

The construction of the subjectivity in Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Lacan's ethics

Alina Ciric

Trying to clarify the formation of subjectivity in both Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Lacan thinking encounters some obstacles on the way to be fully understood. Establishing between the two thinkers the possible ground of a common subject of ethics takes us on the way to clarify first what was the necessity for Levinas to propose a theory of the subject. Our first obstacle will be passed by appealing to the history of philosophy in order to see the movement of thought that generated the Levinasian theory. It is the Husserlian phenomenology that we first have to examine in order to fully understand the necessity of the new subject in the history of philosophy that was proposed by Levinas. We will undergo first the conception of inter-subjectivity especially in the fifth Cartesian Meditation of Edmund Husserl and the problem of solipsism that it raises. After seeing how an alter ego is created by requiring a special type of reduction and clarifying all of the meanings that inter-subjectivity has, we will establish the status that the Other subject has in the ethics of Levinas by using some key psychoanalytical concepts to challenge and clarify his ethics. With this we will open up the possibility of the ethical dimension of psychoanalysis. Even though it will be hard to speak of a Lacanian subject due to the wide variety of things that Lacan spoke about the subject, we will concentrate on summarizing the place of the subject in Lacan psychoanalytical treatment. We will focus on two ways of dealing with subject in Lacan's theory. The position adopted with respect to the Other as language will establish the fact that the subject has a relationship to the symbolic order. Because speaking about the ego occurs in terms of the imaginary register, it will be a challenge to clarify the nature of the subject that positions itself in relation to the Other. We also have to clarify the possible senses that alterity has in Lacan's thinking. Discussing the Other as the locus of language we will arrive to his relation with the ego seen as an imaginary other, ideal ego, and the Other as desire, ego ideal, and we will end up discussing the Freudian superego (the Other as *jouissance*). We will bring in discussion the subject-object relation (object a as cause of desire-the desire of the Other awakens the subject's desire) and we will try to clarify the distinction between *l'objet petite a* and the concept of *das Ding*. We will try to understand here the nature of the desire for the Other in Levinas. By appealing to a shared "pathology of the moral" and trying to discuss the resemblances and differences between the two, we are challenging the limits of an ethical theory today, and also by appealing to clinical cases that psychoanalysis offers us, we are opening new dimensions on the way in which theoretical thinking can receive a practical dimension.

NALS 2015 Conference: ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Dr. AB (Benda) Hofmeyr
Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Pretoria, South Africa
Benda.hofmeyr@up.ac.za

Levinas and the Postcolonial: An Encounter Across Continents Par Excellence

To what extent can Levinas's thought be useful to, engage with, and perhaps learn from, non-Western and postcolonial ethical frameworks and conceptions of identity and difference? Such an encounter seems critical in light of the fact that all of Levinas's philosophical labours have relentlessly been dedicated to uncovering the violence at the very heart of Western philosophy – the reductive tendency of the Self to reduce, subject or 'colonize' any and every form of otherness it comes into contact with. As such, the proposed encounter between Levinas and the postcolonial might be conceived as an African-European encounter par excellence. Within the canon of contemporary Western philosophy, Levinas has been one of the most prominent (if not the first) voice(s) to initiate the ethical turn towards the Other, insisting upon the inherent responsibility we bear towards others. When considering the possibility of such a critical encounter, however, one runs up against a number of challenges.

Thinking Levinas in an African (or postcolonial) context is problematic to say the very least. He has been guilty of a number of explicitly racist remarks, his work is undeniably Eurocentric even as it proposes to critique the totality characteristic of the history of Western philosophy with the infinity of the ethical encounter. Moreover, his Eurocentrism is premised on a very narrow conception of Europe: for him, "Europe is the Bible and the Greeks" (ITN, 119-121), which excludes the constitutive violence of Europe the 'empire'.

Moreover, Levinas's conceptualization of alterity allows no distinction from, comparison to or derivation from identity. Radical difference is unphenomenolizable; it does not appear, cannot be compared to or distinguished from other others. For Levinas, alterity does not follow from differences; differences issue from alterity. What scope, then, is there for a productive interchange between ethical metaphysics and postcolonial celebrations of differences (e.g. Negritude, Black consciousness; the fact of blackness, etc.)?

This question is further complicated by the fact that these discourses and the entire postcolonial 'oeuvre' as such are *political* discourses expressly concerned with the *politics* of difference and oppression. Levinas's philosophy, on the other hand, is largely a-political. He showed very little interest in world affairs apart from his preoccupation with the Holocaust, and the fate of the Jewish people. There remains a recalcitrant gap between ethics and politics in his thought even though he insists that ethics necessarily entails politics: the ethical encounter between the self and the Other always also implicates other others. Yet the singularizing asymmetric responsibility that cannot be evaded or delegated that issues from the face (i.e. ethics, in Levinas's sense) reintroduces thought, knowledge, and judgment (i.e. ontology) – having to compare the incomparable appeals of countless others competing for the limited resources of the self.

In this paper, I shall critically consider the possibility of such a critical encounter between Levinas and non-Western and postcolonial discourses on the self, the other and their relation by addressing the challenges outlined above. In short, can Levinas's ethical metaphysics contribute to decolonizing the mind or does his racism, the eurocentric and a-political nature of his thought, in conjunction with his insistence upon an abstract Alterity render it an instance of the structural violence responsible for the marginalization of difference(s) and/or otherness?

Blake W. Remington
31 December 2014
NALS Proposal

Movement, Attentiveness, and the Poetic Encounter

In the work of the poet Paul Celan, Emmanuel Levinas finds what in *Difficult Freedom* he called “the refusal of art’s bewitching rhythms.” Yet, in his only essay that properly addresses Celan, Levinas chooses to emphasize (and quote from) the poet’s speeches rather than his poems. Levinas begins his interpretation of Celan’s *The Meridian* speech by stating outright “The poem goes toward the other.” In this paper, I follow Levinas to the text of *The Meridian*, where the poet lays out his complex treatment of poetry not as representation, but as—I argue—Levinasian encounter. Levinas’s initial hermeneutical movement thematizes movement itself, establishing the transition from the I to the other as not only the pathway implied by Celan’s trope (the meridian itself) but also as poetry’s purpose. At the heart of such a purpose is what Celan will call (echoing Walter Benjamin on Franz Kafka) “attentiveness.” Celan’s insistence on attentiveness thus pushes the reader out of the rhythmical trance of poetry—for, like Levinas, Celan views art as always posing this bewitching risk. Put simply, Celan seeks an attentive reader. The wrong reader, for Celan, is one who listens *merely to the form* of the poem, that is, to its linguistic artifice, replete with beautiful turns of phrase and mesmerizing devices (“Schawrze Milch der Fruhe wir trinken sie abends...”), or one who listens *only to the content*, thereby missing the encounter with the other in an effort to recognize metaphor and rhyme. But how does Celan’s poetry refuse the bewitching that Levinas so deeply rejects? And how do we, as readers, properly respond to such an encounter? In considering these questions, my paper seeks to address what is at stake in an encounter with poetry—and a poetics—that posits *reading* as an ethical activity.

Blake W. Remington is a Ph.D. candidate at the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas. His research addresses questions of representation and ethics that arise in confronting the memory of the Holocaust in a variety of media—poetry, memoir, film, as well as architectural spaces. He has presented portions of his dissertation at previous NALS meetings (Seattle and Anchorage).

Deconstructing the Divide

Chandra Kethi-Reddy

University of Central Florida

In this paper, I will begin with anecdotes about my first year in university as a 17-year old who began his foray into academic philosophy with Derrida, a direct philosophical descendent of Levinas. These anecdotes will be followed with a discussion of the tension between Analytic and Continental philosophy in our department, the frequent difficulties and problems of the Continental paradigm in America, as well as thoughts on the resistance of students to Analytic philosophy. As a triple major in Industrial Engineering (IE), Mathematics, and Philosophy, I will speak to my experiences of how Continental thought has shaped my opinions and skills in certain topics of IE and Math and contrast that with how Analytic thought has affected my studies in these fields. I will argue that one way to approach bridging the divide is to resist the temptation to construct another school or tradition of thought and rather to focus on particular problems and issues in a way that allow us to reconcile warring voices into dialogue with each other. I will then conclude by discussing how the divide has contributed to almost entirely demoralizing my attempts as a philosopher, and some thoughts on the fatigue that upends thinking. [Word Count: 200]

The Otherwise Than Being in the Critique of Suffering in Levinas and Early Buddhism

Christopher Ketcham

The premise of this paper is: *That while the otherwise than being is important to both Levinas and the Buddha, there are important differences which can provide guidance in the critique of suffering.*

There are differences in the two philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas and the Buddha related to the otherwise than being. Buddhism's goal is the otherwise than being, the cessation of the desire to and the need to be reborn (*samsāra*). The Buddha also denied that there could be a separate self because the five aggregates (*khandhas*) that constitute the 'I' are in constant flux. Levinas' goal was not to eliminate being or push the ontological out of the way. Instead he reoriented ethics before the ontological, putting metaphysics first. Levinas never did deny the I or 'I'ness' (ipseity—the *khandhas*) which means he provided no cure for suffering (*dukkha*) caused by attachment (*upādāna*). Levinas saw suffering (*dukkha*) in a different way: the I (*khandhas*) is always suffering because of its burden of responsibility to others, any others; but this, while it is a form of suffering, is goodness: "The other involves us in a situation which we are obligated without guilt, but our obligation is not less for that. At the same time it is a burden. It is heavy, and if you like, that is what goodness is. (Levinas, E. (1999). *Alterity & Transcendence*. NY, Columbia University Press. P. 106)"

Said Levinas: "In this perspective a radical difference develops between suffering in the Other, which for me is unpardonable and solicits me and calls me, and suffering in me, my own adventure of suffering, whose constitutional or congenital uselessness can take on a meaning, the only meaning to which suffering is susceptible, in becoming a suffering for the suffering - be it inexorable - of someone else. (Emmanuel Levinas, "Useless Suffering," in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, & Wood, David (NY: Routledge 1988), p. 159)"

It is the suffering of the other which is useless, not my suffering which is the suffering for being responsible to the other. Levinas' mitigation of the suffering (*dukkha*) of the other is through the 'I's' responsibility to the other (both of us as *khandhas*), though it is doubtful that all suffering (*dukkha*) of the other can be cured even with the best efforts of the most responsible I. And from Buddhism there are questions about curing suffering (*dukkha*) during anyone's lifetime even when one reaches the point where the enlightened one (*Tathāgata*) renounces desire (*tanhā*, craving rebirth) forever. Unless death should occur simultaneously with this enlightenment moment (*nibbana*) there is still life to live and life for all living things involves desire (*ādāna*) even it is to desire a next meal. The Buddha did not advocate suicide just the end to suffering (*dukkha*) through the end of the penultimate cycle of birth and death (*samsāra*). Neither Levinas nor the Buddha embraced nihilism.

The Temporal Transcendence of the Teacher as Other

Clarence W. Joldersma

Calvin College

Levinas's idea of teacher as transcendent is the idea of learning that comes through an external disturbance, indicating something about the ego's inability to learn by itself from itself. This insight is important in today's climate as formal education increasingly reduces professional educators to a resource and increasingly construes learning as constructivism, namely, a function of the ego's internal mechanisms of knowledge production. In response, this paper conceptualizes a radical asymmetric intersubjectivity between teacher and student, namely, Levinas's idea of the teacher as transcendent. Levinas states, 'It [teaching] is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I' (TI 51). However, the paper draws on Levinas's idea of time to go beyond his spatial metaphors in articulating that transcendence.

Many of Levinas's references to the teacher as Other occur in *Totality and Infinity*. These typically use spatial metaphors to describe the teacher's transcendence, for example, 'the teacher is *outside of* the consciousness he teaches' (TI 100). In TI the idea of the infinite is meant to call into question that ontology is fundamental; infinity as exteriority signals its conditioning for ontology. Drawing on Eric Severson's recent book (2013), the paper argues that Levinas's use of spatial metaphors for transcendence remains entangled with the very ontological language he seeks to overcome, compromising the radicality of the teacher as Other. The paper points out that this echoes Derrida's famous critique, where he argues that although Levinas is aware that the idea of exteriority is associated with totality and the ego, he nevertheless still develops the idea

of the other 'by means of the Inside-Outside structure and by spatial metaphor' (Derrida, 1978, p. 112).

The paper then develops Levinas's temporal metaphors in rethinking the teacher as transcendent Other. In EE and TO Levinas appropriates Bergson's idea of the instant (*duree*), arguing that one instant does not give birth to the next through the action of the ego. Rather, it is a temporal relation to the other that does so. Levinas says, 'The other is the future. The very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future' (TO 77). In OBBE Levinas calls this temporal relation *diachrony*, which names the ego's radical passivity. The paper shows that these temporal metaphors are strong ways to depict the idea of 'learning beyond the capacity of the I.' In temporal metaphors, the ego feels the teacher-as-transcendent as something radically foreign coming in as a disrupting future, unsettling the ego by coming into the present instant from a different time. The ego's primordial experience of the time-of-being-taught is as a radical intersubjectivity, namely, as an incoming futurity that surprises. The diachrony of being taught is a temporal disturbance that releases the ego from the bonds of the present duration.

The paper concludes that a strong way to resist the marginalization of the professional educator in formal education is to draw on Levinas's temporal metaphors to conceptualize the radical transcendence of the teacher as Other.

ABSTRACT

Words and Worlds **Putnam and Levinas on the Meaning of Meaning**

David Banach
Saint Anselm College

“ ‘Meanings’ just ain’t in the head”

(Hilary Putnam 1985, 227)

Never could “psychological” signification draw the infinite spaces out of their silence”

(Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 81)

Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology have each, by their own devices, been led to investigate the transcendental conditions of meaning and meaningful experience. Both traditions have started with attempts to isolate the conditions of meaning in ways that can found objective discourse and both converged upon a view of meaning as situated inextricably in the world and in human activity. Hilary Putnam and Levinas are as good an illustration as any of the extraordinary convergence of these two different traditions.

Putnam’s 1975 paper , “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’ ,” is famous for introducing a causal theory of reference that tied meaning to the nature of a natural kind in ways that did not depend on the content of a language user’s mental representations. A less well known part of the paper introduced a second doctrine that was lost in the furor over naming and natural kinds: the Division of Linguistic Labor. Meaning requires situation in a social context where a cooperative investigation of the world, including the technical work of experts, serves as the background for the use of language. There were two ways in which Putnam suggested that meaning was not in the head, and which bear comparison to similar insights of Levinas’s: (1).(Causal theory of Reference) Meaning is not exhausted by the thematic content of consciousness; it requires relation with and situation within an Other, which cannot be related to the Same. (2) (Division of Linguistic Labor) Meaning presupposes a community and social relations in which significance is fixed.

Levinas, of course, is much more sensitive to the ways in which meaning transcendently requires both of these conditions and how both are tied to the Ethical: “Meaning is in the face of the Other, and all recourse to words takes place already within primordial face to face of language.” (*Totality and Infinity*, 206) A side by side comparison of Levinas and Putnam on meaning will not only reveal what phenomenology has to add to analysis of language, but it will also show the common origins and destinations of the two traditions. Both emerged from the attempt to isolate an objective standpoint within the structure of language or experience from which to ground discourse and knowledge. Both were led by a detailed examination of the necessary conditions of meaningfulness to views that saw the impossibility of

such a standpoint and of grounding discourse in purely epistemic conditions. Putnam was led, through an awareness of the ways in which meaning required interaction with a world in which we were already situated and participation in a linguistic community, towards a more pragmatic view of meaning that abandoned its foundational role. Levinas's more full phenomenological account of the conditions of meaning, also points the way for a modern analytical methodology that takes these insights into account. As Levinas says, "If the face to face founds language, if the face brings first signification, establishes signification itself in being, then language does not only serve reason, but is reason." (Totality and Infinity, 207) Linguistic analysis, in this light, becomes a type of phenomenology of a limited type of linguistic experience that always opens up onto, and is conditioned by, a wider world or experience.

References:

Levinas, E. (1969), *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press).

Levinas, E. (1978) *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. (Trans. Alphonso Lingis, (Dordrecht and Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1978).

Putnam, H. (1985) "The meaning of 'meaning'". In *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2: Mind, Language and Reality*. Cambridge University Press.

Principles of Justice in Rawls and Levinas

David Seltzer

In Levinas's thought, I encounter multiple others, each of whom imposes an infinite obligation upon me, and I must adjudicate between their competing claims. But Levinas never actually spells out how to make these kinds of political decisions. In this essay I argue that Levinas would support Rawls's two principles of justice. Everyone would be guaranteed certain basic rights, and economic and social goods would be distributed equally unless inequalities were to the advantage of all. The advantage of Rawls's system, from Levinas's standpoint, is that it takes the distinction between persons seriously. For Levinas every other is absolute and irreducible. When translated from ethical into political terms, the absolute character of the other is expressed by the system of basic rights, and the irreducibility of the other is expressed by Rawls's difference principle. In contrast, a Utilitarian system not only fails to acknowledge our absolute character (desire satisfaction can always be quantified) but also conflates all individuals together into a single whole.

There are two major differences between Rawls and Levinas. First, Rawls and Levinas arrive at the same principles of justice from opposite directions. For Rawls, the principles of justice are the most that a rational agent choosing behind a veil of ignorance can reasonably expect to get. They grant me rights and function as minimum requirements: I could, if I chose, do more. For Levinas, in contrast, the principles of justice function as limits on my obligations. They define how much I can possibly do for each person without being unjust to every other person. I am therefore bound to fulfill all the obligations from which the principles do not release me. From Levinas's standpoint, Rawlsian agents in the initial position, concerned to maximize their share of goods, have not yet entered into the realm of ethics, and therefore cannot enter into the realm of politics either.

The second major difference is in the direction of the argument. Rawls argues forwards. He starts with the intuition that a system of cooperation should be set up to elicit the willing participation of everyone involved, and then attempts to develop a set of rules and institutions that put this intuition into practice. Levinas, in contrast, generally reasons backwards. He begins with a set of rules, and then tries to follow them back to the ethical position which underlies them. From a Levinasian standpoint, Rawls's principles of justice do have a place, but only if they are not looked at in abstraction from the ethical dilemmas which make them necessary.

The linguistic problem of ethics without ontology

Diogo Villas Bôas Aguiar

Doctoral candidate at Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM/Brazil)

The way that the relationship between ethics and ontology is articulated within contemporary philosophy has something peculiar that interests us. A project of an ethics without ontology obviously implies an ethical independence from ontology. More, perhaps, a primacy of ethics. Thus intended the levinasian project of ethics as first philosophy, intuition to which he adhered until the end - even after criticism in 1964 directed by Derrida in its response to *Totality and Infinity*, the famous article *Violence and Metaphysics*. On that occasion, as well as more specific criticism of the interpretations of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology, Levinas' thought was accused of fatally culminate in a linguistic impossibility.

The requirement of radical transcendence of otherness could not be admitted by language. But if the language, as contemporaneously has been understood, is the very determination of any horizon of meaning, how can we articulate a discourse on something out of a semantic structure? The levinasian use of the term "exteriority", for something outside of totality, including linguistic totality, seems to become problematic. After all, in line with the derridean observations, why stick to this concept to describe something that is not even given spatially?

Therefore, we would like to argue that there is a tendency in the philosophical thought of the last decades of looking at ethics as a problem of language limits. Recently, this debate took a new breath from Hilary Putnam's book, *Ethics without ontology*. Although the title would be taken for a levinasian text - after all what else could mean an ethics as first philosophy but an ethics without ontological determinations? - Putnam proposes, unlike Levinas, an ethical reflection from what he claims to be a pragmatic pluralism. His attempt is to move away from both inflationary and deflationary metaphysics. This pragmatic pluralism implies the recognition that the most different types of discourses used in day-to-day contribute to the description of reality. He is not interested neither in finding a single speech sufficiently able to describe the world nor something supersensible that justifies it.

For this reason, we would like to return at this paper to the problem of the relationship between ethics and ontology from the perspective of language. We try to critically analyze the contemporary development of a theme that had Emmanuel Levinas as one of the leading exponents, and also has the recent contributions of Hilary Putnam. We programmatically set a debate between the phenomenological tradition and the pragmatic one in the figures of these two thinkers around the linguistic possibility of ethics without ontology. This confrontation intended to some extent, determine the validity and limitations of each approach and then make some appointments to a possible configuration for addressing this issue.

Keywords: ethics; language; ontology

Donald L. Wallenfang, O.C.D.S., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Theology
Walsh University
North Canton, Ohio, U.S.A.
dwallenfang@walsh.edu

Title: “*Et tu, Brute?*: Levinas’ Rejection of Marion’s ‘Analytic’ Phenomenology of Givenness”

Abstract:

In the wake of the Western Enlightenment, the yawning chasm between analytic philosophy and continental philosophy is symptomatic of our times. While present-day phenomenology and analytic philosophy share the common rejection of metaphysics and the pursuit of empirical precision, they differ significantly in how they understand this precision in the midst of a post-metaphysical world. Analytic philosophy inevitably dominates phenomena according to the predetermined dictates and limits of subjectivity, while phenomenology attends to the possibilities of phenomena, namely, what is not identical to the self. For analytic philosophy, the door opening to transcendence is closed prematurely. For phenomenology, on the other hand, transcendence is interpreted as a *sine qua non* for possibility itself. Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) and Jean-Luc Marion (1946-) insist on the priority of alterity in relation to the self, whether in terms of the other (*l'autrui*) as in Levinas, or in terms of givenness (*donation*) as in Marion. However, their respective notions of alterity are not in agreement. Whereas Levinas maintains the indissolubility of the other in relation to the self, Marion argues that the other is simply one of many modalities of givenness. For Levinasian phenomenology, Marion, in effect, reduces the other to a category of the same: givenness, appearance, manifestation. Levinas certainly would object to this reduction and may even compare it to the way in which analytic philosophy reduces the other to a formulaic component among additional pragmatic concerns, as in the school of utilitarianism. Does Marion ultimately compromise the integrity of the ethical intersubjective relationship in the name of phenomenological precision? Does he betray the phenomenological priority of the ethical in favor of an egocentric outlook? Just as analytic philosophy reduces the otherness of the other, does Marion capitulate before the originary strictures of phenomenology and ironically develop a new brand of analytic philosophy, or at least its spirit, under the guise of givenness? This paper will answer these questions in the affirmative via Levinasian critique in comparison to the main tenets of analytic philosophy, especially as endorsed by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), G. E. Moore (1873-1958), and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970).

AUTHOR:

Drew M. Dalton, Dominican University (drew.dalton@hotmail.com)

TITLE:

Ethical Materialism: Levinas for the New Materialists

ABSTRACT:

One of the richest points of potential dialogue between contemporary “continental” thinkers and their “analytic” counterparts is through the recent resurgence of materialism in both camps. From the “analytic” side there is the increasingly popular rhetoric of “eliminative materialism” from the likes of Daniel Dennett and Paul and Patricia Churchland. At the same time, from the “continental” side, there are the newly emergent voices of “speculative realism,” from thinkers like Quentin Meillassoux, Ray Brassier, Ian Hamilton Grant, and others. Despite the obvious differences in vocabulary and methodology between these two “camps”, a single goal is shared by both, namely: the attempt to liberate materiality from the limitations of Kant’s subjectivism.

For Grant and his colleagues, “the price to be paid,” by Kant’s critique of dogmatic metaphysics “is the renunciation of any knowledge beyond how things appear to us. Reality-in-itself is cordoned off at least in its cognitive aspects.”¹ This price is, in other words, the ability to speak meaningfully about a world which precedes human experience, and thereby ultimately, for them, any authoritative discourse, scientific or other, on the absolute nature of materiality. According to Meillassoux, by grounding reality in the a-priori structures of a knowing subject, Kant’s work functionally eliminates the possibility of making sense of any “scientific statements bearing explicitly upon a manifestation of the world that is posited as anterior to the emergence of thought and even of life – *posited, that is, as anterior to every form of human relation to the world.*”² What Meillassoux, Grant, Dennett, and the Churchlands all hope to accomplish is to reground the possibility of a pre-subjective realism – an absolute materialism.

Unfortunately, as many have recognized, Badiou and Zizek most famously, this attempt is not without its own “price to be paid,” namely: the loss of any ability to assert a transcendent ethical value. The logic is simple, if there is no transcendent metaphysical position from which to survey reality, how can an absolute evaluative judgment of reality ground itself. The result of such materialisms thus seems to be radical ethical relativism at best, and ethical nihilism at worst.³ The question for Zizek and Badiou, thus becomes: 1) is it possible to assert a radical materialism while maintaining the place for transcendent ethical judgment without reasserting a subjectivist metaphysics; and, 2) if so, how?

This paper will argue that these questions can only be answered through a critical reappraisal of Levinas’ phenomenology of the face as a kind of ethical proto-materialism. In Levinas’ account of the ethical power of the face we discover a purely material ground for transcendent ethical judgment, one which rejects the “alibi” of metaphysical logic, as Levinas calls it in *Totality and Infinity*, and which exists simultaneously “ancestrally” anterior, as Meillassoux requires, to any subjectivistic reasoning. As I will show, it is only through Levinas’ phenomenology that a truly functional ethical materialism could be asserted, thereby satisfying the concerns of analytic and continental thinkers alike.

¹ Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman, “Towards a Speculative Philosophy,” in *The Speculative Turn*, p. 4

² Meillassoux, p. 9-10

³ Cf. Badiou, Alain. *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, pp. 30.

Paper Proposal
‘Emmanuel Levinas across the Generations and Continents’
Purdue University, 27-30th June, 2015.

Dr. Gavin Rae
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
American University in Cairo
AUC Avenue, PO Box 74,
Cairo, Egypt.
Email: gavinrae@aucegypt.edu

‘Politics and Redemption: The Political Theology of Emmanuel Levinas’

Political theology has recently come to the fore in debates in continental and analytical political theory. This paper argues that the Levinasian concept of the political needs to be read as a theological project to not only reveal aspects of it often ignored, but, in so doing, also strengthen it against the charge that it is the weakest aspect of his thinking. This gives rise to the question: what is the nature of Levinas’ political theology? While Levinas, initially, turns away from the political towards the ethical, this turn necessitated a return to the political. This return was not, however, to the ‘same’ political as that turned away from. With this turning away from/returning to movement, Levinas distinguishes between two types of the political, termed here ‘ontological politics’ and ‘prophetic politics.’ The former is outlined in Levinas’ early essay ‘Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism’ (1934), which sees the political horrors of Nazism as being the most explicit manifestation of the West’s historical privileging of abstract universals. This starts with Christianity’s soul/body division before finding expression in a historical privileging of ontology and egoism, all of which reduce the other to the same and so perpetuate the valorization of abstract universals. Levinas famously claims that this historical understanding must be overcome by privileging the face-to-face ethical relation. This does, however, lead to the problem of the third, a problem that cannot be resolved within the boundaries of the ethical face-to-face relation, but requires the organization of the political to order the responses to each face encountered and so ensure justice is secured. For Levinas, a just political order can only emanate from a privileging of the other, meaning that the just state combines the organization of Greek rationality with the guidance provided by the ethical *pathos* of the Bible. Only this ensures that the responsibility to all demanded by the multiple ethical relations encountered can be provided. This is not a synchronic movement, but a diachronic relation that is always to-come (*à venir*). While this means that the political is always linked to failure in that it cannot meet the ethical demand, the notion of ‘justice-to-come’ means that the possibility of political redemption is always present. Redemption is important because it is linked to Levinas’ problematic notion of prophetic politics. This paper explores this by examining the relationship between Levinas’ political and religious writings, manifested most explicitly in ‘The State of Israel and the Religion of Israel’ (1951), specifically showing what Levinas means by ‘prophesy’ and identifying that Levinas distinguishes prophetic politics from ontological politics based on the theology underpinning each; that is, the Christian foundations of ontological politics is unfavourably compared with the Judaic foundations of prophetic politics to suggest that only a political theology rooted in Judaic principles can secure the just state. However, by pointing to a number of later critical remarks that Levinas makes about the just-ness of the State of Israel, this paper argues that the important aspect of Levinas’ political theology is not its valorization of the State of Israel nor its theology, but its recognition that, while the political always fails to meet the ethical demand, redemption is always possible.

Abstract

NALS 2015

“Emmanuel Levinas across the Generations and Continents”

July 27 -30, 2015

Purdue University, Indiana, USA

“Ethics of Alterity and the Non-human Other: A Levinasian Approach”

This paper argues that making use of some valuable insights from the 20th century continental philosophy might be of great help to reconsider our relation with nature and reshape our understanding of it not as mere material, but as that which is distinct, different – which will eventually lead to develop a sense of respect for its ‘alterity’s sake. In order to achieve this, I will draw upon the ideas of the Jewish-French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas whose work on the alterity and ethics of the (human) Other has had a decisive impact on the philosophies of the latter part of the 20th century. Therefore, I will argue for a recasting of our relations with nature informed by a Levinasian ethics and for dispensing with the traditional frames of nature that have got us eased into exploiting, abusing and destroying nature. In addition, I will contend that we need to develop a sense of ethics embedded in an ethics of alterity and otherness as postulated by Levinas if we are to avoid the destruction of all nature – our only living support base. Although Levinas’s theory of *le visage de l’Autrui* has been long argued to belong exclusively to human beings, there has been a newly emerging tendency, starting with the late 1990s and/or early 2000s, to incorporate Levinas’s thought into the fields of ecocriticism or ecocritical theories which have been largely dominated by the Anglophone analytic circles until recently. Levinas’s conception of ethics (of the Other) as first philosophy, I contend, might as well be extended to the non-human Other within the framework of which our relations with the non-human world, or in David Abram’s words, “more-than-human world” can be substantially reformed. If the Levinasian responsibility and accountability towards the alterity of the Other can be achieved across human and non-human dimensions, our rendition of the non-human as essentially “for humans’ sake” can be transformed into an understanding of the non-human Other as “for its own sake” or “for its alterity’s sake.” In this respect, Levinas’s thought, I believe, has much to offer for re-evaluating our traditional understanding of ethics and for developing an all-inclusive ethics of both human and non-human Other.

Res. Asst. Hakan YILMAZ

Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters,
Department of English Language and Literature,
06800 Beytepe, Ankara, TURKEY.
e-mail: hknylmzz@gmail.com

Currently I am a visiting scholar at the Philosophy Department at West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV.

The Responsibility of Witnesses According to Emmanuel Levinas

Hanoch Ben-Pazi

Is it possible to call the second part of the twentieth century “the Age of Testimony?” In light of historical and political circumstances, we may say that the idea of Testimony, or bearing witness, became then an essential part of our cultural discourse. The validity of testimony and the importance of witnesses are crucial to the memory of the Holocaust. Testimonies were an essential practice in South Africa's politics after the age of apartheid, as we can see in the “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.”

Does a witness have any moral responsibility? Levinas' response is sharp: one who hears a voice is, by that very fact, responsible to that voice. To be a witness means to know another, and to know the otherness of the other, meaning to bear responsibility toward that otherness. Albert Camus' answer moves within a range between responsibility and guilt. The witness's first responsibility is to bear witness. His second responsibility lies at the border of guilt, with his being a witness and not an involved subject. Susan Sontag comes down even harder on us when she points out the influence of the existence of witnesses to acts of atrocity committed for those very witnesses, such as the atrocities shown to us on the television screen.

To what extent does the witness bear responsibility for what his eyes have seen? How much responsibility does he have for what his ears have heard? This question becomes a moral question in interpersonal relations and carries a political and ethical charge, toward society near to or far from the subject, whether he sees himself as belonging to it or whether he sees that society as foreign to him.

The research I propose offers a Levinasian look at the question of witnessing and the absolute responsibility placed on witnesses, and on witnesses to their testimony. And concomitantly, we dare to ask about the involvement and responsibility of the witness regarding events that he himself did not bring out.

Jacob Archambault

Fordham University

The Monadothergy

This paper conducts an inquiry into the thought of Levinas and Leibniz, guided by the question of the relation of Levinas' thinking to philosophy itself. That is, is his thinking on the path of philosophy, or does it open up another way of thinking? The answer to this question shall be pursued by way of an analysis of the notion of transcendence in the thought of both these thinkers. In clarifying this matter, we shall clarify the place of Levinas' thinking with respect to the end of philosophy, and thereby shed some light on the ultimate question of our *own* place with respect to that end.

From its opening sentence, the primary concern of Levinas' *Otherwise than Being* – and indeed, of much of his philosophy – is the possibility and significance of transcendence. This theme governs and guides his investigations into other topics such as language, time, and subjectivity. It is clear from as early as “Is Ontology Fundamental?” that Levinas thinks transcendence in dialogue with and in opposition to Heidegger and, to a lesser extent, Hegel. But in attempting to find the root of what is problematic in both Hegel and Heidegger's thinking, he must go *beyond* the specifics of their thought to contest the ground which nourishes both of them. What Levinas identifies as this ground, I will argue, looks remarkably like Leibniz's ontology.

Interestingly, Heidegger also begins his own succinct analysis of transcendence – his 1929 “On the essence of Ground” – in dialogue with Leibniz, arguing that Leibniz's notion of truth as *connexio* is derivative¹. If Heidegger's analysis achieves an essential distance from the matter as Leibniz thinks it, Levinas' engagement with Heidegger may be, in an important respect,

¹See Heidegger 1998, pp. 100-107.

specious; Levinas' thought then, would be *better* understood by being dialectically situated next to that of Leibniz than its more usual antipodes.

We shall answer our question primarily (but not exclusively), in connection with two texts: Leibniz's *Principles of Nature and Grace* and Levinas' *Essence and Disinterestedness*. What we find, in brief, is that Levinas' understanding of transcendence is engaged with the central themes of a Leibnizian account of the same topic, and accords with that of Leibniz on the following points: the analysis of transcendence as a triadic structure pertaining to self, world, God; the analysis of the selfhood of the self as its relation to the transcendent; the analysis of essence as *conatus*; the identification of conatus with *interesse*, and the corresponding analysis of world as this connection of beings. Levinas' claims about the limited nature of Heidegger and Hegel's analyses, and his corresponding attempt to get to the root of the problem, ensure that he will not attack Hegel or Heidegger directly: instead, he will attempt to overcome a more fully encompassing philosophy, one that looks strikingly like that found in Leibniz.

Jacob Pruett
Purdue University
pruettj@purdue.edu
(858)-472-1872

Rhetoric and the Saying of the Said

Plato understood rhetoric as form of *psychagogia*, a leading of the soul. By granting rhetoric and speech the power to directly influence one's soul, Plato opened up the spiritual and unsaid character that underlies all discourse. This presentation explores the relationship between the *saying* and the *said* in Levinas' philosophy as both temporal and rhetorical structures. In temporal terms, the *saying* and the *said* represent the diachronic and synchronic axes respectively. In terms of rhetoric, the *saying* is that which bears the rhetorical energy essential and inceptive in all *said*s. I examine the ways in which a more traditional Platonic and Aristotelian understanding of rhetoric can be mapped onto this pre-ontological ethical and rhetorical energy of the Levinasian *saying*. Recognizing the ethical call to responsibility in the face of the Other, implies the capacity to be moved, to be mutable, and is constitutive of the very relationship between self and Other. Rhetoric, as the movement of the *saying*, is both the passivity one has in proximity to the Other and the activity of response. When rhetoric is situated as endemic to the *saying* of subjectivity, a picture of rhetoric emerges in which it is not simply a static and asymmetric endeavor of same towards Other, but rather is the responsiveness and mutability implied in one's ethical subjection to the Other, prior to any *said*. Just as Levinas conceived of ethics as an optics, rhetoric too has been primarily characterized in Aristotelian terms as a means of seeing the available means of persuasion. I contend that this traditional model of rhetoric can be resituated in Levinasian terms, as a way of seeing the *saying* that underlies all *said*s.

Jake Adair
Master's Student at *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*

At the Margins of Philosophy: Abjection, Academia, and the Continental-other

Through a reading of Levinas' abject other and Derrida's figure of the other as constitutively excluded, my paper will reject the idea of the continental/analytic "divide" as a mediating gap between two equivalent measures. Instead, I will argue, the 'gap' or 'divide' names Continental Philosophy itself as the indivisible remainder of ideological positivism in the University. Analytic philosophy names a privileging of those values acceptable to the university: normativity, certainty, exclusion of the non-knowable or already unknown, and a rejection of truth as undecidability. These values and methodology are wed to the university as a productive source of human capital and the commercialization of knowledge--indeed, analytic departments are often bedfellows to private donors, lobbyists, and various state apparatus. Appealing to a need for common ground, or seeking acceptance from the dominant faculty of the 'divide,' merely strengthens analytic normativity and further attenuates those values constitutive of continental philosophy: exclusion, the non-normative, pluralism, the abject, and the marginal.

The "divide" between analytic and continental philosophy is not a tepid torrent anticipating its own crossing in the wake of a third copernicanism. The divide names not only stylistic or methodological differences, but an inflexible alterity rigidified by economic and ideological abjection. Thoroughly abjected and othered by analytic normativity, Continental philosophy subsists only by a thread, as the indivisible remainder or constitutive exclusion of academia. The gap then can not be un-divided or reconciled, because it is only in the "gap's" indivisibility, or in the margins of that gap, that the continental-left can subsist. Operating within the normative university discourse, the dissolution of the 'divide' would entail the dissolution of continental philosophy as such. Insofar as the 'bridging of the gap' requires the exculpation of the non-hegemonic values constitutive of Continental Philosophy.

Even as academics acutely aware of the subtle machinations of hegemony and capital, "we are, us knowers, unknown to ourselves." When looking through the jagged, cracked microscope of self-examination, the seductive glare of "post-ideological" academia-politics covers over the violence inherent to an assimilationist appeal to compromise. As an ideological supplement to those that wish to bridge the divide, persist those that ask whether or not it is useful or meaningful to distinguish between analytic and continental philosophy--and perhaps even more insidiously, there are those that claim that such a distinction is itself a "binarist" obstacle to a "resolution" of the problem. But the problem so enframed borrows from the hegemonic conception of philosophy as analytic; as problem-solving, soluble, efficient, or useful. All values which serve the purpose of exclusion. The watchword for this appeal to assimilation, to cutting away with the scalpel of liberal tolerance that which defines continental philosophy as a discipline, is "the divide." The analytic's bargain amounts to the dissolution of its subject: If only continental could be a little

less "obscure," or to quote Searle in his famous letter to the New York Review of Books, a little less "terroristic"--if only, in other words, continental would reject itself, there would be compromise.

Hell is Others and Paradise is Others: Hell in the Existential Paris of Sartre, Berdyaev, and Levinas **James McLachlan**

Levinas' thought emerges against the background of the intellectual ferment of post war France. In 1943 Jean-Paul Sartre launched his famous attack on traditional theism's origin in will to power. We humans are "a useless passion" because we want contradictory things: real freedom and an open future. But we also desire a future where everything happens for a reason and God guarantees that everything is taken care of and the movie will end in the proper way with evil defeated. Sartre even said this "should" happen that consciousness is constructed such we see the world in eschatological terms we believe there should be fullness and completion, an in-itself-for-itself. But for Sartre, to be conscious is to lack completion, to be very vulnerably open to the future. Yet we desire completion and this is the source of our Desire to be God and of our Bad faith. The eschatology of completeness leads to violence as the separate projects each doomed to failure blame each other for that failure.(Sartre 1956, 756) The violence is born in the bad faith effort to stop history, to roll up the freedom of the other person in my created total vision of the meaning of the world but the Other constantly reminds me of my inability to accomplish this impossible task hence as Garcin says in Sartre famous play of 1944 "hell is others."

Before Sartre's famous existentialist critique of theism relational explanation of time and theism had emerged in France. In 1931 Nicolas Berdyaev devoted a chapter on Hell in his *The Destiny of Man*. Like Sartre Berdyaev claimed we create Hell and carry it in ourselves this is largely due to our rivalry with others but Berdyaev also claimed Paradise is sociality and only to be had with others.

Levinas never explicitly speaks of Hell but he speaks of the *Il y a* the "there is" and speaks of it in terms similar to Berdyaev's characterization of the *Ungrund*. It is impersonal. In the following passage from Levinas' 1948 *Existence and Existents* on the "there is" is representative. His allusion to Sartre makes the Hellish implication unmistakable.(Levinas, 2001, 57) The absolute being, the *Il y a* resembles Berdyaev's characterization of the pre-existential abyss or *Ungrund* as also the hell of the final dissolution of the person. Levinas' famous characterization of totality as metaphysical violence against the other resembles Sartre's characterization of all notions all human projects as the desire to be God as the desire to transcend the human condition, to fix it in a final stasis and Berdyaev's contention that we create hell for others through our desire to create an ontology that fixes the other in the chain of being.

Ethics and money: The goodness of giving.

Jorge Medina Delgadillo
Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla
jorge.medina@upaep.mx

In the paper, I will do a rereading of *Socialité et argent*, a lecture delivered in 1989 by Emmanuel Levinas.

Along with Levinas's critique of the "civilization of money" as an echo of self-interest, totality and anonymity, there is also the possibility of considering money as an event of non-violent encounter with the other, as an opportunity for inter-human proximity between two strangers. Because the goodness of giving reflects the plasticity of money and can be a bearer of *my* time, *my* energy, *my* life, in order to be exchanged for goods and services (life and time) of the other, and thus establish society, but it also to be given for no reason whatsoever and, in that way, display selfless charity.

Money, therefore, is a permanent possibility of achieving *justice* —compare the incomparable through homologation and calculation— and at the same time the *sanctity* of the human —being-for-the-other through the generosity of giving—. An ethical approach to money can be one more way to clarify the problematic relationship between ethics and politics in Levinas's thought.

Emmanuel Levinas and metaethical quietism

Joshua Blanchard

Several contemporary analytic philosophers (including Tim Scanlon, Hilary Putnam, Ronald Dworkin) endorse a form of *metaethical quietism* about the foundation of the moral domain, arguing that morality is not in need of such a foundation. The reasons they give are, broadly speaking, metaphysical. For example, Putnam argues in some places that the moral domain, like mathematics, is autonomous, providing its own standards of objectivity and truth. Hence, the desire to vindicate the moral domain in a way analogous to some non-moral domains (e.g. by positing foundational objects or properties) involves a kind of metaphysical confusion.

The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, encapsulated in the slogan, “ethics as first philosophy,” suggests a novel version of quietism. Levinas’ view is distinctive in this respect by insisting on a kind of quietism motivated by *moral* rather than *metaphysical* concerns. For Levinas, offering the sorts of foundations and justifications in the moral domain characteristic of much contemporary philosophy is *morally objectionable*, even apart from the metaphysical concerns noted above.

In this paper I explore the relationship between Levinas’ views and those of contemporary analytic metaethical quietists. I argue that Levinas’ form of quietism is independently compelling, but suggest that it is ambiguous whether Levinas should be considered a *metaethical* or *normative* quietist. Either way, Levinas provides us with resources for fresh inquiry into the foundations of morality, as well as more abstract issues involving the legitimacy of a distinction between meta- and normative ethics.

Joshua R. Galat
Ph.D. Candidate, Theory and Cultural Studies
Purdue University
610 Purdue Mall
West Lafayette, IN 47907
(352) 274-3408
jgalat@purdue.edu

The Hospitality of the Law and *The Trial* for the De-Facement of the Other

The departure point for my research is Levinas' understanding of the face as a means of access to the naked humanness of the Other. The very essence of alterity manifests itself through the face, thereby establishing it as the crucial element that constitutes ethical encounters. Derrida's response to Levinas' philosophy as a treatise on hospitality is likewise dependent upon the face as the cornerstone for constructing the hospitable environment that is composed of the host-guest relationship, the dwelling, and the Woman. The extreme degree of emphasis Levinas and Derrida place upon the face and its critical importance in defining hospitality raise questions as to the possible consequences to this environment should the face's function be altered. This issue becomes even more critical when taken in conjunction with the hospitality of the law and its relationship to justice. My presentation implements the Levinasian face as a point of experimentation to explore the precarious division between totality and infinity and how the shift from one to the other affects the elements that compose the structure of hospitality. A reversion of Derrida's law of hospitality to the hospitality of the law demonstrates that the defacement of the Other's face before the law causes it to absorb the infinite alterity of the human beings it is supposed to protect and transforms the juridical system into an unethical totality. The removal of the human element of the face dehumanizes the remaining components of the law's hospitality, reducing them to forms of control, limitation, and entrapment. To exemplify these conclusions, I conduct an allegorical reading of Franz Kafka's *The Trial* as a trial or tentative experiment for the law's "de-facement" of the Other and the effects this alteration has on the structure of hospitality. In this novel, the law disrespects and vandalizes the physical faces of the defendants, making them points of encountering not humanity, but judgment. Although the elements that compose the structure of hospitality—the host-guest relationship, the dwelling, and the Woman—are present, the defacement of the Other metastasize into them, mutating them into dehumanized versions of their ethical purposes. Kafka's *The Trial* thus acts as a warning that the structure of hospitality alone is not enough to guarantee the law's ability to be ethical and provide justice; it depends upon the humanness of the face that must necessarily be respected for these concepts to emerge. If the law were to deface the face of the Other and mar the humanness to which it provides access, it would be reduced to natural law and the relationships between human beings it was intended to moderate would lose their humanity and assume animalistic characteristics.

A Neurological Formulation of Levinas' Metaethics

Dr. Martin Gak

ABSTRACT: Levinas' two major works can and ought to be read as a neuropsychological metaethics. In this paper, I will offer precisely that in the context of some important new--and not so new--findings in neuroscience and particularly in neuropsychology. A systematic presentation of the analytic merits of Levinas' two major works as correlates to developments in neuroscience and neuropsychology has as its main aim to shed light on the often intractable arcana of the levinasian landscape and to show the way towards a broader engagement for Levinas' ideas. First, my presentation I will reorganize the reading of Levinas around the central agenda of current debates in metaethics. Taking this rearticulation as my point of departure, I will go on to show that under a systematic analytic approach, Levinas can, indeed, provide a unified model, capable of furnishing a viable account of rule-following, rule-learning and adjudication echoing recent finding in neuroscience while meeting some of the most important challenges of the debates in metaethics.

In addition to shedding light on the work, its potential application and explanatory power, my presentation should have the marginal benefit of disabuse the pious readers of Levinas from approaching the work with the reverential awe which often leads to either the poetization of the work or to a type of quietism that protects the muddled thinking that at times seems prevalent in his scholarship from critical assessment. Showing that what Levinas is engage in a description of the processes of action-guidance and not in a normative venture, should at least aid in the task of bringing claims of a moral philosophy project in his work to an end.

The presentation will deal with three elements in Levinas and their neurological and neuropsychological correlations: the operation of mirror neuron systems on the learning of rules before to prescriptions as a reformulation of Levinas' 'Ethics before ontology', the phenomenon of "source amnesia" as the neurological explanation of the problem of the immemoriality of the ethical and lastly the neuropsychological phenomenon of "extraction of invariances" as an articulation of totalization and its temporality in the ideal construction of mereological wholes.

Infinity, or its Variation of Sense

Matthew Coate

Stony Brook University

What does Emmanuel Levinas mean by “infinity,” or its “idea?” For Levinas, of course, the word has everything to do with ethics, signifying something like a break-up of finitude in the sense of a disruption of a being’s own being, turned outward or intruded upon by another. But what, exactly, should be characterized as “infinite,” and why? The relationship to the other as such—the other’s *self-revelation* or *approach*—which places the one made subject under obligation to answer for his or her own being? The obligation *itself*? Or is it in fact the *other* that should be called “infinite?” The matter is complicated by the fact that at different points, Levinas uses the word in question to characterize all three: even the other is called “infinite,” though Levinas nonetheless demonstrates that it is precisely the vulnerability of another—something like his or her own finitude, that is—which the other somehow reveals in subjecting the one made subject to ethical obligation.

In this paper, I subject the term “infinity” itself to analysis. In my first part, I demonstrate that the “infinite,” according to Levinas, is inextricable from its “idea,” the “trace of the other” which is nothing but the very *psyche* of the self, its “inspiration” or the “recurrence” of the subject. Provisional clarification of this term is won by setting it against the syntheses of self-temporalization (the being of the subject *qua* subject or consciousness): for although the streaming life of subjectivity constitutes itself precisely via these syntheses, the immediacy of each moment of its being *qua sensible* must be suspended if it is to temporalize itself at all. Here we discover the other’s self-revelation as “production” of the infinite, inasmuch as, placing sensible life in question, the other leaves his or her trace as *psyche* or inspiration, breaking in on finitude. The relation to the other as other can be called “infinite” in this sense. Likewise, the other can be called “infinite,” *not qua* living being or subject, but *qua other*: as totally exterior, whose experiencing he or she gives as that which cannot be given. In an irreducible sense, the other’s experience can never be anything to me—and as such, becomes everything to me in this affection.

In my paper’s second part, I clarify the “infinitude” of the obligation into which the subjected one is thereby placed by another. This requires going back to self-temporalization to dis-

cover how “recurrence” or the idea of infinity serves as condition (though not foundation) of the three ecstasies of temporalization. As *exposure* to another—the other’s proximity, condition of the present—the one torn from his or her own being is subject to an unconditional demand; as *affected* by another—ethical love or fear of doing violence, condition of the past—one becomes subject to irrecusable interrogation; as *promised* to the other—absolute responsibility, condition of the future—the subject is given to a demand for limitless perfectibility. *Unconditional*, *irrecusable*, and *limitless*, this obligation can also be called “infinite.”

My House is Not My Own:
Levinas & the Possibility of Radically Passive Dialogue
Melissa Fitzpatrick

In “Tympan,” Jacques Derrida challenges philosophy to open itself to its proper ‘other’ – its other being that which falls outside of the margins that it (philosophy) has carefully drawn, perpetually grooms, and desperately hopes to maintain. Derrida satirizes philosophy’s insistence on *thinking* its other by demarcating its own margins, as the Hegelian critique of the Kantian limit concept inevitably holds: *how is it possible for philosophy to think that which is other than itself without containing within itself that which lies beyond its limits, thus defining its margins in terms of its own criterion from within itself?* Upon evaluating itself and determining the limitations of itself in relation to its criterion for what counts as philosophy, philosophy inevitably imperializes the ‘house’ of its other. With Hegel’s dialectical imperialism perhaps serving as the pinnacle of the tradition that Derrida has in mind, philosophy has successfully achieved absolute totalization: effectively subsuming alterity and distance by remaining deaf to what falls outside of its self-declared margins.

In this paper, I use the metaphysical work of Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being* to provide at least a partial response to Derrida’s challenge, specifically focusing on Levinas’s metaphysics of conversation.¹ I explore what becomes of dialogue in a Levinasian world of openness, persecuting obsession, infinite responsibility, and radical passivity 1) at the micro level, i.e., interpersonal dialogue, and 2) at a macro level, i.e., philosophical dialogue at large. I believe that Levinas’s ethical metaphysics provides a novel illustration of what we might mean by an ‘other’ that falls outside of the self-determined margins of philosophy, why philosophy should pay attention to that which it cannot hear, and how that breed of listening perhaps *should* influence conversation and pedagogy. To explore what dialogue might look like in a Levinasian world, and to re-imagine our current notion of philosophical dialogue and pedagogy, I will address the following questions: *is dialogue really possible with radical passivity and conversation? Given the strictures of radical passivity, what becomes of philosophical pedagogy? Beyond this, what can we achieve by opening our ears to that which we cannot hear or comprehend?* Through a Levinasian lens, I hope to shed light on what can be gained from a deliberate refrain from active totalization via radically passive listening, and what our disposition as philosophers, educators, and communicators should be as we move forward in a field riddled with chasms and divides.

¹ N.B., In this paper, I am attempting to provide a modest response to Derrida challenge, and will therefore not address the nuances of his deconstructive critique of Levinas’s metaphysics in “Violence and Metaphysics “ – namely, Levinas’s inability to transcend phenomenology because, as Derrida puts it, “ethics presupposes phenomenology” (p. 121). Although Levinas may very well still be working within the very tradition and egoistic framework that he is criticizing, and may in fact be presupposing the transcendental phenomenology he is putting into question, I believe that we should still suspend disbelief and take what we can from his effort to critique and push the limits of the philosophical context that he is perhaps inevitably confined to.

Michael Paradiso-Michau, Ph.D.
Department of Liberal Arts
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
mparadisomichau@saic.edu

Title: *Totality and Infinity and Zombies: An Essay on Undead Exteriority*

Abstract: In this essay, I foster a conversation amongst two different, perhaps divergent, paradigms of scholarship: Levinas studies and monster studies. I ask questions such as: What is the status of the face of the Other, especially when that Other is considered monstrous, evil, grotesque, subhuman, aberrant, or decrepit? And, what are the duties and conditions of responsibility between the ethical subject and the abject Other? To focus the conversation for this conference presentation, I will focus these reflections on one contemporary Afro-Caribbean and U.S. American monster: the zombie. While Levinas is emphatic in his assertion that the self is responsible for the life and death of the Other, what about the *revenants*, the undead? I suggest that, through the films of Oscar Romero and the graphic novels of Robert Kirkman, zombies exist as signifiers of ethical, cultural, and social calls for non-violence, compassion, ethical uprightness (*Temimut*), and social critique. As such, it would behoove scholars and practitioners of monster studies to seriously engage with Levinasian ideas and interventions. Levinas studies would similarly be benefitted by critically reconsidering the status of interhuman alterity, especially when and where the Other is deemed inhuman.

Exclusive Discourse: Levinas on the Continental/Analytic Divide

In *Otherwise than Being*, Emmanuel Levinas refers to the 'saying,' or the non-thematizable ethical exposure to the other, as that which, by necessity, orders the 'said,' the comprehensive and universal—ontological—language of philosophy. He argues that the 'necessity' of philosophical discourse is commanded in response to the ethical exposure to a 'third', the other person who makes up the social-community. In light of our relation to a multiplicity of others, justice demands philosophy—equality, comparison, truth, reason, and the thematization of moral responsibility. However, Levinas claims that this discourse of the said does not absorb the ethical relation, but rather "reinvokes alternation and diachrony as the time of philosophy" (*OB* 167). I am going to discuss Levinas' philosophy as a form of political simultaneousness that is incessantly disordered by an an-archic disturbance. This is not a disturbance that questions the accordance of the structure of thought, but puts in question the ultimate framework of its meaning (as always a repression or exclusion of the ethical). The anarchic disturbance of the ethical saying brings into relief philosophy's structure as segregated and absolute, sealed and allergic to otherness.

In light of Levinas' critique of the ontological structures of that as closed to difference, I hope to show that analytic philosophy undermines an ethical and pluralistic conception of philosophy: a discourse that is always open to new truths and recognizes itself as always structured by the exclusion or effacement of the Other. Here we see the possibility of forging another consciousness, and expressing a new sensibility where knowledge is not subjugated beneath required levels of cognition, logical standardization, or the scientificity of analytic philosophy.

Levinas' continental way of philosophizing recombines dominant ways of thinking with our relation to a radical otherness. By applying Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* to the specific language or vocabulary Levinas uses to construct a philosophical discourse, I hope to show that he ultimately undermines the totalizing power structures of philosophical discourse, tearing philosophy away from its own language by allowing it to contradict and challenge itself in light of our responsibility for the Other. I will show that Levinas' ethical methodology is not just a particular manifestation of continental philosophy, but is an expression of continental philosophy's core values: a plurality of voices, an attention to otherness, and the inclusion of minor experience. By working through Levinas' minoritarian conception of philosophy, I will also address issues like the participation of women and minorities in philosophy and their position in relation to dominant philosophical vocabulary and discourse.

**The Ethics of Social Cognition *as* Gift:
An-economical Enjoyment of Collective Convergence After Levinas and Schrag**

Patrick Hoburg (Purdue University)

Concerned with accounting for the inextricable entwinement of social, situated, embodied, enactive, and extended aspects of human cognition, contemporary “analytic” philosophy of mind and cognitive science have turned to the “continental” phenomenological tradition—in all its various manifestations—not only for heuristic methodological guidance; phenomenological descriptions serve as launching pads for the research projects undertaken by this strand of cross-disciplinary study. While the work of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty have been their primary sources of insight, the work Levinas has been largely neglected. Attempting to help mend this neglect, the following effort aims to articulate the notion of the gift in ethical relation to the dynamics of social cognition. This paper focuses specifically on a liminal case of social cognition—what I will call *an-economical collective convergence*. Concepts crucial to this presentation—ethics, enjoyment, economy, ecstasy, the gift, collectivity, convergence, creativity—their dynamic interrelations, and their connections to kinship concepts, are developed in concert with the classic texts of Levinas, but in the wake of the work of Calvin O. Schrag. The concept of self Schrag proposes in *The Self After Postmodernity* provides a way to discuss the collective relation constitutive of socially creative convergence, a cognitive precondition of which is mutual acknowledgement (not to be confused with Hegelian mutual recognition and knowledge). An-economical collective convergence is an enjoyable mode of social existence that transcends reifications and inflations of the self, as well as the reification of other selves. These events take place out of the *desire* to give way (beyond *need*) to an-economical gifts—whether poetic, imagistic, musical, etc.—that always already transcend socio-economical situatedness. Inspired by Levinas, Schrag makes a new contribution (in *God as Otherwise Than Being: Toward a Semantics of the*

Gift) to the famously flourishing discourse concerning the gift. He suggests that while the Good is beyond being (and concomitantly knowledge), the pure giving of the gift is beyond the Good. Participants enjoy events of collective convergence as an ecstatic relation to others beyond being and knowledge, an ecstatic relation to “*a surplus always exterior to the totality*” (TI 22). A collective that perpetually acknowledges and addresses its face-to-face relations in terms of infinity (rather than totality) converges in a mode of existence otherwise than being and knowledge, thus always transcending the dangers of dogmatism, of reification, by virtue of its infinite relation to the Good. The collective that perpetually acknowledges its face-to-face relations in ultimate deference to the pure exteriority of the pure giving of the gift is a collective that acknowledges sociality in accord with ultimate responsibility to the Good. Philosophers of mind and cognitive scientists cannot neglect this liminal case of social cognition lest the everyday modes of social cognition be inflated as the paramount kind of sociality. The following effort considers the implications of an-economical collective convergence for contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science after Levinas and Schrag.

Adieu to Levinas

Ronald C. Arnett

“. . . the meaning of death does not begin in death. This invites us to think of death as a moment of death's *signification*, which is a meaning that overflows death. We must note carefully that 'to overflow death' in no sense means surpassing or reducing it; it means that this overflowing has its signification, too."¹

Signification is stronger than death—the Other continues to interrupt and awaken the living, calling the “I” into responsibility. When one experiences the death of another, one is jarred by the face of the Other who continues to demand of “me” responsibility. As long as one responds to the face of another, death cannot eclipse the power of the Other upon me. Evoking a call from beyond death does not lessen weeping and raw lament for the loss of another who no longer physically walks among us. A definition of a meaningful life is that a face continues to speak from the grave with the demand of responsibility from a particular Other.

As if it was just yesterday, I remember the death of my mother and the depth of pain that penetrated to the core of my soul. As I stood outside my parent's house, I was confused. I wondered why the world had not stopped with the death of my mother. Cars still moved. Branches tossed in the wind. Small children were still playing. How could such commotion continue after the death of my mother? Yet, somehow my mother continued to demand responsible action from me. A Levinasian understanding of death reminds us of the particularity of a face that demands responsibility of us. We find temporal access to the universal through the particular. Particular faces continue to speak long after their empirical presence is no more—interrupting our lives, calling us to responsibility, and demanding an ethical awakening at times least expected.

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, translated by Bettina Bergo and edited by Jacques Rolland (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 104.

This essay addresses responsibility and obligation that the death of another demands of us. The first section examines Levinas the notion of death. The next section turns to Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) *Adieu to Levinas*.² I then conclude this essay visiting Levinas's engagement with the theme of death in *God, Death, and Time*.

Derrida reminded those present at Levinas's physical end of the paradox of *adieu*; he emphasized it as a communicative gesture inclusive of both hello and goodbye. *Adieu* is “a farewell to temporal despair and a welcome to tenacious hope.”³ With this dual conception of *adieu* guiding my understanding of Derrida's reflections, I turn to two of his responses to the Levinas. First, Derrida gave *Adieu* at the burial of Levinas in Pantin, a suburb of Paris, on December 27, 1995. Then a year later, he offered “A Word of Welcome” at the beginning of “Homage to Emmanuel Levinas,” which took place on December 7, 1996 in the Richelieu Amphitheater of the Sorbonne.

Adieu as the Unity of Contraries

Derrida began by stating that he had feared the advent of this day defined by trembling voice and heart. What bequeathed him some solace was Levinas's use of the term *adieu*. As Derrida meditated on the term, he took comfort in Levinas's understanding of *adieu*. Derrida stated: “I would like...[to reflect on Levinas's understanding of *adieu*] with unadorned, naked words, words as childlike and disarmed as my sorrow.”⁴ The responsibility of saying *adieu* is the necessary “work of mourning.”⁵ Levinas emphasized *droiture*, a “straightforwardness,” an “uprightness” that is “stronger than death,” which no matter how necessary cannot “console”

² Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

³ *Adieu* as a greeting or welcome can be traced to the 14th-century French language of Languedoc, Provence, and Gasconne. Ronald C. Arnett, “Philosophy of Communication as Carrier of Meaning: *Adieu* to W. Barnett Pearce,” *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 14, no. 1 (2013): 7.

⁴ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 1.

⁵ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 2.

those remaining.⁶ The acknowledgment of death calls forth a movement toward the Other that never returns to its point of origin and must understand that the person is no longer. For Levinas, such moments remind us of “‘unlimited’ responsibility” that calls for a “yes” that is both older and more bold than any form of naïve spontaneity.⁷ Death, when the face of the Other demands responsibility, is denied the first and the last word. Derrida reminds witnesses about the *oeuvre* of Levinas, which affirms the “holy” and the “promised” within a context of “nakedness” and “desert.”⁸ Levinas had, twenty years prior in “Death and Time” (“*La mort et le temps*”), stated that death is both a form of non-response emanating the face of the Other and a “patience of time”⁹ that demands a unique ethical response from the living.

Levinas stated that Shakespeare was wrong when he asked the empirical question of “to be or not to be.”¹⁰ The key to a life is not existence alone, but how one engages “entrusted responsibility”¹¹ to live life through a “‘duty beyond all debt.’”¹² Derrida then offered a sketch of the duty of “hospitality” which defines friendship¹³ and encapsulated Levinas’s love of France. Derrida contended that Levinas had changed the intellectual landscape in France with his personal and intellectual dignity. Levinas detailed the power of responsibility invoked by the Other; he gave an ethical interruption demanded of us by another a place of preeminence. Levinas underlined the “traumatism of [me that is awakened by] the other.”¹⁴ The Other traumatizes us out of routine and moves us to ethical obligation responsive to ethical action and

⁶ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 2.

⁷ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 3.

⁸ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 4.

⁹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 5.

¹⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 3. Drawn from Hamlet’s soliloquy, 3.1.56-90.

¹¹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 6.

¹² Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 7.

¹³ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 8.

¹⁴ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 13.

responsibility. Levinas described the necessary ethical response to the Other: “Here I am.” In such a moment, one assumes an “immense responsibility” for the Other.¹⁵

Derrida referred to Heidegger and stated that Levinas had great admiration for Levinas’s project, even as he contended with some of Levinas’s basic assumptions. The difference between the two men and their work, for Derrida, is that unlike Heidegger, Levinas calls forth respect and thanks without regret. Derrida’s disagreements with Levinas never eclipsed a genuineness of respect. One can sense the depth of the respect for Levinas in Derrida’s closing words:

“The question-prayer that turned me [Derrida] toward him [Levinas] perhaps already shared in the experience of the *à-Dieu* with which I began. The greeting of the *à-Dieu* does not signal the end. ‘The *à-Dieu* is not a finality,’ he says, thus challenging the ‘alternative between being and nothingness,’ which ‘is not ultimate.’ The *à-Dieu* greets the other beyond being, in what is ‘signified, beyond being, by the word “glory.”’ ‘The *à-Dieu* is not a process of being: in the call, I am referred back to the other human being through whom this call signifies, to the neighbor for whom I am to fear.’

But I said that I did not want simply to recall what he entrusted to us of the *à-Dieu*, but first of all to say *adieu* to him, to call him by his name, to call his name, his first name, what he is called at the moment when, if he no longer responds, it is because he is responding in us, from the bottom of our hearts, in us but before us, in us right before us—in calling us, in recalling to us: *à-Dieu. Adieu, Emmanuel.*”¹⁶

Adieu invokes the reality of a genuine end that has no conclusion; the term reminds us of the unity of contraries of a life well lived. There is a uniting of sorrow with a nagging demand for responsibility engendered by an awakened life. *Adieu* in the midst of death acknowledges

¹⁵ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 12.

¹⁶ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 13.

goodbye and reminds us of how the face of the Other continues to startle and awaken, beckoning us toward unending responsibility and obligation.

A Word of Welcome

Derrida begins his second statement centered on Levinas with “*bienvenue*.” He highlights the power of welcome with his own understanding of “hospitality.”¹⁷ In order to welcome, one must be in a position to address the Other. Hospitality functions as a politics of capacity, for Derrida; it is the *pourvoir*, the power of a host who becomes a guest in the welcoming of the Other—power resides in the welcome of the host-guest. The uniting of the constructs of host and guest moves the communicative gesture of welcome from an act of possession and paternalism into an obligation to attend to the Other. This form of welcome both gives and receives, turning teaching into a simultaneous interplay of offering and reception.

Derrida stated that the reversal of the host becoming the guest moves welcome from ownership to temporal participation dwelling of responsibility. Such a move keeps hospitality within an act of “opening.”¹⁸ Hospitality for Levinas, according to Derrida, was tied to Sinai¹⁹ and to the face. There is both law and particularity of obligation tied to hospitality. For Derrida, there is, in the writings of Levinas, both an ethics of and a law of hospitality.

[There is a relationship] between an *ethics* of hospitality (an ethics *as* hospitality) and a *law* or a *politics* of hospitality, for example, in the tradition of what Kant calls the conditions of universal hospitality in *cosmopolitical law*: “with a view to perpetual peace.”²⁰

¹⁷ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 15–16.

¹⁸ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 19.

¹⁹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 63–70. Derrida offers Sinai as a place that embodies the disruption of the self and the unveiling of the face, drawing from Levinas. He offers both geopolitical and theological reflection on this theme, with Sinai representing, in both cases, a border (between Israel and other nations and between G-d and humanity).

²⁰ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 19–20.

Ethics emerges in the face of the Other and law houses concern for those not present in a given moment. Like much of Levinas's insights, the particular and the universal guide, in this case, he exhibits a textured conception of hospitality responsive to ethics and law.

Derrida stated that in Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*, he seldom uses the word hospitality, approximately six times. Nonetheless, the word hospitality is central throughout this major work. Hospitality is that communicative act that one witnesses in the opening of oneself to the *visage*, the face of the Other. The face welcomes and calls for responsibility for the Other. This welcome begins in the human face generating a burden of accountability for the Other that cannot be understood within the realm of "thematization."²¹ The welcome of the face opens one to "infinity," to a yes that transforms a life.²² The cry of this affirmation necessitates an acceptance of welcome that lives in "anarchy," in a world without limits defined by responsibility that is "pre-originally welcomed."²³ The "yes" and the "welcome" emanate from the Other, shaping a unique view of agency that responds to an immemorial communicative environment that is already and always underway. Even when there is no response and one remains in a "solitary cry of distress," there is still the "promise of response."²⁴ The response dwells within an acknowledged welcome that lives within a particular human face.

Interestingly, welcome is not a primal first gesture; welcome, like the face, rests in a "passive movement,"²⁵ which makes ethics as first philosophy possible. Ethical relation depends upon the reception of the welcome that guides the awareness of ethical responsibility unresponsive to reciprocity. This welcome is a door that opens one to the home of ethics within exteriority and infinity. The welcome demands that we cross the threshold of the door that leads

²¹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 22.

²² Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 23.

²³ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 23.

²⁴ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 24.

²⁵ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 25.

to responsibility for the Other.²⁶ When welcome is acknowledged the human being responds to an immemorial ethical demand. Welcome invites ethics and responsibility without informing one of the right or correct responses, however. Human responsibility requires existential discernment in the doing of ethics. Welcome invites a dwelling of discernment and ongoing responsibility.

Welcome involves a “thinking of recollection,” which makes possible the notion of “dwelling.”²⁷ Welcome is *a priori* to recollection and collection; welcome makes the act of recollection possible. The welcome lives in the “uprightness” of a real human face; one attends to the “gathered interiority” of the “dwelling.”²⁸ When there is a welcome acknowledged on the face of the Other, ethics arises and is then disrupted by justice, which acts as an interruption of the face-to-face nature of ethics, calling forth attention to those not empirically present at the table of conversation and decision-making. Justice moves one outside the proximity of the face-to-face, *dehors* a sense of “immediacy.”²⁹

Levinas frequently spoke about a “primordial word of honor,” which is sensed as one engages in an “attestation of oneself” that announces the “uprightness of the face to face.”³⁰ The proximity of ethics embraces a companion form of hospitality—the intrusion of justice is an almost “intolerable scandal.”³¹ “Even if Levinas never puts it this way, justice commits perjury as easily as it breathes; it betrays the “primordial word of honor” and swears [jurer] only to perjure, to swear falsely [parjurer], swear off [abjurer] or swear at [injurer]....this ineluctability...imagines the sigh of the just....”³² The sigh of the just emerges with recognition that the enactment of justice is demanded, but is ever so unclear. Just as Levinas offers no easy

²⁶ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 55.

²⁷ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 28.

²⁸ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 34–36.

²⁹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 31–32.

³⁰ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 34.

³¹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 34.

³² Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 34.

framework to do ethics, he refuses such a move in justice. Only in the nourishing of structures and laws can one hope to approximate justice.

There is an ongoing oscillation between ethics and justice, with each interrupting the Other. The face is an ethical reminder for *moi même* of a responsibility that originates in both proximate (ethics) and distant (justice) obligations. Derrida emphasized that hospitality is propelled by the “trace of the face, of the visage” that is a “*visitation*” that “disjoins and *disturbs*.”³³ The visitation of the face cannot be programmed or demanded; it is “unexpected” and “awaited beyond all awaiting.”³⁴ Perhaps one can liken the visitation of the face as a “messianic visit” that is not tied to a past or the present, but rather to a responsibility in ethics of proximity and justice for those not immediately present.³⁵

Derrida’s view of hospitality operates within a background guidance of justice that shapes and interrupts ethics. This form of hospitality enacts radical separation that is essential for space between persons that interrupts the comfort of the proximity of ethics.³⁶ Derrida alludes to the justice connection as a major reason for Levinas rejecting the “I-Thou” construct of Martin Buber; Levinas contends that there is no exclusive sphere of justice in his dialogic and dyadic construct. Justice lives in attentiveness of an exteriority, an Otherness, not within a special located between persons.³⁷

Separation or what Levinas called disinterestedness³⁸ makes hospitality, ethics, justice, and welcome possible, displacing any sense of hospitality that seeks to mask acts of

³³ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 62.

³⁴ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 62.

³⁵ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 62.

³⁶ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 47.

³⁷ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 60.

³⁸ John Llewelyn, *Appositions to Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas*, series: Studies in Continental Thought. Series ed., John Sallis. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 75-78. Levinas’s concept of disinterestedness was onto-theological. Our relation in love to the other reflects God’s love for us that is beyond interestedness. See also Levinas, *God, Death and Time*, 219-224.

interpersonal domination. Hospitality is tied to the infinite, not to totality where one can claim or ideologically assert a particular set of unwavering assumptions. Separation within hospitality interrupts the self, making it a “paradox” capable of attending to an ethical import of a particular face that turns one to an immemorial call without unmasking of the Other; the Other remains an enigma. Levinas suggests a hospitality that is both disclosure and a continued veiling. Without separation, proximity that abides in the face-to-face trace of ethics seeks to eclipse the dual obligation of justice. The “face as a trace” propels ethics and justice in an ethical dwelling constructed with separation.³⁹

Derrida understands that the unity of contraries undergirds the welcome of hospitality: 1) ethics and justice, 2) the particular and the universal, 3) the proximate and the distance, 4) the meeting and separation, and 5) the visual attentiveness to the Other that gives way to an audio recognition of an ethic of immemorial responsibility. There is an ongoing interruption of reversal, as the host becomes the “hostage” of the Other, which results in the invitation of a guest into given dwelling that ceases to be one’s own.⁴⁰ The hostage endures “substitution,” assuming responsibility for the Other.⁴¹ The act of substitution is a profound interruption of the self.⁴² Derrida connects the Sinai Peninsula to a dwelling of interruption, a place where conflict defines the day with contrasting and competing histories and disputed boundaries.⁴³ Derrida contends that three major terms undergird Levinas’s project, with each pointing beyond the self, while demanding responsibility of the self that is beyond the expected via the importance of “*fraternity, humanity, hospitality.*”⁴⁴ These concepts are at the heart of lived experience within

³⁹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 52–53.

⁴⁰ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 56.

⁴¹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 56.

⁴² Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 61.

⁴³ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 65.

⁴⁴ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 67.

the Torah. Even for those unwilling or unable to offer a message of the Torah, all are reminded of life “*before* or outside of the Sinai” by attentiveness to a human face.⁴⁵

The defining contention of Levinas is fraternity; this ethical command thrives throughout his work and life. Fraternity and justice move one to concern for the neighbor and the third. This form of hospitality is more radical than Kant’s understanding of hospitality in a *Perpetual Peace*.⁴⁶ Hospitality for Kant was attentive to interspaces within the public and civic domain. “Levinas, on the other hand, understands hospitality as a ‘dwelling’ that offers an ‘asylum,’ an ‘inn’ for the Other.”⁴⁷ Hospitality is a dwelling of welcome that is attentive to the proximate and the distant, ethics and justice. Such a dwelling, for Levinas, is a “place offered to the stranger.”⁴⁸ This *espace* gathers and collects persons near and far around the vitality of fraternity, humanity, and hospitality. Levinas discloses an immemorial welcome for the person whose face awakens the other and us to those who may never be seen, but are part of a struggle for justice. It is the unending burden of ethics and justice that welcomes the proximate and the distant, the neighbor and the stranger. Levinas’s ethics is misunderstood when termed “*cosmopolitical* hospitality.”⁴⁹ The cosmopolitan embraces the distant; Levinas interrupted justice with ethics in the face-to-face, and justice offers a similar fragmentation of the closeness of ethics.

According to Derrida, Levinas’s project reminded us of a memory that is even prior to the memory of God. This immemorial ethical echo is a voice before and beyond the Torah that meets Sinai, calling forth welcome, responsibility, and the interruption of justice. Levinas illuminates a hospitality beyond the State that welcomes from a ground of ethics more ancient

⁴⁵ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 67.

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (New York, NY: Cosimo, Inc., 2010).

⁴⁷ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 68.

⁴⁸ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 68, 71.

⁴⁹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 68.

than time itself. Additionally, Levinas crafts a “politics beyond the political.”⁵⁰ For Levinas, peace exceeds the political. Peace arises in the welcome and the receiving of the Other from a “magisterial height” that can only be assumed by a host who becomes a hostage attentive to responsibility for the Other; the command of ethics demands the construction of a temporal dwelling in which one becomes a guest.⁵¹

The hostage becomes a derivative self formation. The interrupted self leads to the transcendence of the self through the act of substitution for the Other, returning to the self differently, and then revisiting to the other charged with responsibility. This derivative self is a self hostage to the Other, shaped via “substitution,” and acts with absolute passivity, not in a Heideggerian sense of the possibility of the impossibility, but out of “infinite responsibility” that obligates me toward the neighbor—a “passivity is not only the possibility of death in being, the possibility of impossibility. It is an impossibility prior to that possibility, the impossibility of slipping away”.⁵² Our responsibility is awakened by the death of another, reminding us of obligation prior to death and as we stand before death another is called by our own death.⁵³

The hostage of whom Levinas spoke understands the danger of rhetoric that invokes a “careless idealism.”⁵⁴ Additionally, on the side of strife, Levinas rejected Kant’s contention that all begins with war. For Levinas, it is not idealism or the dark reality of war, but the human face functions as the visual origin of ethics and ultimately justice. The human face demands that one tend to places of “non-violence, peace, and hospitality.”⁵⁵ This visual and audio understanding of ethics and responsibility finds prominence within a peace that embraces a radical separation and

⁵⁰ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 79.

⁵¹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 85.

⁵² *Otherwise than Being*, 128.

⁵³ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 83.

⁵⁴ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 84.

⁵⁵ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 92.

distance between and among persons, as we simultaneously respond to the call of the face of a particular Other.

Derrida continues with an outline of Kant's perspective on peace, which assumes that the pivotal point of the human condition is war, negating peace as a natural state of being. Kant's assertion demonstrates that peace is something other than utopia; peace is a state that requires constant vigilance, work, and action. If during a momentary time of peace, one reflects on the possibility of war, then war not peace is better understood as the point of origin. Peace is simply "not natural."⁵⁶ To address the non-natural nature of peace, Kant discussed the importance of universal hospitality that works to offer a dwelling larger and more expansive than a given State or residence; his concern was for those outside the scope of institutional support to discover physical sustenance and safety. Levinas understood this perspective and frequently referred to dangers that lurk within the "tyranny of the State."⁵⁷ Such tyrannies deform the "I" to the point of missing the directives within the face of the Other; the face of the Other is eclipsed. Levinas contended that political hospitality too often morphs into "tyrannical violence."⁵⁸

The political does otherwise with hospitality, moving it from the authentic to the temporally artificial. An act of political hospitality engenders brilliant illumination. However, one discovers later that such a light blinds one to all persons, events, and ideas; it covers over and obscures, rendering yet another form of darkness. Political light obfuscates for Levinas, ignoring the reality of genuine holy sparks. Levinas, like Kant, rejected a civil view of peace that was dependent upon a government alone. Kant's cosmopolitan position supports a dwelling for the sojourner.⁵⁹ Levinas, on the other hand, did not use the term cosmopolitan, due to its

⁵⁶ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 86–87.

⁵⁷ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 97.

⁵⁸ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 97.

⁵⁹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 87.

ideological connotations used to render credence to “modern anti-Semitism.”⁶⁰ Hospitality, for Levinas, is both the proximate and the distant with each interrupting the certainty of the other. This ongoing interruption includes an excessive love for the stranger. The unwillingness to announce oneself is a “holy separation” that propels the human and God to love the stranger.⁶¹ The “Saying *à-Dieu* would signify hospitality. This is not some abstraction that one would call, as I have just hastily done, ‘love of the stranger,’ but (God) ‘*who* loves the stranger.’”⁶² Derrida stressed in his final pages the call of *Adieu* as a desire to rest and dwell. It is a dwelling in God. A city of refuge was contrary to Levinas’s view of dwelling, which emerged from the Torah and the charge of responsibility for the Other. Even in the midst of death, however, the face of the Other calls forth responsibility from beyond. The dwelling within death has an active demand for responsibility from the face of the Other after death. Interruption from the face continues. Levinas pointed to an ethical dwelling that houses an echo that carries the burden of responsibility and a “promise”⁶³ that demands a holiness of responsibility for the Other. The *adieu* is a goodbye and, like in seventeenth-century France, a hello to the Other within a realm of ethics and responsibility that has no end. For Derrida, *adieu* is a continuing form of signification—the face of the one for which we grieve still calls forth responsibility from the living; death becomes yet another form of ethical awakening. *Adieu*, as understood by Derrida, included an immemorial call, which for Levinas defines relationship to *God, Death, and Time*.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 88.

⁶¹ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 104.

⁶² Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 104–105.

⁶³ Derrida, *Adieu to Levinas*, 113.

⁶⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, translated by Bettina Bergo and edited by Jacques Rolland (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

I now turn to a series of lectures on this three-fold engagement that are attentive to an immemorial responsibility.⁶⁵

God, Death, and Time

There are forty-seven essays in *God, Death, and Time*; they are the product of two lecture courses taught by Levinas in the 1975–1976 academic year; my task in the wisdom of Walter Benjamin is to enact “pearl-diving” that searches for ideas that assist the performative characteristics of *adieu*—the goodbye and hello to responsibility that acknowledges the face of the dead to call forth responsibility. This series of lectures centers on the “word beyond measure”⁶⁶ that gives structure to what Levinas understood as an immemorial echo of “ethics as first philosophy.” He understood this primordial word as offering an ethical trace stronger than death itself. In the lectures we sense a trace of Levinas’s face; he is lecturing, talking to students, and now continuing to call us. For each essay, I offer a brief statement about an idea imperative to Levinas and then follow with a response in italics.

Part I: Death and Time

Initial Questions—Friday, November 7, 1975. Time is “duration” with death assuming the patience of all time.⁶⁷ Death is a departure to the unknown. It appears as a passage from being to no longer being. Duration in death is thus understood as a “fission” that reunites one with an *a priori* that is before the *a priori*.⁶⁸ The death of another is not the same experience as my own death. *The former requires my attentiveness to the face of the Other and the latter offers*

⁶⁵ These lectures were compiled by Jacques Rolland. Rolland was a student of Levinas’s at the University of Paris, Sorbonne, wrote his dissertation on Dostoevsky under Levinas’s direction, and later became friends with Levinas in the 1980s. See Bettina Bergo, “Translator’s Foreword” in Emmanuel Levinas’s *God, Death, and Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), xi.

⁶⁶ Jacques Rolland, “Foreword” in Emmanuel Levinas’s *God, Death, and Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 1.

⁶⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 7.

⁶⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 10.

responsibility for another; the death of another awakens my ethical responsibility and my own death calls forth responsibility in another.

What Do We Know of Death?—Friday, November 14, 1975. Death is the “stopping of expressive movements.”⁶⁹ However, one is awakened by the Other with recognition that I am the “survivor.”⁷⁰ The meaning of life flows beyond the moment of death, offering “surprise” that heals and reminds us of impotence to inevitability.⁷¹ Death is the recognition of duration defined by the mortality of a single one. *The Other’s death informs us; our own death, at the least, reminds those around us of duration, both its infinite calling and its finite sense of stoppage.*

The Death of the Other [D’Autrui] and My Own—Friday, November 21, 1975. Levinas counters both Husserl and Heidegger, suggesting that emotion cannot be limited to intentionality or “rooted in anxiety.”⁷² Death is better understood as a “disquietude;” it is a finite moment that defines infinity.⁷³ Death is a “nonsense” that must be met.⁷⁴ *A life of finitude confirms the infinite; it connects us to those before us and those not yet among us.*

An Obligatory Passage: Heidegger—Friday, November 28, 1975. Levinas offers his voice in discussion of death’s disquieting restlessness and the awakening we receive from another that is “beyond measure.”⁷⁵ For Heidegger, the point of Being in relation to *Dasein* is a “mineness” associated with the potential loss of being.⁷⁶ Heidegger later reflected on the question of time as, “it is a being.”⁷⁷ Existentially, we end with the question “Who is time?”⁷⁸

⁶⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 11.

⁷⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 12.

⁷¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 13–14.

⁷² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 18.

⁷³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 17.

⁷⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 21.

⁷⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 22.

⁷⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 25.

⁷⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 27.

⁷⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 27.

Levinas reminds us of a call from the Other from the grave; Heidegger reminds us of a sober note; it is me that dies.

The Analytic of Dasein—Friday, December 5, 1975. In addition to nature and natural science, the human offers a “rupture” in the advent of Being, reason, and any claim to objectivity outside of existence.⁷⁹ The human is awakened by the face of the Other who directs one to ethics. Heidegger, on the other hand, explicates a care that is routinely expected. The structure of Heidegger’s care is three-fold: “*being-out-ahead-of-oneself* (the project), *being-always-already-in-the-world* (facticity), being in the world as *being-alongside-of* (alongside the things, alongside of what is encountered within the world).”⁸⁰ Levinas stresses that time defines care of project being future, facticity the past, and along-side of being the present. Care is tied to time and to the structure of things. Even the notion of despair fits within the structure in that there is anticipation of more agony. *Dasein* in the act of care finds a lack, that being death, and is connected to time, as one cares for structures on the way to death.⁸¹ *Heidegger’s view of care is time-centered* *Levinas’s understanding of care linked to ethics as a response to an immemorial echo—a responsibility before and beyond time that shapes the human with joy, not the anticipation of death.*

Dasein and Death—Friday, December 12, 1975. Levinas contended that Heidegger’s contribution was describing *Dasein* as moving toward death of annihilation, which reframes our understanding of time and Being.⁸² Heidegger embraces an ontological preoccupation with “being-there” in the “*proper*” or “*authentic*” sense.⁸³ Death then becomes the end of “being-in-the-world” with Levinas being unwilling to forget the possibility of the “beyond,” the

⁷⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 28.

⁸⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 30.

⁸¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 32.

⁸² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 33.

⁸³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 34.

“infinite,”⁸⁴ which leads Levinas to a natural claim—the face of the Other continues to speak after death.

The Death and Totality of Dasein—Friday, December 19, 1975. Heidegger asserts that death emerges as a totality of “being there” in the experience of the death of another.⁸⁵ *Dasein* works with a debt to be paid, a “distance relative to itself,” in response to death.⁸⁶ The “being-out-ahead-of-oneself” is the movement of *Dasein* to death.⁸⁷ Death is that which actually completes *Dasein*.⁸⁸ *Levinas admires the recognition of the power of death and its import on us via our experience of and response to the death of another. Unlike Heidegger’s conception of death, however, the visage of another continues to speak.*

Being-Toward-Death as the Origin of Time—Friday, January 9, 1976. For Levinas, death is tied to significance and responsibility. Death announces the mortality of *Dasein*, but it is not an abrupt end, but rather an ongoing recognition of the not-yet. *Dasein* lives as if close to the end in every moment of life; death becomes a defining characteristic of one’s own being. Death then shapes not a moment, but the “manner of being”. Death is not an “unfulfilled future,” but the very root of being. “Just as *Dasein*, as long as it is, is always a ‘not yet,’ it is also always its end.”⁸⁹ The movement toward death carries with it an ever-present recognition of the question of non-being. *For Levinas, on the other hand, focus is on responsibility for the Other, not on a preoccupation with one’s own death.*

Death, Anxiety, and Fear—Friday, January 16, 1976. One lives with the “to-be-in-question.”⁹⁰ *Dasein* responds to anxiety “for” and “of,” which render insight to a “being-toward-

⁸⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 37.

⁸⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 38.

⁸⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 39.

⁸⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 40.

⁸⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 41.

⁸⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 43.

⁹⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 46.

death.”⁹¹ One flees death into the “They” of “idle talk.”⁹² The certainty of death makes all other possibilities of life possible, according to Heidegger. *Levinas would agree that flight from meeting existence is an escape and, additionally, an eclipse of one’s responsibility for the Other.*

Time Considered on the Basis of Death—Friday, January 23, 1976. Death is a “reversal of appearing”;⁹³ it makes *Dasein* and time possible. In every moment in life, *Dasein* is in relationship with death.⁹⁴ *For Levinas, the human is in relationship with responsibility for the Other in each moment of life.*

Inside Heidegger: Bergson—Friday, January 30, 1976. Levinas stresses Bergson’s contribution to time via *duration*, which breaks with the Western equation of time with measurement.⁹⁵ Duration assumes a heaviness that descends into and with the self. Duration makes intersubjectivity between persons possible, as one attends to the “interiority” of another.⁹⁶ *Levinas recounts that such a view of duration accounts for signification that transpires long after the empirical death of another.*

The Radical Question: Kant Against Heidegger—Friday, February 6, 1976. Levinas explicates what he considers a fundamental difference between Kant and Heidegger with the latter focused on Being and the former on transcendence, which permits Kant to understand signification not tied to Being. Kant’s transcendental ideal understands meaning otherwise than finitude.⁹⁷ *Levinas highlights an alternative to finitude—the signification of the face that continues....*

⁹¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 47.

⁹² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 48.

⁹³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 50.

⁹⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 53.

⁹⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 55.

⁹⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 56.

⁹⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 60.

A Reading of Kant (Continued)—Friday, February 13, 1976. This section continues a differentiation between Heidegger and Kant with the latter's emphasis on a sense hope that is not linear, but tied to happiness manifested in the doing of a universal maxim.⁹⁸ This hope offers signification that is more than and beyond Being. For Kant, hope is a product of happiness; it is the "rational character of a virtue" that works with a universal imperative. Happiness is then tied to virtuous work; it is not morality that is the "Sovereign Good," but the doing of ethical reasoning and action. "Therefore, neither happiness alone nor virtue alone—both of these injure Reason".⁹⁹ *Levinas concurred with the dangers of the reification of morality, happiness, and virtue; he recognized the power of finitude and the reality of making ethical decisions without pure assurance of correctness; in such living one finds meaning and hope beyond an impending sense of annulation.*

How to Think Nothingness?—Friday, February 20, 1976. Levinas asserted that the notion of nothingness has "defied" much of recent Western philosophy.¹⁰⁰ Contrary to this perspective is Kant's understanding of "rational hope" as a counter to nothingness.¹⁰¹ Rational hope is outside the temporal sequence of events. Rational hope is outside of time; it assumes the power of self-legislation attentively tied to the categorical imperative. *For Levinas, the joy of existence, trumps notion of nothingness; in existence the face of the Other matters.*

Hegel's Response: The Science of Logic—Friday, February 27, 1976. Levinas emphasizes that "pure being" as understood by Hegel is indeterminate, including its commencement; genesis, corruption, and decomposition are subsumed within the "absolute."¹⁰² Nothing is new, and at the same time, annihilation never ceases. Nothingness is part of Being,

⁹⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 63–65.

⁹⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 64–65.

¹⁰⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 70.

¹⁰¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 67.

¹⁰² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 72–73.

with beginning ignited within nothingness that gives shape to the absolute. *For Levinas, there is a beginning before all beginnings that is part of an immemorial past; it is an origin prior to origins.*

Reading Hegel's Science of Logic (Continued)—Friday, March 5, 1976. For Hegel, ““pure being and pure nothingness are the same.””¹⁰³ There is an identity of nothingness/being.¹⁰⁴ One cannot name the difference between being and nothingness. *For Levinas, however, there is an origin of ethics fundamentally prior to an origin of being.*

From the Science of Logic to the Phenomenology—Friday, March 12, 1976. Belief that is theoretically constructed is better understood as *doxa*.¹⁰⁵ The thinking of being connects nothingness with thought, connecting one to a world beyond measure. “*I think*” permits consciousness to engage in reciprocal recognition.¹⁰⁶ This consciousness becomes an ethical state that clarifies human law and divine law.¹⁰⁷ The double form of consciousness permits the spirit to function as individual within a community.¹⁰⁸ The universal is lost when an individual dies; it is only the individual who can glimpse the universal. *For Levinas, sociality is a defining shaper of our humanness—only through the particularity of personal responsibility does one meet the possibility of the universal.*

Reading Hegel's Phenomenology (Continued)—Friday, March 19, 1976. Hegel, like Kant, does not equate the individual with Spirit or an ethic.¹⁰⁹ The person is the individual Other, which is the dwelling place of the universal. Universality, for Hegel, rests in the individual.¹¹⁰

Death of an individual is the continuing progress of thought. For Hegel, death is not a person or

¹⁰³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 77.

¹⁰⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 79.

¹⁰⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 80.

¹⁰⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 81.

¹⁰⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 82.

¹⁰⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 84–85.

¹¹⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 85.

thing, but a “shadow” that points to the obscure world of thought and appearances akin to Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*.¹¹¹ Death is a nothingness that returns to the “ground of being.”¹¹² *Levinas, on the other hand, finds the universal through the particular, which permit a glimpse of an anarchical origin.*

The Scandal of Death: From Hegel to Fink—Friday, April 9, 1976. The nothingness of Hegel and Aristotle assumes that there is “already a beginning.”¹¹³ Death is a “destiny;”¹¹⁴ for the real that was always “destined for destruction.”¹¹⁵ Death connects one to the beginning once again with self-grasping thought.¹¹⁶ Eugen Fink (1905-1975),¹¹⁷ contrarily, connects death to intelligibility. Death is a “rupture” that must be met in silence¹¹⁸ that functions as a “scandal” in that it is a estrangement from intelligibility.¹¹⁹ *For Levinas, death is not a scandal, but intimately linked to an immemorial echo of responsibility that continues to call forth the actions of another.*

Another Thinking of Death: Starting from Bloch—Friday, April 23, 1976. Levinas contends that Ernst Bloch (1885-1977)¹²⁰ engages a humanism that yearns for a “habitable

¹¹¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 86–87.

¹¹² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 87.

¹¹³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 88.

¹¹⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 88.

¹¹⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 88.

¹¹⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 89–90.

¹¹⁷ Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl & Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology, 1928-1938* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 1-72, 529-543. Born in Konstanz, Fink attended the University of Freiburg in 1925, studying with Husserl as well as Heidegger. He became Husserl’s assistant in 1928. He submitted his doctoral dissertation in 1929, under readers Husserl and Heidegger (marking the only PhD project the two ever oversaw together). Fink was present when Husserl was dismissed from his Rectorship and was caught in the political, personal and intellectual divide between his teachers. Though able to escape Nazi persecution due to his non-Jewish, German lineage, he remained Husserl’s assistant after his dismissal. Husserl would come to acknowledge Fink as his “collaborator” rather than assistant, with Fink making substantial contributions to *Cartesian Meditations* and other Husserl works. He worked with Husserl up to Husserl’s death in 1938 and delivered a eulogy at his cremation service. He went onto to teach at Freiburg in 1946, following Husserl’s work while also declaring that his work “decisively differences” himself from Husserl.

¹¹⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 89.

¹¹⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 90.

¹²⁰ Vincent Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 1-45. Ernst Bloch is a Jewish-German and Marxist philosopher who wrote across several academic disciplines, concerned with matters of culture, religion, nature and utopias in a career that spanned over six decades. He was at one time a student of Max Weber and was a friend at various points of György Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Bertolt Brecht, Paul Tillich and other

site.”¹²¹ What led many people to socialism was the “spectacle of misery” that called for concern for the neighbor.¹²² Bloch understands Marx as offering a philosophy about a progress toward the enactment of human dignity. Alienation of labor represents the time of incompleteness of the progress.¹²³ “Social evil” is then understood a “fault” or an obstacle in the path toward progress.¹²⁴ For Bloch, time is a dwelling of hope that lives within culture that “vibrates in sympathy” toward a progressive ideal of human dignity.¹²⁵ *Levinas responds with affirmation to the role of neighbor’s suffering and our eternal responsibility in addressing another’s pain as the keystone to attentiveness to the demands for justice.*

A Reading of Bloch (Continued)—Friday, April 30, 1976. Bloch assumes the importance of hope tied to a utopian future.¹²⁶ Anxiety about death originates in the incompleteness of one’s work, a stoppage of progress.¹²⁷ Bloch contends that when the light emanating from utopia bursts upon the “obscurity of subjectivity,” we witness “astonishment.” Through astonishment one senses the penetrating rain of progress at work.¹²⁸ *Levinas responds to hope, not via progress, but in an unending obligation to attend to a voice before all voices.*

A Reading of Bloch: Toward a Conclusion—Friday, May 7, 1976. The subject in a dark world works for “a better world” with the fear of dying before necessary work is accomplished.¹²⁹ Culture shaped by such work is then understood as a cultural revolution.¹³⁰

“Astonishment” emerges in moments that one glimpses a perfected utopia in which the

prominent 20th century thinkers. Some have criticized parts of his work as having Stalinist sympathies, though Vincent Geoghegan argues that his relationship to this form of thought is more nuanced than some of his critics have allowed.

¹²¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 94.

¹²² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 94.

¹²³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 95.

¹²⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 95.

¹²⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 96.

¹²⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 98.

¹²⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 99.

¹²⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 100.

¹²⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 101.

¹³⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 101.

uniqueness of person emerges.¹³¹ During these moments one understands work as “leisure.”¹³² Bloch connects astonishment with leisure in a manner that refuses to equate leisure with “the unfinished or capitalist world” of empty time and “sad Sundays” that urge one to exploit holidays that can offer rejuvenation. Leisure connected with the temporal world of astonishment is stronger than “any possession or any property;” astonishment counters the world of melancholia.¹³³ Bloch has the audacity to celebrate astonishment, culture, and leisure as coordinates of work that invite and ultimately glimpse a dwelling for utopian hope. *Levinas recognizes that the oeuvre of a life matters. Additionally, he understands the power of astonishment through the expressive voice of saying.*

Thinking About Death on the Basis of Time—Friday, May 14, 1976. Death opens the door to attentiveness to others; it functions as an interruption in time.¹³⁴ The “flux” of time lives within interruption that makes our understanding of the infinite possible.¹³⁵ *Levinas understood that the infinite as interrupted by the finite; the infinite embraces as a form of totality yields a world without interruption, saying, and interruption.*

To Conclude: Questioning Again—Friday, May 21, 1976. Death is not of our current world; it is forever a “scandal.”¹³⁶ Death unites us to an origin before origins, while bringing us face to face with the finite. In the authority of death there is yet a greater power—the face of the Other that calls us into responsibility. *When all analysis is complete there is one fundamental fact remaining—the death of the Other matters when it calls someone into responsibility.*

¹³¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 102.

¹³² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 102.

¹³³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 102.

¹³⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 106.

¹³⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 107–108.

¹³⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 113.

In this series of lectures Levinas addressed his perspective on death tied to calling of a face that speaks with a power greater than death. His project attends to that which is before the before and the beyond; such a project requires final reflections on a God that cannot be named.

Part II: God and Onto-theo-logy.

Beginning with Heidegger—Friday, November 7, 1975. Levinas examines Heidegger's question of being after God. Heidegger's project, became a Onto-theo-logy with an epoch announcing a particular way of being. Being is then differentiated from human beings with language functioning as the "house of being."¹³⁷ Unlike Hegel, where philosophy aligns with progress, Heidegger moves backward in order for questioning and thinking about Being to be understood and opened up. *Levinas understands the move backward, otherwise, toward a primordial ethics. Levinas does not endorse thinking about Being of thinking, but rather a passive thought that attends to an ancient ethical echo in a disinterested and determined fashion.*

Being and Meaning—Friday, November 14, 1975. Heidegger posits Being as the origin of meaning. Levinas states that to separate God from Onto-theo-logy means that the Same and the Other cannot be equated; the key is difference. For Levinas, this suggests that questioning and thinking about Being is no longer central, but rather difference and ethics are primary, not Being. The Greeks tied meaning to discourse, but Levinas understands meaning as *a priori* to Being. Communication about Being comes long after an ancient commanding communication about ethics. *Levinas begins with immemorial responsibility that existed long Being and thinking about the importance of Being.*

Being and World—Friday, November 21, 1975. In the Western tradition, it is "rhetoric" that functions as the carrier of meaning. This tradition privileges the synthesizing through thought. Levinas asserts that Heidegger works within this rhetorical position in a questioning

¹³⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 122.

fashion, undoing metaphysics, as he gestures toward another metaphysics in which the “Same is still the rational, the meaningful.”¹³⁸ *Levinas’s conception of ethics is prior and beyond synthesis, metaphysics, and the rational; it is an archaistic and immemorial command of obligation.*

To Think God on the Basis of Ethics—Friday, November 5, 1975. Heidegger offered a rationality of disquietude, as he questioned Being. Only through the questioning of Being does one engage and understand Being. Levinas privileges ethics that is an origin prior to any disquietude of Being. *Levinas did, however, understand the vitality of disquietude. Unlike Heidegger he understood disquietude arising from the interruption of the face of the Other that imposes on me, activating an immemorial patience of ethics that reshapes my own identity.*

The Same and the Other—Friday, December 12, 1975. Pure passivity of response to an ethical call emerges from the Other; we answer within the diachrony of time.¹³⁹ Levinas repeatedly announces the importance of meaning before knowledge within a duration before time. It is the Other that sobers the Same into awareness of this ancient ethical call before, during, and after time. *The face of the Other acts as a spiritual awakening to a sacred command of responsibility.*

The Subject-Object Correlation—Friday, December 19, 1975. Transcendence happens in the Other awakening the Same. Difference, not synthesis and correlation of subject and object, counters the Western impulse to absorb. *Levinas does not begin with an originative subject, but with an awakened subject, the derivative I.*

The Question of Subjectivity—Friday, January 9, 1976. The gathering of structures frames signification and constitutes the “said”. “Saying” grows silent within the said, while a

¹³⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 135.

¹³⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 141.

trace of saying remains within the said. Heidegger stated that the poet enlivened the said of a poem and permitted it to speak; a poet awakens the voice of a saying that dwells in the silence of the said. The facticity, the saidness of the Other, houses a trace of saying that redirects one's responsibility as an "I" with obligations that are unique and particular manner. *Levinas understood the said as the dwelling of the trace of saying; the interaction between saying and said makes signification of responsibility possible.*

Kant and the Transcendental Ideal—Friday, January 16, 1976. The dialectic of transcendence suggested by Kant assumes thinking that is both empirical and general, permitting one to sense what is and might be. In Western philosophy, communication announces the signification of a representation of Being. Signification that is thematized lives with the "said;" "saying" is independent of content, bursting forth into meaning not yet reified. *The Other points us to the call of responsibility that dwells within "saying"—an inarticulate, yet definitive voice. .*

Signification as Saying—Friday, January 23, 1976. The signification of saying fuels responsibility for the Other. There is no said or clear programmatic answer that calls forth responsibility; the I of ethics lives within a dwelling of saying that is forever moved to the particular. The call of responsibility charges an ethical I with obligation held hostage/indebted to the Other who renders possible my identity. The manner in which this debt is carried out has no formula; it is unique, not distinct; one must offer a one-of-a-kind response. *Saying carries signification that cannot be packaged or framed in a manner that technicians would seek to duplicate and imitate.*

Ethical Subjectivity—Friday, January 30, 1976. This form of subjectivity habituates within the saying and is manifested in uniqueness response to the Other. Saying dwells prior to language in the before, the above, and the beyond. The accusative *moi* finds signification in

uniqueness of response that emerges in response to saying. *Ethical subjectivity is performative, commanded by an ancient ethical echo.*

Transcendence, Idolatry, and Secularization—Friday, January 6, 1976. When one connects transcendence to ethics we discern a “secularization of the sacred.”¹⁴⁰ Ontology becomes the idolatry of our time. Perhaps one can understand secularization as the idolatry of the West. Levinas discusses the secularization of transcendence as tied to the pursuit of Being. With Being an ideology, it misses the world of the hungry and the poor in daily life. Even technology as a secularization “is destructive of pagan gods.”¹⁴¹ *Levinas understood the danger of false height through ideology, reification, and secularization, as well as the ethical necessity of countering a local that members seek to seize and possess. .*

Don Quixote: Bewitchment and Hunger—Friday, February 13, 1976. Levinas states that the world is always proportionate to our knowledge with God functioning as an ultimate metaphor of “dis-proportion.”¹⁴² The sense of dis-proportion can be avoided by anything that brings about “bewitchment,” which Levinas states is core to the story of *Don Quixote*. One can be bewitched by any ideology or reification that misses the face of the Other, which can too easily occur when one is in a “well fed slumber.” Interestingly, Levinas underscored that in *Don Quixote*’s enchantment there was a “transferable responsibility.” *Even in the midst of bewitchment there is a trace of the saying of ethics that calls forth responsibility.*

Subjectivity as Anarchy—Friday, February 20, 1976. Levinas’s conception of ethics originates prior to a beginning in “*an-archy*.” Ethical signification dwells in act of

¹⁴⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 163.

¹⁴¹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 166, 275 fn6. In distinction from Heidegger, Levinas has argued that technology has philosophical implications and does not necessarily reject it in all its forms. He affirms the exposure of some pagan gods as “gods of the world.” An extended discussion of this exists in Emmanuel Levinas, “Secularization and Hunger,” trans. Bettina Bergo, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 20, no. 2-21, no. 1 (1998).

¹⁴² Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 167.

responsibility. Unlike Heidegger, Levinas's version of freedom emerges from response to a demand for responsibility. Ethical subjectivity is detached from Being and intimately tied to an original echo—"I am my brother's keeper." The ethical command for investiture in the Other is impersonal; it shapes the personal identity. *Levinas does not equate ethics with a program or a set of skills; ethics is an originary anarchy that fuels uniqueness of responsibility.*

Freedom and Responsibility—Friday, February 27, 1976. Freedom emerges in the act of responsibility for the Other; freedom is the enactment of a "uniqueness" of responsibility that generates "superindividuation," which can be carried forth by no one other than me. This responsibility is a vocation and is far from utopian; it demands an inequality of me toward and for the Other. It is a call for responsibility heard via a demanding whisper since time immemorial. *For Levinas ethics is performed in an inequality of self in relation to the Other.*

The Ethical Relationship as a Departure from Ontology—Friday, March 5, 1976. Ethics begins with a dis-inter-estedness, a dissymmetry of relationship with the Other that demands substitution of me for the suffering of another, which abandons the "free ego." But, even the responsibility of ethics has limits. Justice attends to "the third party's intervening in the relationship of nearness."¹⁴³ Meaning dwells within the revelatory that emerges in responsibility that originates beyond and before the assurance of technique, clarity of ethics, of confidence in a singular conception of justice. *Levinas reminds us that totality cannot subsume ethics; it must give way to justice that mitigates our responsibility for the proximate Other, just as ethics must temper the assurance of justice.*

The Extra-Ordinary Subjectivity of Responsibility—Friday, March 12, 1976. Levinas stated that subjectivity is the "extra-ordinary" dimension of my own responsibility for another. This responsibility is not a disclosure of an ethical act, but a bearing witness of me manifests in

¹⁴³ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 183.

the “Here I am.”¹⁴⁴ *This call of responsibility is both extra-ordinary and simultaneously otherwise than the convention of Being.*

The Sincerity of Saying—Friday, March 19, 1976. Meaning begins with giving bread to another and requires practical material acts. Such gestures offer sincerity when they dwell within saying; sincerity lives until it is absorbed into a programmatic said. Sincerity is a witnessing that does not return the focus to oneself. Sincerity of saying offers a “model without a world.” *Sincerity cannot name itself in the witnessing of saying; it lives beyond reflection and in practical acts for the Other.*

Glory of the Infinite and Witnessing—Friday, April 9, 1976. Inspiration witnesses to ethics and responsibility in response to the Other. It is not a form of representation, thematization, but a saying that temporally manifests itself in a witnessing burst of responsibility—“Here I am.”¹⁴⁵ *Witnessing begins with saying moves to the said and then fades once again within the said as a trace until it is called forth once again.*

Witnessing and Ethics—Friday, April 23, 1976. Witnessing is the fulfilling of responsibility. One bears witness in the “Here I am.” It is the fulfilling of responsibility propelled by an “anachronism of inspiration.” It is a fulfilling of a witnessing for God without ever using the word God. “God is not uttered.”¹⁴⁶ Witnessing is performed in the doing, not in representation. *Ethics emerges from an immemorial sacred call that is derailed in representation and solidification of the said.*

From Consciousness to Prophetism—Friday, April 30, 1976. Bearing witness is not an act of making manifest, but rather being responsible in response to an immemorial command. The notion of God reminds us of a height of responsibility beyond being that does not pause in

¹⁴⁴ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 188–189.

¹⁴⁵ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 197.

¹⁴⁶ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 200.

idolatry; it “speaks beyond being.”¹⁴⁷ *To witness is to bear responsibility; the focus remains on the responsibility, not the communicator. Responsibility, not the prophet must speak.*

In Praise of Insomnia—Friday, May 7, 1976. Insomnia is tied to consciousness; it is an awakening tied to a *diachrony* of time. Insomnia is the Other is an awakening of the Same; it is the spiritual activity of the soul. Consciousness “descends from insomnia.”¹⁴⁸ *Levinas points to consciousness that witnesses its presence in a spiritual insomnia that awakens us to responsibility.*

Outside of Experience: The Cartesian Idea of Infinite—Friday, May 14, 1976. Within the West there is a privileging of Being and immanence. Even much discussion of God rests within representation and immanence, which is a form of ontology. Such a focus can miss a signification prior to Being and immanence.¹⁴⁹ *It is the ethical command before Being that Levinas calls us to attend and witness.*

A God “Transcendent to a Point of Absence”—Friday, May 21, 1976. The final contribution in this series of essays announces with exceptional clarity the danger of turning the good and the infinite into a totality of assurance. One eclipses the power of the infinite when it is used to eclipse the finite. The infinite cannot be embraced as a weapon of self-assurance. The infinite dwells within incomprehensibility, unable to be grasped and possessed. The infinite is awakened in responsibility for and to the Other. The infinite arises in a “trauma of awakening....”¹⁵⁰ The awakening is a love without eros, a desire that cannot be quenched, a disinterested responsibility, and a signification that is both beyond, and before Being. Such a

¹⁴⁷ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 202.

¹⁴⁸ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 210.

¹⁴⁹ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 217–218.

¹⁵⁰ Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 220.

view of ethics when enacted witnesses to God as transcendent to a point of absence. *Infinite responsibility is played out by a derivative me who stands and acts—Here I am.*

The Saying and the Said

We witness in the words of Derrida the reality of a saying that lives within a trace that rests within the ultimate form of the said—death. Levinas’s project suggests the inability of death to extinguish ethics, which is not tied to a person, but to immemorial time that houses ethics. A transcendence to the point of absence is a God without Being and immanence; acknowledgement of God is performed in responsibility for the Other. In each case, Levinas articulates meaning beyond meaning, time before time, responsibility before necessity—an obligation of ethics that speaks in spite of death with recognition of a transcendence so powerful that self-assurance is forsaken. Levinas offers us insight into an immemorial world of responsibility that connects us to a universal ethic, “I am my brother’s Keeper.” This audio ethical echo moves one to responsibility for the Other—witnessing, “Here I stand.” At such a moment, personal decision-making begins—one must discern how to be uniquely responsible for a particular Other. There is no blueprint for such acts of responsibility, just an immemorial command to be responsible.

1. *The said of death* cannot erase the trace of ethics;
2. *The face of the Other* calls through a saying that interrupts the assurance of ideologies, procedures, and culturally imposed finality;
3. *Transcendence* houses an ethic that is beyond clarity of definitive description;
4. *Death and God* both announce the possibility of spiritual awakening when the trace, not solidified anguish or assurance, calls us forth;

5. *Ethics and justice* dwell within *adieu* of goodbye and hello, goodbye to self-assurance and hello to an immemorial ethical echo that demands us to stand and to respond in uniqueness and particularity forever obligated and ever fearful of self-righteousness. Yet, even the call of ethics has limits, as one considers those not at the table of decision-making. The interruption of ethics makes justice possible. Finitude and infinity, the said and saying, justice and ethics, the universal and the particular interrupt one another, defining human identity with responsibility and ambiguity. There is no code, process, procedure, or rule that will ensure the universal enactment of ethics and justice. There is, however, a demand to forever perform acts of responsibility for the Other, the neighbor, the Third—ever reminded of a *me* that originates in exteriority of responsibility unresponsive to self-righteousness and self-assurance.

Ryan James Kopaitich

Abstract for Submission

NALS 2015

31 December 2014

The Literary, the Analytic, and the Continental: Literary Theory on the Cusp of Two Traditions

The histories of both philosophy of language and metaphysics have been intertwined in both continental and analytic traditions. My attempt to explore this intersection as elucidated, albeit differently, by both traditions finds an important outlet in the literary. From Heidegger's metaphysical meditations on the nature of Being seen through the poetry of Hölderlin and Rilke to Van Inwagen's work on existence and fiction, the fascination with and mystery of the intimate relation between these two areas of inquiry is preserved across the philosophical divide. It is the contention here that the literary may serve as a fertile ground to investigate these two inextricably linked fields in such a way that both traditions commingle fluently, addressing the concerns raised on both sides. The questions arising from the literary allow for a non-systematic approach, or specifically a non-linear systematic approach, that does not find a sufficient outlet, or so I argue, in analytic philosophy. At the same time, however, the theories of reference and indexicality which have found various formulations in analytic philosophy are pointed at precisely this link between the metaphysical and the linguistic in a way that has, with a few superficial exceptions, often been ignored on the continental side.

This paper proposes a look at how such a methodology may be formulated and utilized as well as what questions such a work of theory may be able to pose and answer. Furthermore, it will include a brief reading of David Foster Wallace's novel *The Broom of the System*, in which he formulates the literary as a non-systematic linguistic space which engages the problems of language and metaphysics in a synthetic way. The results of such an investigation will incorporate David Lewis' modal realism and philosophy of language and Gilles Deleuze's work on the intensive and extensive to analyze a theory of the intersection of these two topics based upon a theory of reference derived from the work of both philosophers. The intent is to tease out a starting point at which the approaches and ideas, from Quine to Cappelen and from Heidegger to Badiou, may be seen as part of a constant and singular problem within the work of philosophy.

BioNote

Ryan Kopaitich currently works in the section for literary theory at the English Department of the University of Bern, and is pursuing his PhD as part of the SNF Sinergia project, “Theory and Practice of Authenticity in Global Cultural Production”. He obtained his BA in English from the University of Arizona in 2009 and an MA in Comparative Literature from the University of Fribourg in 2012. His main research interests are contemporary Anglophone and continental novels, continental and analytic philosophy, with particular emphasis on philosophy of language, and literary theory.

Sarah Pessin

On the Impossibility of Levinasian Hospitality: Mysticism, Moral Perception, or Messianicity?: 3 Versions of Levinas as 3 Visions of Justice in Habermas, Putnam, and Derrida

In “Habermas, Derrida, and the Question of Religion,” Peter E. Gordon analyzes Habermas’ concern with Levinasian ethics (as a concern too with Kierkegaard and Derrida) as a concern to avoid the “irrational” (or, we might say, the mystical). In *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*, Hilary Putnam champions Levinas and critiques Habermas while affirming his *own* concern to avoid the “mysterious” (or, we might say, the mystical—which he attributes not to Levinas, but to the intuitionism of Moore). In this paper, I examine the supra-rational and transcendent nature of Levinasian hospitality as a necessary and impossible “greeting-beyond-reason,” and I invite us to consider whether this is too mysterious (as Habermas seems to think), not mysterious at all (as Putnam seems to think, aligning it, as he does, with his own sense of moral perception), or mysterious simply for the reason that it is directed to a never-yet-arrived-future (as Derrida seems to think, aligning it, as he does, with his own sense of messianicity). In the course of my presentation, I show how each of these 3 views (Habermas’ critical philosophy, Putnam’s analytic philosophy, and Derrida’s postmodern philosophy) are linked to 3 respective views of justice, and I argue ultimately that the precise spirit of Levinasian hospitality—and the precise spirit of Levinasian justice—is captured by none of these 3 views.

The Mystery of Ethical Responsibility: Emmanuel Levinas versus Analytical Philosophy

Yves Sobel

For analytical philosophers, the ethical imperative is a mystery. Some prefer not to mention it. Others just have no choice but to note that language is commonly used to talk about good and evil or to admit subjunctive and imperative moods as part of grammar. Still others exhibit a moral sense, an ethical commitment, attachment to values, regardless of what is recognized as central to their work.

Bertrand Russell is definitely one of the pillars of analytical philosophy whereas Emmanuel Levinas claims his phenomenological filiation. One can thus assume that they are hopelessly separated by the Analytical-Continental Divide. Their thoughts, their struggles and their evolution yet converge on several points:

Both thinkers were shaken by the violence of their times. Russell's commitment against the First World War at the first echoes of saber-rattling has led him to develop thorough ethical and meta-ethical reflection. Levinas developed his concept of "ethics as first philosophy"¹ in the "presentiment and the memory of the Nazi horror"²

Russell is undoubtedly one of the founders of modern logic, champion of rationality, bitter opponent of religion and challenging the recourse to God. He does not hesitate however to draw a link between belief in God and ethics:

"For those who no longer believe in the God of traditional theology, a certain change of phraseology may be necessary, but not a fundamental change as to ethical values."³

Levinas strongly defends the achievements of reason. He honors scientific research and strict logic. He also fights against the capture of the human mind by the irrational or by mystical exaltation, the attraction of the mythic, the recourse to *Hinterwelten* and telluric forces. He resists the temptation to solve problems through physical or verbal violence, or even by seduction. For him, it is through ethical responsibility that "God comes to mind."

"The notion of face in our work 'Totality and Infinity' already asserted the significance of the singular which, while not referring to universality, does not however express whatever irrational essence."⁴

More generally, from David Hume⁵ to Hilary Putnam⁶, the naturalist and pragmatist traditions have not ceased their interest in the problem of values. We propose to specify where runs the divide between the thought of Emmanuel Levinas and these traditions in the way they locate the source of the ethical imperative and normativity.

¹ *The Levinas Reader*, Ed. Sean Hand, p. 75

² *Signature*, in *Difficult Freedom*, p. 291; trans. Mary Ellen Petrisko, ed. Adrian Peperzak, *Research in Phenomenology*, VIII (1978), n. 44, 175-189

³ *Human Society in Ethics and Politics*, p. 16-17

⁴ *Language and Proximity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Collected Philosophical Papers* (1987 Martinus Nijhoff Publishers), p. 120 : "... already brought out the signifyingness of the singular which, although not referring to universality, does not therefore express some irrational essence"

⁵ *A Treatise Of Human Nature*, Being an attempt to introduce the Experimental method of Reasoning into moral subjects, Part I - *Of Virtue And Vice In General*, Sect. I *Moral Distinctions Not Derived From Reason*

⁶ *Ethics without Ontology*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002)