

## **Beyond Totality: Bahá'í Ethics and the Prophetic Epistemology of the Other**

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### *Abstract*

This article offers a comparative philosophical analysis of Bahá'í ethics, presenting it as a distinct model that avoids both ontological totality and mere ethical rupture, instead proposing an integrative praxis shaped by the prophetic horizon. Unlike Levinas's ethics of asymmetrical responsibility and Foucault's self-technologies, the Bahá'í model proposes a third path: an ethical subjectivity grounded in clear and manifest action (*'amal al-wāḍiḥ al-mubīn*), where divine command and civilizational responsibility converge. Within this framework, the ethical self emerges not through judgment but through participation in a teleological process animated by love, justice, and transformative responsibility.

This self is understood not merely as a knower, but as a builder, moving beyond deficient modes of being toward active ethical responsibility and ontological presence. Faith here is measured not by assent or inherited identity but through continuous participation in the ethical, communal, and prophetic aims of Revelation.

Levinas's concept of infinite responsibility is affirmed but transfigured within the Bahá'í framework: the relation to the Other is grounded not in impossibility or guilt, but in ontological hospitality and service. Foucault's ethics of self-fashioning are reinterpreted through the lens of divine agency and obedience. This is articulated through virtues such as *riḍā* (contentment), *tawakkul* (trust), and *tafwīḍ* (submission), which reveal a freedom beyond resignation or aesthetic self-stylization.

The article also considers how conceptions of home and interiority, from Heidegger and Levinas, inform a Bahá'í view of active world-construction. The soul emerges not as a dweller within history, but as a builder of civilization. Prophetic time, cyclical history, and divine light shape the ontological grammar of this ethics, culminating in the sanctification of life and the practice of unity-in-diversity. Finally, the study contrasts Levinas's interruption of philosophy through prophecy with the Bahá'í affirmation of reason completed through Revelation, wherein philosophy and prophetic utterance converge without reduction.

In conclusion, Bahá'í ethics is presented not as a rejection but as a transformation of the philosophical tradition: it gathers rupture, responsibility, and reason into a unified paradigm of moral and civilizational action. While Levinas and Foucault illuminate the limits of ontology, Bahá'í Revelation offers its ethical transfiguration.

### *Introduction: Ethics Beyond Totality—From Ontology to Action*

In response to the perceived exhaustion of speculative metaphysics and the fragmentation of systematic theology, contemporary thought has increasingly turned toward ethics—not as a subsidiary discourse, but as the primary site for rearticulating questions of meaning, responsibility, and historical becoming. This shift signifies a departure from classical ontologies rooted in totality, closure, and comprehension, and turns toward modes of relationality, responsibility, and praxis. Yet this ethical turn has not escaped its own aporias. In the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, for example, ethics is conceived as infinite responsibility, a relation irreducible to reciprocity or knowledge. For Michel Foucault, ethics becomes an immanent technology of the self, historically contingent and devoid of transcendental grounding. Both expose the limits of ontology but leave unresolved the question of how ethical subjectivity might

participate in world-formation without succumbing to domination, resignation, or aesthetic forms of nihilism.

The Bahá'í Faith offers a distinct response to this impasse. Rather than perpetuating the metaphysical ambitions of classical theology, it reconfigures ontology through praxis, proposing that divine Revelation does not impose a totalizing conceptual order but summons humanity to moral and civilizational responsibility. In this vision, ethics is not a secondary application of belief but its ontological fulfillment. The deed (‘amal al-wāḍiḥ al-mubīn, the clear and manifest act) is not the result of prior dogma but the confirmation of spiritual reality within history. Revelation culminates not in speculative theology or mystical absorption but in the construction of a just and unified civilization.

This article extends the trajectory developed in three previous studies: first, the argument that classical metaphysical theology finds its terminus in the Bahá'í Writings, where speculative closure yields to ethical teleology and institutional action; second, the demonstration that true belonging in the Bahá'í Faith cannot be reduced to nominal affiliation or assent but exists on a spectrum whose lowest condition is **Deficiency**—a hollowed mode of existence devoid of existential care or service; and third, the analysis of theology fulfilled not as doctrine but as praxis—a lived embodiment of divine purpose through community-building, consultation, and the construction of spiritual civilization.

These theses converge here in a comparative philosophical inquiry into the relation between Bahá'í ethics, the prophetic epistemology of the Other, and the broader crisis of ontology in modern thought. While Levinas interrupts the totalizing ambitions of ontology through the irreducible demand of the Other, and Foucault historicizes ethical subjectivity through self-

practice, the Bahá'í paradigm offers an integrative alternative grounded in prophetic time and divine agency. This synthesis repositions ethics not merely as a response to the Other's face but as a world-forming praxis rooted in the teleology of Revelation.

At the center of this inquiry is the figure of the realized Bahá'í subject: not a Dasein oriented merely by Being, nor a subject immobilized by guilt or aestheticized through self-fashioning, but one defined by **taklif** (ethical responsibility) and animated by the will to serve. This subject transcends the deficient mode of passive belief and becomes a builder of worlds—one whose faith is measured not by proclamation or identity but by alignment with the divine intention for humanity. The relationship to the Other is not one of assimilation or self-erasure but of **radiant hospitality**, a metaphysical openness grounded in the recognition that all human beings share a common ontological horizon and are summoned to co-construct a unified civilization.

To unfold this argument, the article proceeds through seven interlinked movements: (1) the critique of rupture-only ethics; (2) the ontology of divine action and moral will; (3) the interiority of the soul as builder, not dweller; (4) the metaphysics of life and sanctity; (5) prophetic time and historical memory; (6) civilization as ethical obligation; and (7) the relation between prophecy and philosophy. Through each of these, it will be shown that the Bahá'í Writings do not reject the insights of Levinas, Foucault, or Heidegger but reposition them within a theological and civilizational teleology where ethics, ontology, and prophecy coalesce.

In doing so, this article affirms that the Bahá'í paradigm does not merely respond to the ethical crisis of modernity—it fulfills it. Where Levinas interrupts ontology, the Bahá'í paradigm reorients it. Where Foucault historicizes ethics, the Bahá'í vision sacralizes it. Where Heidegger mourns the loss of home, the Bahá'í teachings call for its reconstruction—not as a nostalgic

return but as a project of sacred futurity. This is the ethical architecture beyond totality: not an exit from theology, but its resurrection in the form of action.

### *Prophetic Epistemology: Ethics Without Ontology?*

#### 1.1 Levinas's Concept of Prophetic Knowledge as Rupture with Totality

At the heart of Emmanuel Levinas's philosophical project lies a decisive rupture with the ontological ambitions of Western metaphysics. From Parmenides and Plato to Hegel and Heidegger, philosophy has often been animated by the desire to assimilate alterity into the Same, to reduce the Other to a category of comprehension within the horizon of Being. In this tradition, knowledge becomes the domestication of difference, and ontology becomes the first violence—a system that refuses the irreducibility of the face, the singularity of the Other, in its ungraspable transcendence. As Levinas observes, “Being is understood as that which shows itself, as that which appears... to know is to comprehend, to grasp being out of its appearance, to maintain it within the same” (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 43).

Against this tradition, Levinas reorients philosophy toward ethics as the first philosophy—not temporally first, but structurally primary. The ethical event does not arise from cognition but from interruption, from the encounter with an Other who cannot be subsumed, reduced, or totalized. The face of the Other—**le visage**—does not merely signify difference; it commands. “The presence of the Other, the face, breaks with the world that can be grasped” (TI, p. 194). This encounter constitutes a rupture within totality, exposing the subject to a demand that cannot be neutralized: “Thou shalt not kill” (TI, p. 199).

Knowledge, in this schema, ceases to be theoretical comprehension and becomes ethical vulnerability. The self does not initiate the relation; it is summoned, addressed, destabilized. “It is the responsibility for the Other that structures subjectivity” (TI, p. 245). Prior to cognition, there is obligation; prior to presence, there is demand. This inversion marks the essence of prophetic ethics—a mode of knowing grounded not in mastery but in exposure, not in synthesis but in asymmetry. The self is always already for-the-Other, perpetually answerable, perpetually insufficient.

Levinas’s ethical inversion is not merely a repositioning of values within an existing ontology; it is a redefinition of philosophy itself. Ethics precedes ontology because it disrupts the naïve evidence of the Same and points toward a transcendence beyond being. As Levinas writes, “Metaphysics precedes ontology because it puts into question the naïve evidence of the Same... It is a desire beyond the known, a transcendence, a going beyond being” (TI, p. 41). Prophetic knowledge, in this sense, is not a theological category but a structural condition of meaning in a world where the Other remains irreducible.

## 1.2 Being-for-the-Other, the Ethical ‘No,’ and Subjectivity as Responsibility

Levinas’s reconfiguration of subjectivity centers on the principle of **being-for-the-Other**.

Contrary to philosophical traditions that conceive of the self as autonomous, self-identical, and sovereign, Levinas asserts that the self is constituted through its ethical vulnerability.

Subjectivity is not self-grounded; it is exposed. “Subjectivity is not for itself; it is initially for another” (TI, p. 117). The self emerges not through reflection but through responsibility—an obligation that precedes freedom, precedes choice, and precedes even awareness.

This obligation is disclosed through what Levinas terms the ethical “No”—a prohibition not imposed by law or grounded in contract, but arising from the very presence of the Other. The Other’s face is not reducible to visual phenomenon or conceptual category; it is “expression prior to any expression” (TI, p. 199), the exposure of both vulnerability and transcendence. The ethical demand—“You shall not kill”—is not a normative rule but a structure of encounter, a primordial imperative woven into the very fabric of relationality. This encounter is asymmetrical, non-reciprocal, and infinite. “I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it” (TI, p. 245).

Subjectivity, thus conceived, does not originate from autonomy but from substitution, from the self’s being hostage to the Other’s demand. Responsibility is not an elective moral choice; it is ontological in its weight but ethically prior to ontology’s claim. The face resists possession and mastery, resisting the philosophical tradition’s desire to convert difference into identity. In this structure, the subject becomes answerable without end. Identity is not secured through self-reflection but through the perpetual displacement of the self by the Other.

### 1.3 Language, Ethics, and the Primacy of Difference

Language, for Levinas, is not a neutral medium for mutual understanding nor a vehicle for representing a shared reality. It is the site of exposure, vulnerability, and responsibility. “Speech is not an exhibition of the interiority of the subject, but precisely his exposure to the Other” (TI, p. 194). Language does not emerge from solipsistic cognition but from the address of the Other. It is not an instrument of knowledge; it is the performance of ethical asymmetry.

Thus, language precedes knowledge. The self does not begin with comprehension and proceed to responsibility; the self is first addressed, summoned, even accused by the Other. “Language is not born in the solitude of the self but in the primordial discourse of the face” (TI, p. 206). The face initiates language not as strategy but as command, not as exchange but as exposure. This reverses the traditional philosophical confidence in dialogue as mutual comprehension; in Levinas’s view, dialogue originates in disproportion, in an irreducible difference that cannot be overcome through synthesis.

Levinas’s conception of difference resists Hegelian dialectics and the closure of *Aufhebung*. Difference is not a stage on the path to universality but the condition of ethical responsibility. “The difference between the Same and the Other is not reducible to a contradiction or to a complementarity; it is prior to all dialogue, and yet it is language” (TI, p. 213). Language, therefore, becomes a moral act: not the articulation of power, but the submission to vulnerability, the acknowledgment of exposure, the practice of responsibility.

For Levinas, the essence of discourse is prayer—an address that acknowledges the Other’s precedence and the self’s insufficiency. Language, in this sense, is not an assertion of identity but a recognition of ethical subjection. “The essence of discourse is prayer,” Levinas writes (TI, p. 66)—an invocation, a plea, a response to an unmasterable demand. Through this reversal, Levinas reveals language as the structure through which ethics becomes intelligible, where relation interrupts isolation, and difference is preserved against the violence of totality.

## 1.4 The Limits of Levinas: Rupture Without Fulfillment

Yet this ethics of infinite responsibility, radical as it is, remains suspended. Levinas deliberately avoids grounding his ethical vision in theology, history, or institution. The Other commands, but the command does not culminate in community or civilization. The prophetic dimension in Levinas's thought gestures toward religion but refuses revelation; it invokes responsibility but resists teleology. The divine is present as trace, not as voice; as disturbance, not as foundation.

Herein lies the limitation. The infinite demand builds nothing; it opens without constructing. Responsibility is infinite but unfulfilled. Guilt is ontological but unresolved. The ethical relation remains suspended, asymmetrical, without horizon. Levinas offers rupture without homecoming, ethics without eschatology, responsibility without historical fulfillment.

It is precisely at this limit that the Bahá'í paradigm offers an alternative. Without negating the centrality of the Other or the necessity of rupture, Bahá'í ethics transfigures infinite demand into a civilizational praxis grounded in Revelation. The Other is not a mute summons but a bearer of divine signs. Responsibility is not an abyss but a path. Guilt is not the substance of identity but a mark of misalignment. Most crucially, the call speaks—it commands, it invites, it constructs. Revelation does not merely trace the ethical; it constitutes it within history, offering not suspension but fulfillment.

Where Levinas's ethics remains content with the impossibility of closure, the Bahá'í vision integrates rupture and restoration, asymmetry and unity, into a praxis that builds. Ethical responsibility becomes the architecture of community, the grammar of unity-in-diversity, the labor of history. In this, Bahá'í thought affirms that the interruption of totality need not remain

suspended; it can become the foundation for world-forming action. In contrast to Levinas's ethics without ontology, the Bahá'í Writings offer an ethics that reconstitutes ontology through prophetic fulfillment.

## *2. Technologies of the Self: Foucault and the Ethics of Self-Cultivation*

Michel Foucault's later work shifts the focus of ethics inward—not toward transcendence or alterity, but toward the formation of the moral subject through practices of freedom, discipline, and historical self-reflection. In *The History of Sexuality* (volumes II and III) and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault reconceptualizes ethics not as a response to external law or divine command but as a historically contingent mode of subjectivation—a process wherein the individual actively constitutes themselves as a moral agent through relation to truth, power, and self-care. Central to this vision is the ancient Greco-Roman notion of *epimeleia heautou*—care of the self. For Stoic and other pre-Christian schools of thought, ethical transformation was not secured through submission to transcendence but through the cultivation of inward harmony, moderation, self-knowledge, and reflective practice. This labor upon the self was neither narcissistic nor solitary; it was understood as a rigorous discipline aimed at forming a soul capable of reasoned freedom and virtuous action. Foucault retrieves this genealogy of ethics as a counterpoint to modern regimes of confession, normalization, and bio-power. Subjectivity, in this model, is not given but constructed through what Foucault calls technologies of the self: practices such as reading, writing, dialogue, abstinence, memory work, and embodied repetition.

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These practices do not negate the operation of power in subject-formation; rather, they reveal power's dual function as both repressive and productive. While Foucault acknowledges the ways in which discourses and institutions shape subjects, he resists reducing ethics to mere compliance with external norms. Instead, he emphasizes the individual's capacity to problematize their own mode of being and to engage in deliberate exercises of autonomy. Ethics, therefore, becomes a critical relation to oneself, a reflective practice through which one negotiates the norms by which one is governed.

Foucault's ethics rejects metaphysical foundations, privileging historical specificity and the creative possibilities of self-fashioning. Ethics becomes a practice of freedom—not as absolute liberty but as the capacity to constitute oneself otherwise, to resist normalization, and to craft a relation to truth that is self-aware and deliberate.

Yet this immanent ethics reveals its own limitations. The care of the self is framed as a response to historically situated power relations, but it lacks a telos beyond the individual's own elaboration. There is no prophetic interruption, no eschatological horizon, no universal claim upon the subject beyond their immediate historical context. The Other appears not as a commanding presence but as a dialogical partner in the shared space of ethical practice. Normativity is produced, not revealed; ethics is situated, provisional, and endlessly contingent.

The Bahá'í paradigm reconfigures self-cultivation as a teleological orientation toward history, community, and the divine. The self is not merely a site of resistance but a trust to be fulfilled through alignment with Revelation. The perfection of the soul is not aesthetic but ethical, not immanent but eschatological: “Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures.”

Practices of prayer, fasting, and consultation serve not as ends but as preparations for ethical world-engagement. They align the will with divine purpose and reframe freedom as responsibility. The subject is summoned not merely to freedom but to **fruitfulness**, not merely to autonomy but to responsibility for the renewal of the world. Thus, the Bahá'í subject is not merely self-formed but summoned to history and service. Their care for the self is not an end but a preparation for service, not an aesthetic but an offering. The convergence of ethics and eschatology here marks a decisive divergence from Foucault's project. While Foucault retrieves self-care from the ruins of institutional religion, the Bahá'í Writings reintegrate it within a prophetic horizon that binds the individual to history, community, and the transformative work of Revelation.

### *3. The Bahá'í Paradigm: Divine Will, Ethical Action, and the Integration of Rupture and Cultivation*

The Bahá'í ethical framework transforms both rupture and cultivation through a prophetic ontology, generating ethical subjectivity through response to divine command and enacted deed. In this model, the human subject is neither a hostage of alterity nor an autonomous curator of selfhood, but a **trustee of divine purpose**—an agent whose reality is fulfilled only through active participation in the transformation of self, community, and world.

This transformation is not founded on guilt, absence, or aesthetic self-discipline. It is grounded in **recognition and action**, twin principles articulated in the opening verse of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*: “The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the second is to observe whatsoever He hath ordained... These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other.” This is not a theological formula—it is an ontological principle. To recognize is not merely to assent to truth but to undergo an existential reorientation; to obey is not to surrender autonomy but to **externalize alignment** with a divine architecture of reality.

Here, rupture and cultivation are not opposed. They are integrated into a higher structure of becoming. The **prophetic call** interrupts the self’s orientation toward the world, but not to destabilize it indefinitely. Rather, it repositions the self toward a new horizon—an eschatological project that requires not only inward transformation but outward action. The response is not simply *hineni* (“Here I am”), as in Levinas, but *qūm* (“Arise!”)—a command that occurs repeatedly in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh. It is an imperative to serve, to proclaim, to construct. Revelation does not merely disturb; it **summons**.

This active orientation distinguishes the Bahá’í ethic from both philosophical extremes. In Levinas, the subject is burdened by infinite responsibility, yet never reaches ethical completion. In Foucault, the self constructs itself, but never receives a transcendent call. In contrast, the Bahá’í subject is formed by divine address and confirmed by ethical action. Their existence is not defined by unresolved obligation or immanent self-making, but by **manifestation in action**: *‘amal al-wāḍiḥ al-mubīn*—the clear and manifest deed that renders faith visible, meaningful, and world-forming.

Contentment is not apathy; it is the affirmation that the self is oriented toward a transcendent reality and thus free from worldly determinism. Trust is not fatalism; it is the alignment of the will with divine wisdom. Submission is not subordination; it is the release of anxiety in the face of higher order.

These virtues constitute the interior structure of action. They allow the believer to act not from fear or guilt, but from **confidence in divine guidance**. Thus, ethical action in the Bahá'í paradigm is always both inward and outward, both disciplined and ecstatic. It is the fruit of revelation but also its confirmation. As Bahá'u'lláh states: “The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds.”

Moreover, this structure of action grounds a distinctive form of **metaphysical subjectivity**. The believer is not merely a moral agent but a participant in a cosmic drama—one in which the self is called to co-create, alongside others, a world of justice, unity, and light. This responsibility is not abstract. It is institutionalized in the Bahá'í system of consultation, collective worship, education, and administration. These are not bureaucratic instruments; they are ontological forms—technologies of spirit, designed to translate recognition into enduring structures of reality.

This is why the *Deficiency* described in earlier work is not merely a moral failure. It is an ontological descent—a withdrawal from participation into residue. The *just-still believer*, the *nur noch self*, is one who remains within the formal architecture of belief but no longer orients toward its teleology. Their identity is preserved in name, but suspended in force. The antidote to this condition is not judgment, but **reawakening**: the return to action as the vehicle of presence, the return to divine address as the ground of subjectivity.

In this context, the realized Bahá'í self—the believer who has passed from Deficiency into ontological fullness—is not one who possesses certainty, but one who acts with **clarity of direction**. They move not from fear, nor from aesthetic will, but from covenantal love. Their ethics are neither sacrificial nor self-enclosed. They are expansive, oriented toward the Other as bearer of divine signs, and toward society as the field of divine intention. This self does not dwell in a state of rupture or care—it **builds**. The soul becomes a **constructive presence**, a living response to the voice of the Manifestation, echoing not only “Here I am,” but “I arise.”

Thus, in the Bahá'í paradigm, theology becomes ethics, and ethics becomes **praxis**. Revelation is not an inert text but a **world-shaping force**. And the believer is not a confessor, nor a curator of selfhood, but a **builder of unity**. This is the ontological transformation Levinas prepares but cannot fulfill, and that Foucault gestures toward but cannot complete.

#### *4. Prophetic Speech and the Convergence of Love, Command, and Civilization*

Where Levinas leaves the divine call suspended in the trace of the face, and Foucault seeks ethical life in self-forming practice, the Bahá'í Writings return to the heart of religious consciousness: the speech of God as event. The Word is action; it reconfigures being.

The language of Revelation in the Bahá'í texts is not that of suggestion or metaphor. It is **imperative, luminous, and creative**. Bahá'u'lláh declares: “*The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable.*” This is not an abstract metaphysics of logos. It is a theology of speech as **world-formation**. The Manifestation of God speaks, and new epochs unfold. Prophetic utterance in this sense is not communication—it is **construction**. It inaugurates history, reorients time, and commands ethical responsibility not only for the soul, but for society.

Unlike Levinas's silent trace, the Bahá'í paradigm presents the divine as fully vocal, issuing imperatives anchored in love. The commandment is not given from power, but from nearness. As Bahá'u'lláh affirms: "*Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.*" Obedience here is not legal submission, nor moral calculus. It is the echo of divine intimacy. The soul responds because it has been addressed in love. The ethical subject is not crushed by obligation but awakened by beauty.

This convergence—of **love and law, command and care**—marks a decisive break with both the aporetic ethics of Levinas and the immanent self-fashioning of Foucault. It offers a **third space**, where subjectivity is formed through divine speech, but without coercion; where ethical action is commanded, but always in the register of beauty, mercy, and justice. Revelation becomes not the negation of selfhood, but its fulfillment in relation to a cosmic project: the unity of humankind.

This project is not symbolic. It unfolds through action, structure, and transformation.

Bahá'u'lláh's writings repeatedly emphasize that the purpose of religion is the **betterment of the world**, the **protection of the weak**, the **promotion of justice**, and the **advancement of civilization**. Ethics is not limited to interpersonal conduct. It extends to social systems, global institutions, and the organization of collective life. In this light, prophetic speech is not exhausted in doctrine or mystical insight—it **manifests as architecture**: educational systems, consultative processes, economic reforms, and international governance grounded in divine principles.

The subject summoned by this speech is not only obedient, but **generative**. They become co-creators of the divine will on earth. The Bahá'í subject is formed by the imperatives of unity, but lives them through structures of justice and love. Revelation does not merely console—it calls. It

does not merely interrupt—it **establishes**. It gives rise to a civilization where the ethical is not private, but public; not deferred, but enacted.

This prophetic mode thus integrates rupture and cultivation. It preserves the **asymmetry** of Levinas's ethics—because the Manifestation is not reducible to human categories—but it also restores **order, meaning, and form**, which Levinas suspends. It affirms the **discipline and reflexivity** of Foucault's subject, but without relativism or disconnection from historical direction. It gives the soul a task: not only to become, but to build.

The Bahá'í subject is therefore not merely ethical, but **eschatological**. Their deeds are not private virtues, but signs of a divine civilization being born. Their speech, like the speech of the Manifestation, becomes **world-forming**: consultative, constructive, and luminous. Their interiority is not sealed—it flows outward into institutions, relations, and laws. They do not retreat into guilt, nor collapse into autonomy. They arise.

Thus, where Levinas remains in interruption, and Foucault in cultivation, the Bahá'í Writings declare a new integration: a speech that summons love and command, ethics and civilization, rupture and fulfillment. This is not an ethics beyond ontology, nor a return to totality. It is a **transfiguration**—an architecture of action rooted in divine address.

This completes the critical arc of this section. The next section will turn to the Bahá'í Ontology of Action, grounding these principles in metaphysical terms such as *riḏā*, *tawakkul*, *tafwīḏ*, and truthfulness—not as moral virtues, but as structures of ontological freedom.

## *5. The Bahá'í Ethical Paradigm: From Self to Civilization*

### *5.1 The Ontology of Action: Faith as Metaphysical Participation*

In contrast to ethical paradigms centered on duty, character, or autonomous self-fashioning, the Bahá'í Writings articulate a distinctive ontology of action in which deeds constitute not merely moral performance but the ontological unfolding of spiritual identity. Faith, within this schema, is not an inward conviction isolated from praxis nor a private assent abstracted from history. Rather, faith is realized as being-in-response—a participation in the divine order through the medium of *‘amal al-wāḍiḥ al-mubīn*, the clear and manifest deed. Action, here, is not derivative of belief; it is the locus where belief becomes existentially visible.

Bahá'u'lláh's affirmation—"The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds"—is not a moralistic imperative but a metaphysical axiom. It grounds the reality of the self not in thought or proclamation but in embodied transformation. Within this framework, action is ontologically constitutive. To act rightly is to exist rightly. Revelation provides the grammar; action becomes the syntax through which the self articulates its presence within this structure.

This ontological weighting of deeds displaces modern tendencies to privatize faith within sentiment or to isolate it within epistemic affirmation. In Bahá'í metaphysics, faith divorced from action falls into Deficiency—a mode of suspended being wherein belief persists without projection, care, or world-building efficacy. Action is not the sign of faith's presence; it is faith's event, its emergence into the public and historical sphere.

The believer, in this light, is not merely a moral agent nor solely a worshipper but a constructor of reality—one who participates in the divine act of shaping history through deeds aligned with Revelation. Ethical conduct becomes the site where the soul's alignment with divine purpose is

disclosed, where the distinction between nominal belief and existential nearness is made manifest.

### 3.2 *Riḍā*, *Tawakkul*, and *Tafwīḍ*: Virtue as Metaphysical Freedom

Within this ontology of action, the virtues of **riḍā** (contentment), **tawakkul** (trust), and **tafwīḍ** (entrustment) emerge not as psychological states or passive resignations but as modalities of metaphysical freedom. They represent orientations of the soul that transcend reactive existence and align the subject with the teleological structure of reality.

**Riḍā** signifies not stoic indifference but an ontological stabilization—a posture of the self unshaken by contingency because attuned to the wisdom inherent in divine decree. As Bahá'u'lláh states: “Be thou content with the Will of God, for His Will is that which hath encompassed all things.” Contentment here anchors the self in a horizon beyond circumstance, liberating it from the oscillations of fortune and enabling courageous, sacrificial action without fixation on outcomes.

**Tawakkul**, or trust in God, functions as the refusal to make sovereignty over consequences the basis of agency. It reconfigures freedom not as autonomy but as **confidence within covenant**. The self remains active, purposeful, and responsible but relinquishes the demand for control. This trust liberates the believer to persist in action amid uncertainty, failure, or adversity—acting not from self-interest but from alignment with divine purpose.

**Tafwīḍ**, the act of entrusting affairs to God, constitutes the culmination of this orientation. It does not negate volition; it sanctifies it. The believer acts, but without the anxious attachment to results. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá affirms, this is the posture through which the self is purified of egoic

striving and reoriented toward sacred striving. These virtues form a spiritual architecture that enables the **clear and manifest deed**—a life of motion without anxiety, purpose without coercion, and service without self-assertion.

Together, **riḍā, tawakkul, and tafwīd** redefine freedom not as mastery but as release into the divine order. They liberate the subject from the economy of fear and self-preservation, grounding ethical agency in confidence, receptivity, and eschatological clarity. They constitute not attitudes of withdrawal but thresholds of participation in the teleological unfolding of history.

### 5.3 Truthfulness as Ontological Alignment

Among the virtues emphasized in the Bahá'í Writings, **truthfulness (ṣidq)** occupies a foundational role—not merely as moral injunction but as a condition of being. Truthfulness is framed not as propositional accuracy alone but as **ontological integrity**—the alignment of word, deed, and interior reality. As Bahá'u'lláh writes: “Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues.” This statement is not rhetorical but metaphysical: without truthfulness, no virtue attains reality; action becomes performance, faith becomes pretense, and presence becomes residue.

In this light, truthfulness marks the refusal to dwell in fragmentation. The believer who professes belief yet fails in action exists in ontological contradiction, suspended in **Deficiency**. By contrast, the truthful soul integrates recognition and action, embodying coherence between inward assent and outward manifestation. Their life becomes a site of alignment, a resonance with the divine structure of reality. This alignment is the necessary condition for participation in Revelation—it is through such coherence that the self becomes luminous, trustworthy, and capable of sustaining community.

Truthfulness, therefore, transcends the moral imperative to speak accurately; it manifests as the existential integrity through which the self participates in the divine grammar of being. It resists the hollowing effects of performative modernity, reasserting presence as radiant, action as transparent, and will as synchronized with the divine horizon. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá affirms, the truthful soul is drawn inexorably toward coherence, incapable of dwelling in duplicity, oriented always toward integration with reality.

#### 5.4 From Self to Civilization: Ethics as World-Building Praxis

This ontology of action culminates in a vision of Bahá’í ethics as intrinsically **civilizational**. The self’s ethical transformation is not an isolated project but a contribution to the construction of a just and unified world. The clear and manifest deed is not private virtue; it is public fidelity to the revealed order. Through the alignment of speech, action, and will, the believer participates in the historical unfolding of divine purpose.

Where Levinas suspends ethics within infinite obligation and Foucault situates it within immanent self-cultivation, the Bahá’í paradigm integrates these insights within a **teleological horizon**—one in which ethics, ontology, and history converge in the construction of civilization. The virtues of contentment, trust, submission, and truthfulness are not private asceticisms but foundations for collective resilience, consultation, and justice. They enable communities to transcend the fractures of modernity and embody unity-in-diversity as sacred practice.

Thus, Bahá’í ethics offers not merely a catalogue of virtues but a **cosmology of presence**. Faith becomes rhythm, action becomes world-formation, and the self becomes a locus where Revelation takes form. The ethical subject, in this light, is neither autonomous nor passive but

summoned—called to arise, to serve, to build. Freedom is redefined not as detachment but as alignment with the telos of history: the construction of a world reflective of divine attributes.

## *6. Interiority and the Moral Self: Economy, Autonomy, and Spiritual Surrender*

### 6.1 Heidegger, Home, and the Displacement of the Self

In In Martin Heidegger's thought, the question of home (**Heimat**) is fundamentally ontological, not merely spatial, cultural, or psychological. To dwell (**wohnen**) is not simply to reside within a place but to inhabit a world meaningfully, to be attuned to the structures of Being. In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger describes dwelling as the essential comportment of human existence: "Dwelling is the basic character of being, in keeping with which mortals exist." To dwell is to live in accordance with what is, to inhabit a world as a site of unconcealment, to let beings be in their essence. The etymology of **bauen** (to build), linked to **bin** (I am), reveals this existential grammar: to be is to dwell.

Yet for Heidegger, this dwelling is not given but imperiled. Modernity introduces a profound displacement, a homelessness (**Unheimlichkeit**) that marks the spiritual crisis of the age.

Through the enframing logic of technology (**Gestell**), the world is no longer encountered as home but reduced to **Bestand**—standing-reserve, resources to be calculated, optimized, and exploited. The forest becomes timber, the river hydroelectric potential, the human being labor data. The world is transformed from a dwelling-place into an inventory. This reduction discloses not merely ecological or cultural damage but metaphysical homelessness—the alienation of the self from its ground, horizon, and belonging.

Heidegger connects this condition to the absence of **Grund** (foundation), unveiling the deeper **Abgrund** (groundlessness) at the heart of Being. In *Contributions to Philosophy*, he insists that human beings are thrown from foundation into abyss, from certainty into questioning. This is not despair but ontological disclosure: thought begins not in possession but in abyssal wonder. The crisis of home reveals not a loss to be rectified through nostalgia, but a task to be undertaken—the task of dwelling poetically, of building anew within the openness of Being.

The Heideggerian self, shaped by **Geworfenheit** (thrownness), is called not to regress into mythic pasts but to engage in a **Kehre** (turn), to rethink building as thinking, dwelling as care, and technology not as destiny but as something itself to be questioned. This is not a metaphysical doctrine but an existential practice: the safeguarding of the fourfold—earth, sky, mortals, and divinities. It is within this fragile attunement that Heidegger locates the possibility of renewed dwelling, not as permanence but as custodianship.

Yet this project remains suspended. Heidegger does not offer ethical restoration nor theological grounding. His notion of home remains lyrical but indeterminate, evocative but unanchored. He diagnoses the condition of displacement without articulating a concrete teleology of return. In this lacuna, the Bahá'í Writings offer a critical intervention.

## 6.2 Interiority, Relationality, and Ethical Becoming

This Bahá'í recasting of home as construction rather than dwelling reconfigures the purpose of interiority. The inner life is not a refuge from history but the crucible where responsibility is forged. It is within this interior sanctuary that virtues mature, not as static traits but as ontological

conditions that enable ethical action. The self's inward refinement is inseparable from its outward mission; the heart prepares the hands for work.

The Bahá'í paradigm does not negate Heidegger's insight into the homelessness of modernity nor Levinas's emphasis on the relational constitution of the self. Rather, it integrates these critiques within a prophetic teleology. The home is not given; it must be built. This construction requires not only external deeds but internal transformation. The virtues cultivated in solitude become the architectures of community. The sanctuary of the heart expands into the sanctuary of civilization.

Thus, interiority is reimagined as dynamic, teleological, and outward-facing. It is not a static ground of being but a site of preparation for ethical world-engagement. The self turns inward not to escape but to align, not to withdraw but to ready itself for history's demand. In this alignment, interiority becomes the birthplace of resilience, patience, and radiance—the foundations upon which the home of humanity may be raised.

In this way, the Bahá'í ethical paradigm synthesizes the Heideggerian concern with ground and dwelling and the Levinasian focus on responsibility and alterity, while surpassing both through a covenantal horizon. The self is neither fixed in nostalgia nor dissolved in relation but summoned to construct a future in which unity, justice, and truthfulness become the dwelling-place of all humanity.

### 6.3 Levinas on Ethical Economy and the Feminine “Tu”

Within Emmanuel Levinas's ethical philosophy, the figure of the Other functions not merely as the bearer of obligation but as the origin of subjectivity itself. The self does not precede the

ethical call; it is constituted through it. This relational grammar is fundamentally asymmetrical: the ethical relationship is not founded on reciprocity, mutual recognition, or synthesis but on an irreducible rupture wherein the Other commands, disturbs, and exceeds. The self arises not as sovereign or autonomous but as hostage—one who is summoned into responsibility without having first chosen it.

Levinas locates this structure within what he terms ethical economy, a term that gestures toward the interior architecture of subjectivity as formed through the quiet, elemental acts of dwelling, enjoyment, and possession. In *Totality and Infinity*, he describes the home (**la demeure**) as the primordial horizon of the self—not as a metaphysical abstraction but as the concrete orientation through which the self appropriates the world via nourishment, warmth, rest, and stability.

Through these acts, the self establishes itself as a center of interiority, possessing and organizing its world into a totality. “The dwelling is not an object in the world, but the world itself constituted in its economic possession. To possess is to be the same” (TI, p. 153). Subjectivity thus arises through an initial relation of mastery, of making the world available for its needs.

Yet this economic interiority—the stabilization of the self through possession—is precisely what must be interrupted for ethics to emerge. The self’s sufficiency must be broken by the appearance of the Other, whose face cannot be possessed, reduced, or totalized. This interruption is not merely epistemological; it is ontological. The Other’s face speaks the primordial ethical imperative: “Thou shalt not kill.” The face resists incorporation into the economy of the Same. It commands without content, ordains without coercion: “The face resists possession, resists my powers... It is that which orders and ordains me” (TI, p. 197). Responsibility arises not as choice

but as response—unreciprocated, infinite, non-symmetrical. The self is constituted not through autonomy but through exposure.

Within this structure, Levinas introduces the figure of the feminine Tu—not as the radical Other but as a proximate difference that enables the self to encounter alterity within the space of the home. The feminine is the condition of intimacy without appropriation, presence without subsumption. “The dwelling... is accomplished as intimacy, and the feminine is the condition for this intimacy” (TI, p. 155). This feminine topology does not signify gender but articulates a moral architecture of receptivity: a nearness that does not collapse into possession, an openness that does not culminate in assimilation.

The feminine Tu becomes, in this schema, the silent condition of ethical awakening—not as the full rupture of the face but as the preparation for it. She is not a speaking subject; she is the trace of difference within familiarity, the site where the self first encounters the limits of its sovereignty. This proto-ethical space does not yet inaugurate responsibility, but it weakens the closure of the Same, preparing the home to become porous, to admit the infinite.

However, this ethical economy, while luminous, remains incomplete. The feminine Tu shelters without commanding; the face commands without instructing. Levinas’s ethics suspends the self within permanent exposure, without offering a horizon beyond rupture. There is no revealed path, no eschatological telos, no civilizational fulfillment. The ethical subject remains luminous but historically suspended, called but without direction, responsive but unable to construct.

## 6.4 Bahá'í Ontology of Interiority: From Reception to Construction

It is precisely here that the Bahá'í paradigm extends and transfigures Levinas's ethical economy. While preserving the sanctity of the Other and the necessity of asymmetry, the Bahá'í Writings relocate ethical responsibility within a prophetic teleology. The Other does not merely interrupt; the Manifestation of God speaks. The asymmetry of ethics remains, but it no longer suspends the subject in rupture. It flows into structure—into law, community, consultation, and historical transformation. The believer is not merely responsible; they are enabled. The call does not leave the self without home or horizon; it reorients the self toward a cosmic vocation.

In this reconfiguration, the feminine topology is not erased but fulfilled. The Bahá'í soul remains receptive, hospitable, and tender—but it is also active, radiant, and constructive. The self does not dissolve in asymmetry; it rises through covenantal nearness. Revelation dignifies both silence and speech, receptivity and response. The believer is not immobilized by the face of the Other; they are summoned to build a world where that face may be honored through justice, unity, and transformation.

Interiority, in this light, becomes a sanctuary of preparation, not retreat. It is within this space that *riḍā*, *tawakkul*, and *tafwīd* are cultivated—not as resignation but as the interior architecture that sustains action. The heart becomes the home for divine descent, but this descent does not end in stillness. It leads outward—into community, into history, into the labor of world-building. The home is not merely preserved; it is constructed anew through ethical presence and prophetic purpose.

Thus, the Bahá'í ethical subject embodies a dual movement: receptivity and responsibility, interiority and action, silence and proclamation. This synthesis completes the ethical economy Levinas initiates. It affirms that Revelation does not merely disturb; it constructs. The self does not dissolve in the asymmetry of obligation but is shaped through it into a being of presence, trust, and transformative action.

In this horizon, the home is not behind the self as a lost origin, nor above as an unattainable ideal. It lies ahead, as the outcome of fidelity, service, and participation in the unfolding divine order. The ethical economy thus moves from economy to eschatology, from reception to world-construction, from Levinas's infinite responsibility to Bahá'u'lláh's clear and manifest deed. The moral self is no longer hostage alone; it becomes builder—called not only to preserve the Other's sanctity but to construct the world where that sanctity may be manifest.

### 6.5 The Soul as Builder: Ethical Exile, Post-Mortem Responsibility, and the Eschatology of Becoming

In contrast to Heidegger's rooted dwelling and Levinas's ethical rupture of enjoyment, the Bahá'í Writings articulate a vision of the self as simultaneously exiled from its true home and entrusted with a divine mission within this world. The world is neither a site of primordial belonging nor merely an economy of enjoyment to be disrupted. Rather, it is the theater of spiritual refinement—the arena where the soul labors not to dwell but to build; not merely to inhabit but to serve. Home is not a given but a task, constructed not through appropriation or possession but through orientation toward divine purpose.

Bahá'u'lláh makes clear that the reality of the soul is not reducible to this earthly plane. In the *Lawh-i-Yūsuf*, He describes the post-mortem development of the human spirit not as cessation but as the continuation of a moral trajectory: “Those souls who have attained unto the good-pleasure of God and His Cause—after the separation of their spirits from their bodies—shall verily attain that which hath been destined for them in the world to come... These heavens are the fruits of actions performed in this world.” In this cosmology, action is not confined to the limits of time or mortality. It generates not only social transformation but cosmological consequence. The self is defined not by its capacity to dwell or enjoy but by its responsibility to construct a moral civilization in anticipation of continued existence.

This eschatological horizon distinguishes Bahá'í ontology from the structures proposed by Heidegger and Levinas. Heidegger situates the self within a horizon of Being bracketed by death, while Levinas suspends the self within the infinite demand of the Other, without teleology or fulfillment. In contrast, Bahá'í metaphysics affirms that the self's exile is neither accident nor failure but vocation. The soul is dispatched into history not to preserve an origin but to participate in the unfolding of divine purpose.

This mission is explicitly cosmopolitan. Bahá'u'lláh rejects nationalist and possessive notions of home: “O ye wise among nations! Turn your gaze away from estrangement and direct it toward unity. Take hold of that which leads to the comfort and tranquility of all peoples. This mere span of earth is but one homeland and one habitation.” Home is not soil but cause; not inheritance but action. The human being is not called to dwell as possessor but to act as trustee. The soul's true orientation is not defined by place but by purpose.

Moreover, Bahá'í ontology expands the frame of existence beyond the visible world. As Bahá'u'lláh writes in *The Seven Valleys*: “Although the worlds of God be numberless, some have named four: the world of time (zamān), of perpetual duration (dahr), of sempiternity (sarmad), and of pre-eternity (‘azal).” This multiplicity situates the soul within a multi-world cosmos, where the present world serves as the nursery of eternal consequences. Action here becomes architecture there. The deeds of this life are not discarded at death; they are transfigured into the soul’s capacities in the worlds beyond.

In this light, the Bahá'í subject is not defined by anxiety before death nor by suspension in asymmetrical responsibility alone. The self is commissioned—sent into exile with purpose, with the tools of patience, consultation, and sacrificial love. The home lies ahead, not behind. The world is not a site of primordial meaning to be rediscovered but a field of labor where unity must be constructed. The rupture is not terminal; it becomes responsibility, and responsibility becomes radiance.

This ethical exile reframes the entire question of interiority and civilization. The Bahá'í self is not merely responsive but constructive. Ethical responsibility is not exhausted in hospitality or reception; it extends into the fabrication of community, the establishment of justice, and the building of institutions that reflect divine attributes. The believer becomes an artisan of the future, shaping both self and society in alignment with Revelation’s horizon.

Death, in this schema, is not cessation but transition. The moral arc does not conclude; it extends into eternity. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá affirms: “The soul after death progresses ever nearer to God, provided it follows the path of progress...” Post-mortem responsibility transforms action into being; deeds become light, truthfulness becomes radiance, service becomes wings. The self’s

eschatology is not external reward but internal transfiguration. The home it builds in this world becomes the mansion of its becoming in the next.

Thus, Bahá'í ethics resolves the tension left by Heidegger and Levinas. The Bahá'í subject is neither immobilized by nostalgia nor suspended in asymmetry. They are summoned, shaped by divine speech, empowered to construct. Interiority and civilization are restored to unity. The home is neither past nor lost; it is the consequence of faithfulness, the fruit of deeds, the architecture of eternity.

The moral self, in this horizon, is not a closed system nor a passive host. It is a builder of worlds, entrusted with the sacred task of translating divine attributes into historical form. Through action, the soul becomes luminous; through service, civilization becomes sanctuary. The exile becomes pilgrimage; the dwelling becomes mission. In this convergence, ethics transcends survival and becomes eschatological creativity—a sacred labor whose horizon stretches beyond time, beyond place, into the infinite worlds of God.

## *7. Ethical Resistance, the Sanctity of Life, and the Ontological Prohibition of Violence*

### *7.1 Levinas on Ethical Resistance and “Thou Shalt Not Kill”*

At the heart of Emmanuel Levinas's ethical philosophy lies a radical re-reading of the commandment “Thou shalt not kill”—not as a juridical prohibition, but as the primordial event of ethics itself. This imperative arises not from divine legislation, utilitarian calculation, or social contract, but from the phenomenological encounter with the face of the Other (*le visage*). The face is not merely a physical visage; it manifests vulnerability, exposure, and transcendence. It addresses me not through language, but through presence: “Do not kill me.”

For Levinas, this ethical “no” precedes ontology. It interrupts the totalizing structures of knowledge, power, and being. It is unilateral, asymmetrical, and unreciprocated. “The face,” he writes, “is the only thing that one cannot kill”—not because it is invulnerable, but because its destruction would annihilate the very condition for ethics and justice (Levinas, 1969, p. 197). Responsibility, in this schema, is not chosen but undergone. It is infinite, binding, and without a horizon of fulfillment. “I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, even if I die for it.” In this way, Levinas reorients subjectivity away from sovereignty and toward radical dispossession.

This reconfiguration overturns traditional accounts of freedom. For Levinas, true freedom arises not from the assertion of will but from its interruption. Freedom is discovered not in autonomy but in obligation—the obligation to respond to the unbidden demand of the Other. In this encounter, I realize I inhabit not a neutral world of objects but a moral universe structured by claims I did not choose and cannot evade. Freedom becomes responsibility; subjectivity emerges not through mastery but through exposure.

Thus, Levinas reverses Heidegger’s priority of Being-toward-death. Where Heidegger grounds authenticity in anxiety before finitude, Levinas locates moral seriousness in attentiveness to the life of the Other. Ethics begins not in my death but in the Other’s life. “Thou shalt not kill” becomes not merely legal restraint but the foundational grammar of humanity.

Yet Levinas’s ethical architecture remains suspended. He preserves the sanctity of life as a limit upon violence but offers no path toward its positive construction. His ethics arrests the hand but does not build the world. The prohibition remains potent but unfulfilled—it interrupts violence without instituting peace, suspends sovereignty without offering a horizon of unity.

## 7.2 Bahá'í Law and the Ontology of Life: From Prohibition to Affirmation

The Bahá'í Writings affirm Levinas's ethical imperative yet extend it beyond mere prohibition into the register of ontological affirmation and cosmic purpose. In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh reiterates the sanctity of life not merely as ethical restraint but as a principle inscribed within the fabric of creation: “Let none contend with another, and let no soul slay another; this, verily, is that which was forbidden you in a Book that hath lain concealed within the Tabernacle of glory. What! Would ye kill him whom God hath quickened, whom He hath endowed with spirit through a breath from Him?” Life is sacred not simply because of vulnerability but because it is an act of divine creativity. To kill is not merely to transgress law; it is to desecrate being itself, to violate the divine order wherein each soul is quickened by the breath of God.

This ontological grounding transforms ethics from a negative prohibition into a positive theology of life. As Bahá'u'lláh affirms: “Whoso giveth life to a soul, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind.” Life is microcosmic; each human being mirrors divine attributes and serves as a site of unfolding purpose. The prohibition against violence marks the threshold of sanctity, but the command of Revelation extends further: to preserve, elevate, and unify life. Ethical action is not exhausted in refusal; it is fulfilled in construction—in cultivating conditions where souls may flourish.

The Bahá'í ontology thus reconfigures the human being not merely as a locus of vulnerability but as a trust of God, a being whose dignity demands not only protection but empowerment. Violence is prohibited not sentimentally but metaphysically; it fractures the mirror of God and desecrates the sanctuary of creation. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states: “If religion becomes the cause of enmity and bloodshed, it is better to have no religion.” This is not relativism but metaphysical

clarity: violence is ontologically incoherent with the purpose of religion and the sanctity of the soul.

Yet Bahá'í nonviolence is not passive withdrawal. It demands the active construction of justice, unity, and social forms that reflect divine attributes. The sanctity of life calls for institutions that protect the vulnerable, systems that eliminate prejudice, and cultures that foster education and equality. These are not political strategies; they are ontological imperatives grounded in the sacredness of life.

Even speech becomes ethically charged. To slander or deceive is not merely immoral—it constitutes ontological violation, an assault on the dignity of the Other's soul. Words become acts of preservation or destruction. In this vision, ethics permeates the entire structure of existence, from law to language, from governance to community.

The Bahá'í ethical paradigm thus extends Levinas's ethical "no" into a world-forming command. Where Levinas suspends action within infinite responsibility, and Foucault confines ethics to historical techniques of selfhood, Bahá'u'lláh affirms ethics as participation in divine creativity. The believer becomes not merely the host of responsibility but the architect of peace. Justice is not the neutral administration of prohibition but the active construction of harmony.

In this light, the prohibition against killing is inseparable from the duty to construct unity. The sanctity of life demands not abstention but engagement, not withdrawal but architecture. The ethical subject becomes the guardian of life, the mirror of divine attributes, and the builder of peace—not through passivity but through creative responsibility.

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## **Conclusion: Ethics as the Architecture of Sacred Futurity**

This study has sought to reposition the discourse of ethics within a teleological, prophetic, and civilizational horizon, offering the Bahá'í paradigm as a response to the aporias left unresolved by Levinas, Foucault, and Heidegger. Through a sustained engagement with these thinkers, it has been demonstrated that Bahá'í ethics neither suspends the subject in infinite obligation, as in Levinas, nor confines ethical formation to the aesthetic or historical immanence of the self, as in Foucault, nor mourns the lost dwelling of metaphysical foundations, as in Heidegger. Instead, it offers an integrative model in which the rupture of alterity, the cultivation of interiority, and the construction of home are fulfilled within a prophetic ontology that unites ethics with world-building responsibility.

At the heart of this paradigm is the principle of **'amal al-wāḍiḥ al-mubīn**—the clear and manifest deed—as the ontological site where faith, responsibility, and the self's participation in the divine order converge. This model transforms ethics from a discourse of prohibition or self-fashioning into a practice of radiance, through which the self becomes an agent of unity, justice, and eschatological construction. Virtues such as **riḍā**, **tawakkul**, **tafwīd**, and **truthfulness** are thus repositioned not merely as moral ideals but as modalities of metaphysical freedom and participation, enabling the subject to transcend the oscillations of contingency and to align with a cosmic teleology that extends beyond mortality.

The Bahá'í ethical subject, as elaborated here, is constituted not by possession, mastery, or sovereign agency, but by receptivity to divine address and a responsiveness that manifests

through service, consultation, and the establishment of structures reflective of divine attributes. Ethical action becomes not an isolated moral choice but the ontological confirmation of faith's reality within history. The home that Levinas suspends and Heidegger laments is here transfigured into a task—the labor of constructing civilization as a dwelling-place for the virtues of unity-in-diversity, justice, and peace.

In this way, Bahá'í ethics fulfills the potential intimated yet left incomplete within continental thought. Where Levinas offers rupture without fulfillment, and Foucault offers practices without eschatology, the Bahá'í Writings integrate rupture and cultivation within a prophetic framework that binds the individual to history, community, and the divine telos of civilization-building. Revelation here is neither an abstraction nor a mere interruption but a world-forming address that summons the believer to action, to responsibility, and to the construction of a sacred futurity.

Such a model invites further reflection on the intersections of prophetic discourse, ethical subjectivity, and civilizational praxis, extending beyond the confines of Bahá'í Studies into broader philosophical and theological debates concerning the nature of agency, responsibility, and the eschatological horizon of ethical life. In positioning the Bahá'í paradigm as a resolution to the crises of modern ethical thought, this study affirms that theology and philosophy need not remain in opposition, nor ethics remain disjoined from ontology. In the architecture of sacred futurity proposed here, ethics, ontology, and Revelation converge in the clear and manifest deed—a luminous praxis through which the self, the community, and history are drawn toward their ultimate fulfillment.

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