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Title: Laughing with Levinas: Humor Opens the Door for Ethical Relations

Abstract

Drawing on a personal experience, this paper examines how several of the key concepts from Emmanuel Levinas’s Totality and Infinity (1969) apply to the basic relations of human beings through laughter and humor, despite communication barriers. This paper explores applying Levinasian ethics — transcendence, apology, discourse, enjoyment, recognizing the Face of the Other — to the lives of every individual through ordinary interactions containing humor, with special attention paid to moments of humor that also bring harm to the other. By examining the good and the bad of everyday humor and laughter, this paper takes a deeper dive into the presence of Levinasian ethics in our daily lives.