

Chen, Chiu San, Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

Three Faces related to Humanitarianism

This article, based on my personal experience as a humanitarian worker with the refugees along the Thai-Burmese Border in Thailand in 2001, indirectly affected by the foreseen humanitarian crisis caused by the American planned anti-terror's war in Iraq in the aftermath of 911, aims to explore the contradiction of Humanitarianism and the gap between its ideal and practice. With the concept of face as a metaphor with a sense of calling for responsibility, inspired by and borrowed from the theory of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, I reveal three faces related to humanitarianism: the Empire's hypocritical face whose essence and humanitarian call are both violent; the humanitarian worker's caring face which is forced to the frontline of ethical dilemma by the Empire's face; and, the refugees' suffering face which calls for a response always late. As a humanitarian, we should be alert to the face calling for responsibility, to whether it is the Empire's hypocritical face, or the third face: a suffering face, flickering between the visible and the invisible.