-members (non-Self), becomes ready for a struggle for survival (Schmitt, 2011, p. 12). This shared sense of identity against a threat is what can compel individuals to fight and sacrifice their lives for the group (Ghahreman, 2014, p. 143). Within this framework, the State, as the supreme political institution, holds the exclusive function of defining the enemy and declaring war. Therefore, politics is meaningless without the possibility of an enemy, and every human is potentially a "combatant."

This logic of antagonism has direct consequences for the concept of peace. From Schmitt's point of view, sustainable peace is a liberal and dangerous ideal that ignores the true essence of politics. In the Schmittian world, peace is merely a temporary interruption in a permanent state of conflict. His emphasis on the "State of Exception," where the sovereign can suspend the legal order to confront the enemy, clearly shows that the political takes precedence over ethics and law (Ghahreman, 2014, p. 32). This prioritization of political survival and the weakening of international institutions aimed at limiting state sovereignty paved the way for the justification of violence and war (Schmitt, 2014, p. 32). Consequently, the structure of Schmitt's thought is fundamentally at odds with the possibility of achieving sustainable peace, as it considers antagonism and enmity an irremovable element of the human condition (Mouffe, 2013, p. 17).

However, can a lesson for defining the conditions of peace be drawn from this radical pessimism? While the direct application of Schmitt's thought for peace-making is contradictory, certain aspects can be critically utilized. First, Schmitt's realism warns us that conflict is an inseparable part of politics and cannot be ignored with naive

idealism (Mouffe, 2013, p. 20). Recognizing this reality is the first step toward the realistic management of conflicts. Second, his emphasis on the importance of collective identity and internal cohesion is a reminder that sustainable peace requires creating a sense of belonging and solidarity among citizens. Finally, his insistence on the necessity of decisive action in crises highlights the importance of competent political leadership for protecting peace against threats.

In summary, Schmitt's "Friend-Enemy" logic defines peace not as an ethical goal, but as a variable dependent on the dynamics of power and antagonism. This perspective, through the reductionism and polarization of human relations, practically blocks any possibility for ethical dialogue and understanding, and presents a fundamental challenge to any project for sustainable peace. The analysis of his thought helps us understand why the transition from a purely political logic to an ethical logic is essential for achieving peace.

2. The Liberal Paradigm: Peace through Rational Consensus and its Limitations

In opposition to the Schmittian logic of antagonism, the liberal paradigm proposes a different path to achieving peace: the management of differences through rational consensus. This approach, especially in the two main models of liberal democracy—the aggregative model and the deliberative model—seeks to reach a general agreement on fundamental principles and values. This section analyzes the role of this paradigm in creating peace and examines its inherent limitations.

Liberalism's peaceful promise rests on the assumption that agreement on shared values such as freedom, human rights, and the rule of law can reduce the likelihood of violent conflicts. Consensus on these principles provides a basis for constructive cooperation,

guarantees individuals' basic rights and freedoms, and prevents despotism and violence by strengthening democratic institutions. In this view, the "Other" is not an enemy, but an equal citizen with whom rational agreement can be reached through dialogue and legal procedures.

However, this peace-building project faces serious limitations. Critics point out that liberalism in practice can lead to severe economic inequalities, which are themselves a source of social unrest. Furthermore, this ideology alone is incapable of containing powerful and emotional forces like extreme nationalism, and the cultural relativism stemming from it sometimes challenges the formation of shared values.

However, the more fundamental critique concerns liberalism's inability to understand and confront the unavoidable dimension of "antagonism" in social life. According to critics like Chantal Mouffe, liberalism, due to its emphasis on individualism and rationalism, fails to fully grasp the pluralistic and passionate nature of politics—a dimension for which there is no final, rational solution (Mouffe, 2013, p. 57). The attempt by the aggregative and deliberative models to completely resolve conflict through consensus ignores the reality that every consensus is inherently based on an act of exclusion and rejection. There are always groups and viewpoints that are left outside the scope of this consensus, and this very act keeps the potential for antagonism alive.

This is where the key difference between the liberal models and the agonistic model becomes apparent. While aggregative and deliberative models view conflict as an obstacle to effective decision-making and seek to neutralize it, the agonistic model considers tension and competition a natural and even necessary element for a dynamic

democracy. In this view, the goal is not to eliminate conflict, but to transform the "Enemy" into an "Adversary."

Consequently, although liberalism provides an essential framework for creating "procedural peace" through law and rights, it faces a challenge in achieving sustainable peace. Its attempt to eliminate antagonism by searching for an all-encompassing rational consensus ultimately leads to the suppression of differences and the disregard of the true nature of the political. To achieve sustainable peace, one cannot simply overlook these limitations; it is necessary to seek approaches that recognize difference and pluralism not as a problem, but as a fundamental reality.

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3. The Politics of Difference: Peaceful Management of Conflict in the Thought of Chantal Mouffe

Chantal Mouffe, the Belgian political theorist, proposes a third way between the Schmittian logic of antagonism and the liberal ideal of consensus. By critiquing both viewpoints, she seeks a framework that both recognizes the unavoidable reality of conflict in human societies and offers a way to manage it peacefully. For this purpose, Mouffe introduces the concept of "Agonism" or "Agonistic Pluralism."

Mouffe agrees with Schmitt that "The Political," as the ontological and inherent dimension of human relations, is based on a fundamental conflict or antagonism (Mouffe, 2012, p. 19). In other words, the formation of every collective "We" necessitates a distinction from a "They," and this distinction always carries the potential for antagonism. Thus, like Schmitt, she considers the liberal idea that conflict can be eradicated from society by achieving complete rational consensus a dangerous "illusion" (Rabiei Kohandani, 2021, p. 52).

However, Mouffe's key point of departure from Schmitt lies in

the management of this inherent conflict. While Schmittian antagonism leads to a "Friend/Enemy" relation in which the Other must be eliminated, Mouffe seeks to tame this destructive potential. She argues that the task of democracy is not to eliminate antagonism, but to transform it into agonism. Agonism, unlike antagonism, is a relationship between "adversaries," not "enemies." Adversaries are those who disagree and struggle to realize their conflicting viewpoints, but at the same time, they recognize each other's right to this struggle and adhere to a common ethical-political framework (Mouffe, 2012, pp. 27-28).

This common framework in liberal democracies is the agreement on the fundamental principles of "Freedom and Equality for all." Therefore, in the agonistic model, political conflict continues, but this struggle is over the "interpretation" and "mode of implementation" of these shared principles, not over the annihilation of the opposing side. The "Other" in this view is neither an existential enemy (like Schmitt's view) nor merely a rival with negotiable interests (like the deliberative liberal view), but a "legitimate adversary"; someone whose ideas we fight, but whose right to defend those ideas we respect (Rabiei Kohandani, 2021, p. 57).

With this approach, Mouffe critiques the dominant liberal models: the aggregative model (which reduces politics to bargaining over interests) and the deliberative model (which seeks the rational resolution of all conflicts). She believes that by ignoring the passionate and antagonistic dimension of politics, these models depoliticize it, and by suppressing legitimate conflicts, they open the way for the emergence of right-wing populisms and violent forms of antagonism (Khaleghi Damghani & Malekzadeh, 2015, p. 150). In her view, true pluralism is only possible when differences are not merely

tolerated, but are accepted as the driving force of a dynamic democracy (Moeini Alamdari, 2010, pp. 132-133).

Ultimately, Mouffe's point of departure with the agonistic model was to show how it is possible both to recognize the conflictual dimension of society and to preserve peaceful forms of political action from within pluralism. Peace in her thought is not a static, conflict-free state, but a dynamic and perpetual process of managing conflicts within a shared democratic framework. By transforming the "Other" from an absolute enemy into a legitimate adversary, she opens the way for a type of coexistence in which differences are not suppressed but become a source of political vitality.

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4. The Ethical Opening Towards Peace: The Priority of the "Other" in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas, the Jewish-French philosopher, offers a radical alternative to political approaches to peace by presenting a "First Philosophy" based on ethics. In contrast to the entire tradition of Western philosophy, which is founded on the priority of the "Self" or the Subject, he argues that ethics begins not with the "Self," but with the encounter with "the Other" (Abbasi & Fazeli, 2023, p. 67; Aliya, 2009, p. 37).

Levinas's goal is not to formulate a prescriptive ethical system, but to describe the condition for the possibility of ethics and to find its meaning in the foundational experience of the human relationship. This approach is a revolution in ethical thought that emphasizes pluralism, particularity, and feeling instead of unity, totality, and reason.

4-1. The Nature of the "Other" and Asymmetrical Responsibility

At the heart of Levinas's philosophy lies the concept of "The

Face of the Other." The "Face" is not an epistemic object that can be known and summarized within the concepts of the "Self"; rather, it is an immediate, vulnerable, and commanding presence. The Face of the Other, through its nudity and defencelessness, issues an ethical command: "Thou shalt not kill me." This command, prior to any choice or social contract, calls the "Self" to an unconditional and asymmetrical responsibility. This responsibility is "heteronomous" (Other-derived), meaning it is imposed upon us from the outside (by the Other) and challenges the absolute spontaneity and freedom of the "Self."

In this view, I am responsible for the Other, even before they are responsible for me; this responsibility goes so far that Levinas states that "I care more about the life of the 'Other' than the life of 'Me'" (Saber Latibari, 2023, p. 77; Asghari, 2010, p. 153).

This ethical priority of the "Other" is the foundation of peace in Levinas's thought. Violence, in its essence, is an attempt to deny this responsibility and to objectify the Other—that is, to reduce them to a threat (Schmittian view), a rival (Liberal view), or a concept within the framework of one's own identity. Peace, in contrast, is not a political contract or a balance of power, but the product of accepting this fundamental responsibility. True peace is established when the "Self" ceases the attempt to dominate the "Other" and becomes accountable for their vulnerability. This view offers a novel definition of humanism: not a humanism based on the autonomous modern Subject who legislates for others, but an "Humanism of the Other" that is redefined based on responsibility towards them (Sayyad Mansour, 2017, pp. 199 & 201; Asghari, 2010, p. 148; Davies, 2007, p. 75).

4-2. The Role of Religion in Levinasian Ethics and Peace

Religion, especially the Jewish tradition, plays an inspirational

role in the formation of Levinas's ethics, but his ethics are not limited to any specific religion. Teachings such as the story of Cain and Abel, which emphasize human responsibility for one's brother, resonate in his thought. However, Levinas believes that the ethical experience of encountering the "Face of the Other" is a fundamental, universal human experience that precedes any religious or cultural belief. He does not seek to establish a religious ethic, but rather endeavors to phenomenologically describe the meaning of ethical acts such as forgiveness, love, and self-sacrifice that lie at the heart of religions (Saber Latibari, 2023, p. 77).

From this perspective, religion can play a dual role in achieving peace. If religion becomes a source of inspiration for responsibility, justice, and compassion towards the Other (even the alien or enemy Other), it can be a powerful force for peace. But if it transforms into a tool for fanaticism, the justification of violence, and the exclusion of the Other, it will become the greatest obstacle to peace. Ultimately, for Levinas, the true test of any religion and any ethic is in its manner of confronting the "Other." The ultimate goal of his ethics is to achieve a world filled with peace and tranquility; a peace made possible not through the elimination of differences, but through the acceptance of endless responsibility toward the different Other.

5. Comparative Analysis and Critique: From the Politics of Antagonism to the Ethics of Responsibility

The examination of the four perspectives discussed indicates a spectrum of approaches to the issue of the "Self" and the "Other" and, consequently, to the possibility of "Peace."

This spectrum begins, on one end, with the extreme realism of Carl Schmitt, who reduces politics to the ineliminable logic of

"Friend/Enemy" and regards peace as a temporary and strategic matter. In this view, the "Other" is always an existential threat, and ethics fades in the face of political necessity. This approach, through its reductionism and prioritization of power, practically forecloses any possibility for sustainable peace based on mutual understanding.

On the other side of the spectrum lies the idealism of Liberalism, which attempts to contain conflicts and transform the "Other" into an equal citizen within a neutral framework by relying on "rational consensus" and legal institutions. However, as critics have pointed out, this approach often suffers from oversimplification when confronting the stubborn realities of politics, such as structural inequalities, identity passions and emotions, and power dynamics. Its focus on procedures and institutions sometimes overlooks the root causes of conflict, and its idealization of democracy and consensus ignores the voices of marginalized groups.

Chantal Mouffe, by presenting the "Agonism" model, attempts to find a middle path. She accepts the unavoidable reality of "antagonism" from Schmitt but seeks to tame it by transforming the "Enemy" into a "Legitimate Adversary," managing the conflict within a democratic framework. This approach, by recognizing differences and legitimizing political contestation, goes beyond Liberalism's simplification. However, the fundamental question facing Mouffe is whether a mere agreement on the abstract principles of "freedom and equality" is sufficient to maintain this "agonistic" relationship and prevent its slippage into destructive "antagonism." Her model, while more politically realistic, still remains within the framework of a purely political logic and lacks a deep ethical foundation for confronting the "Other."

This is where the radical approach of Emmanuel Levinas gains significance as a "First Philosophy" based on ethics. By inverting the

entire tradition of Western philosophy, Levinas prioritizes ethics over ontology and the "Other" over the "Self" (Abbasi & Fazeli, 2023, p. 67; Aliya, 2009, p. 37). Peace in his view is not a political contract, but the product of an unconditional ethical commitment in the face of the "Face of the Other" (Saber Latibari, 2023, p. 77). This perspective, by placing responsibility at the core of the human relationship, offers the deepest alternative to power-based logics.

However, the main critique of Levinas is this: is this radical ethic and unlimited responsibility feasible in the real world of politics, which involves the presence of the "Third Other" (society, institutions, laws) and the necessity of judgment and justice? Does the pure focus on the "Other" not lead to a neglect of the "Self" and the necessities of collective survival?

6. An Alternative Perspective: Ethics, Politics, and Peace in Islamic Thought

At this juncture, a comprehensive critique of these viewpoints can be made from the perspective of Islamic Thought, and an alternative vision can be outlined. Islamic thought, by offering a comprehensive system, attempts to establish a balance among the different existential dimensions of humanity (ethics, politics, spirituality).

6-1. Critique of Western Perspectives from an Islamic Viewpoint:

From this perspective:

- Schmitt's theory is rejected due to its reduction of politics to naked power and its neglect of ethical and spiritual foundations. In Islam, power is not inherently evil, but a means to achieve transcendent goals and serve the people, and if separated from self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and

piety (*taqwa*), it leads to corruption (Imam Khomeini, 2013, p. 71). Islamic politics is founded upon revelation and justice, and mandates the observance of ethical principles even when confronting an enemy.

- Liberalism is considered deficient due to its neglect of the spiritual dimensions of humanity and its attempt to establish a purely procedural and secular consensus. Furthermore, its inability to resolve structural inequalities renders it unsuccessful in achieving true justice.
- Mouffe's theory, although acknowledging the reality of conflict, lacks a firm metaphysical and ethical foundation for managing it. Agreement on abstract principles, without spiritual backing and internal commitment, is fragile.
- Finally, Levinas's theory, despite its significant affinity with Islam's emphasis on the Other, is critiqued for its neglect of ontology and its unilateral focus on the "Other." In Islamic thought, responsibility is a multidimensional concept that includes Responsibility before God (Quran, Al-Anfal: 27), Responsibility towards the Self (Quran, Al-Ma'idah: 105) and self-purification (*Jihad al-Akbar*), and Responsibility towards Society (Quran, Al-Baqarah: 143; Ma'refat, 2001, pp. 191-192). These responsibilities are defined and delimited within the framework of divine Law (*Sharia*) and, unlike Levinas's unlimited responsibility, possess boundaries and parameters.

6-2. The Islamic Solution: Prioritizing Self-Purification over Confrontation with the Other

From the Islamic perspective, before addressing the "external Other," one must address the "internal Other." The human possesses two "Selves": the "Commanding Self" (*Nafs al-Ammara*) (egoistic and

base) and the "Contented Self" (*Nafs al-Mutma'inna*) (spiritual and higher). Real peace in society is the product of the victory of the "Higher Self" over the "Commanding Self" within individuals.

A society whose individuals move toward perfection through self-purification and adherence to the guidance of intellect and revelation is, in Imam Khomeini's terms, a society where the "Other" in the sense of a non-Self and a threat will not exist, and the "Politics of Friendship" replaces the "Politics of Antagonism." In such a society, sovereignty belongs to God, and the human ruler (who must possess conditions such as knowledge, capability, and trustworthiness) is merely the implementer of justice and the trustee of the people (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 34). However, even within this discourse, the danger of the "hypocritical Other," whom Imam Ali (A.S.) described as more dangerous than a believer and an idolater, always exists and requires insight and vigilance (Nahj al-Balagha, Letter 27).

Therefore, the Islamic solution for peace is a comprehensive project that, by emphasizing justice, dialogue, and the promotion of ethical values, ultimately seeks the root of peace in the internal transformation of human beings and the return to divine spirituality and ethics.

Conclusion

This research, aiming to answer the question, "How can ethical readings of the Self and the Other contribute to achieving peace in contemporary societies?", conducted a comparative analysis of four principal approaches in political and ethical thought. The results showed that each of these paradigms offers a distinct response to this fundamental issue, which directly impacts the possibility and nature of peace.

The approach of Carl Schmitt, by defining politics based on the existential opposition of "Friend/Enemy," reduces the "Other" to a threat and regards peace merely as a strategic interruption in a permanent state of conflict. Conversely, Liberalism, relying on "rational consensus" and legal procedures, attempts to neutralize the "Other" within the framework of equal citizenship, but often fails to comprehend and manage the irrational and passionate dimensions of politics and power. Chantal Mouffe, by presenting the "Agonism" model, takes a step further and proposes a way for the peaceful management of unavoidable political conflicts by transforming the "Enemy" into a "Legitimate Adversary," though her model lacks a deep ethical foundation to guarantee this coexistence.

In contrast to these primarily political approaches, the radical ethics of Emmanuel Levinas, as a "First Philosophy," offers the most promising vision for "sustainable peace." By prioritizing the "Other" over the "Self" and grounding the human relationship in "asymmetrical responsibility," Levinas defines peace not as a political contract, but as an endless ethical duty. The main hypothesis of this article—that a profound understanding of the "Other" as an ethical being is the necessary condition for sustainable peace—is most fully manifested in Levinas's thought.

However, this research demonstrated that each of these viewpoints, on its own, faces limitations. Ultimately, by introducing the Islamic perspective as a comprehensive alternative, it was argued that sustainable peace requires an integrated approach that attends to both political dimensions and ethical and spiritual foundations. From this perspective, external peace in society is rooted in the internal peace of individuals and the victory of the "Higher Self" (*Man-e Alavi*) over the "Commanding Self" (*Man-e Ammara*).

In final summation, it can be stated that the transition from a

"Politics of Antagonism" to a "Politics of Friendship" and the achievement of peace requires, above all, an ethical revolution in how we confront the "Other." This transformation, in which empathy, responsibility, and the recognition of the inherent dignity of the Other replace fear and self-interest, can open a space for genuine dialogue and coexistence in today's pluralistic world and pave the way for the realization of a stable and just peace.



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