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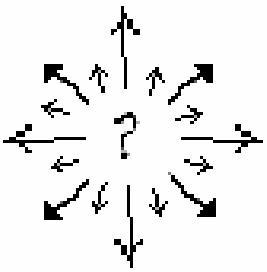

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Editor, Sofia Philosophical Review
Faculty of Philosophy
Sofia University
15 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd.
Sofia 1504
BULGARIA
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I. ONGOING CONVERSATION ON LEVINAS' METAPHYSICS, CONTINUATION FROM VOL. III, NO. 1

Ethics in an Extra-Moral Sense

Jerard Bensussan (University of Strasbourg)
Translation from French: Sofie Verraest

To present in a single conference a line of thought as strong, as original, and as peculiar as that of Emmanuel Levinas involves a major difficulty. How indeed do we know where to begin, from what point of view to enter the subject, from which angle to introduce it? Every decision runs the risk of seeming arbitrary, every determined choice of seeming exclusive or forced. However, a choice has to be made, a mode of exposition has to be decided upon. If we reflect upon it somewhat, it does not seem to be the least judicious option to depart from that which is not Levinas's thought, but which is nevertheless often unjustly held to be so. Maybe, in this way, we can shed light upon a paradox which is so surprising that it seems to lead to some redoutable misinterpretations here and there. Perhaps to signal them is not the worst possible way of accessing an oeuvre charged with disdain and overwhelmed with simplified yet dominating readings.

The register where this line of thought is massively inscribed, the space of which its actuality has seemed to impose the motifs is, as we all know, "ethics". As far as this term of ethics and its dominant uses is concerned, we have to be careful from the outset not be misled. The reception of Levinas's oeuvre – understood in a broad sense, i.e. as a public of non-philosophers in the strict sense of the word, a public of non-specialists – had to deal with a conceptuality that is so new that it has, and continues to have, the reputation of being difficult. In this reception, the theme of ethics and

the theme, more or less concomitant, of responsibility have come to add to one another as it were spontaneously, and with good right. In Levinas's own time and its outdated modalities, the reception of his work was largely reactive. If one were to reconstitute its history in the moving panorama of philosophical ideas, one would notice that Levinas, for a good thirty years, was neither read nor heard, except by a few "amateurs" who went to listen to him at Jean Wahl's Collège philosophique, or at the Ecole Normale Israélite Orientale for his talmudic Saturday morning lectures. Marked by Marxism and existentialism, and after that by structuralism, over-determined by the political context (the Cold War, colonial wars, the mobilizing theme of "changing the world"), the grand debates in France after the Second World War had no knowledge of him, whereas he most certainly had knowledge of them, as his articles show us very clearly. If we take some distance, we can more easily understand this silence surrounding his oeuvre in its ecumenical reception.

The sixties and seventies were highly sensitive to history and its movements, that is to say, to what Levinas defines as "totality". His times were concerned with urgent and collective affairs in which the individual could only give "meaning" to itself by subordinating itself to a project which exceeded and encompassed it, to a universal and a worldwide revolutionary project. A meditation on the nature of Levinas, concerning my responsibility for a singular other, whatever the latter does, up to the point where I can be held responsible for his very responsibility, and focusing on the absolute uniqueness of the responsive subjectivity, could not but appear as misplaced and in need of actualization in the context of that time. The climate which subsequently allowed Levinas to be read was marked by a general recession of the human sciences, especially of Marxism and structuralism which dominated the seventies – a recession which is itself tied up with the world history, with planetary political events and, specifically, with the fall of communism. The new ideological landscape resulting from these conditions can be described as the condemnation to death of the death of the subject. According to the "structural-marxist" themes (or sometimes the structuralo-marxist vulgate), man is being acted upon rather than acting himself, and subjects merely appear as carriers of functions, as an assembly

of discourses and dispositions, as organizations, that is to say, as the expression of a process of which they are nothing but the unconscious and determined carriers. Putting forward a quasi-paroxystic form of responsibility, of my own-most responsibility, exceeding all determinations to which I may be subjected, Levinas seems to authorize – unlike the line of thought which had been dominant all along, and at a specific moment in intellectual but also in political, social, ideological history – some sort of a self-reappropriation of the subject, of its acting individuality, of its capacity of autonomous initiative.

But, whereas Levinas's thought appears as credible, from several perspectives a real and profound contradiction seems to be in place. The Levinasian responsibility in no way results from an active "I want". It rather constitutes an original predetermination of the subject by means of which the subject is, upon closer look, more determined than it is by the unconscious or the relations of production. In the light of this contradiction, the Levinasian body of ideas runs the risk of being simplified, schematized and fixed as a moral quasi-ideology corresponding in a Hegelian manner to an era of universal history (of which the necessity and legitimacy is by the way understandable), to a determined moment of this history which today is revolutionized itself. This intermediary era is that of altruist and humanitarian morals, that of the verbal inflation of a divided ethics confused with deontological codes, that of the rediscovery of the enterprise, the market, but also of human rights. An era of "an exhibition of ethics", as Plato describes constitutions, concerning democracy. An era where one could, for example, speak of an ethics of journalism, a medical ethics, an employer's ethics, all of which are hardly linked up with one another. Consequently, the theoretical panorama in which they are inscribed, with its disassembled and often chaotic elements, appears as a tower of Babel. Ethics of discourse, communicational ethics, neo-aristotelism, utilitarianism, contractualism, communitarianism, differentialism, meta-ethical reflection, applied ethics – so many moral positions which are practical, sectorial and competitive, which undoubtedly have their effective importance from a theoretical and practical point of view, from the point of view of foundation and of the question of comportment, but all of whom have nothing in common with the ethics of which Levinas constitutes the pivot of all thinking about subjectivity.

The ambition of the author of Otherwise Than Being, indeed, is not to put forward (within the used range of philosophical disciplines, from epistemology to anthropology over hermeneutics) a new theory of ethics as the study of ethos, an analysis of average and general human behavior. Reacting against a number of prejudices or established readings, we have to begin by emphatically stating that Levinas does not propose a moral philosophy. He enjoins us even to be careful never to be the "victim" of it; those are the first words of *Totality and Infinity*. In order to read him well, then, we have to keep ourselves from the hurried and dangerous, let us say it as it is, attempt to find in his body of ideas a prescriptive ethics comprising laws or normative regulations susceptible of improving the moral quality of a given historical community. This preliminary clarification is necessary and very important. Levinas's ethics never engages in a more or less coherent systematization of the entirety of regulations for the behavior of a human group. Neither does he found the possibility of a rational justification of moral norms through or under a unifying principle. It is thus really required to understand and interpret his ethics in its extra-moral sense.

What does this thinking aim at, what does it endeavor in? What Levinas is attempting is to express the "sense" of "what is human in man" – an expression pointing to the "non-synthesizable", as he puts it, i.e. that aspect of and in man which never allows itself to be totalized without remainder nor to be resumed in a totality of "meaning". Levinas's body of ideas constitutes an Ethics of Ethics, according to Derrida[1], or an ethics without law, without concept, without morality, and which precedes its determination in laws, in concepts, and in morals. We are less dealing with outlining the foundations of the subjectivity than we are with returning to its arch-origin along the uncertain axis of the relationships of man to man. Levinasian ethics proposes to think of this interhuman relationship as an encounter, something unexpected, the event of a break-in, and more radically even, as a consequence, a relation to the infinite, of which the face – as the site of the break-in – in its absolute denudation, would be the trace, i.e. the non-site. As such, the face resists all definition. To define the face would be to forget about the infinite it upholds in the finitization of its definition. In other

[1] *L'écriture et la différence,* Seuil, 1967, p. 164.

words, if the other is what he is, that is, if he is defined in any way whatsoever, if he is enclosed in any sort of essence, he is no longer the other, he is what he is, he is his own being. As such, in his alterity of the singular subject, we never encounter his characteristics of being, characteristics which are and which make up the other, but rather his face as nudity "without qualities", without being identifiable.

Consequently, the other is nothing but his face.

One might immediately point out that the usage of the verb *to be* as a "predicate" for the other's "essence" as a face most obviously brings about a considerable difficulty, since the face is employed as its definition. All Levinasian philosophizing is conducted with a sharp attention to "the sealed destiny to which the human being from the outset confines the other's language of the being"[2] while incessantly trying to retract the fatal said where our language definitively fossilizes. This form of prudence makes up his philosophical style and gives his writing an inimitable respiration, breath and breathlessness, anger and disillusion. Rather than encouraging, like many of his contemporaries, the "end" of a philosophy which is ever too metaphysical, Levinas overloads philosophy. To philosophy, he adds an historical effort, while exasperating it when trying to retract it with the exaggeration that animates it by means of what he calls "his emphasis" or his "exasperation" through "excess of expression". For Levinas, this retracting accompaniment of philosophy consists of "passing from an idea to its superlative"[3].

In this way, he carries the contents of philosophy beyond themselves. That is to say, basically, he investigates into and expresses the "truth" of the ontological language which makes up these contents. But he transposes the "truth" of this inquiry and of this expression into the "always" of a promise, of a future, of a love[4]. One could say descriptively that he makes a shift from the essence to the time of the essence; from the truth in philosophy to the temporality of a promise; from the *anankê stenai*, where concepts stand,

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2 *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, Livre de Poche, p. 16.

3 *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Vrin, 1992; pp. 141-142.

4 *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, Livre de poche, p. 53 (*AE*) : "The truth promises itself. Always promised, always future, always loved, the truth is to be found in the promise and the love of wisdom…" (Cited in French in the original.)

to continuous diachrony. Levinas thus in no way intends to do away with philosophy as conducted in the accepted ways and with what it says. Rather, he invents for it an unprecedented characterization when interrupting it, that is, when desynchronizing it. Philosophy indeed guarantees its prestige as a synchrony of the being and as a line of thought where Levinas finds nothing but a "dialectical" silence where all signification returns and turns back upon itself. But if this is the case, it is equally necessary that from the depths of this silence, from what makes this silence be, something rises up which already disturbs it, which converts it, something to the effect of a pre-synchronic change of lanes, of a gravity, as Levinas also puts it. A Saying preceding everything Said, a doing-being rather than a being has to impose itself and bring into existence its "destructure"[5]. This can only happen in a movement of composition, of decomposition and recomposition – the Saying is "turn and turn about affirmation and retraction" of the Said[6]. We must have philosophy – it is indeed the same "must" which Justice requires – in order to discharge of philosophy. If philosophy is allowed to have the "final word", could this final word, which is never spoken in the said and the written logos of philosophy, ever exhaust Saying? Could it totalize an ultimate meaning in a Said and succeed in saying the end of the word? If there is an ethics preceding ethics (an abyss of responsibility preceding our beginning, freedom and presence of mind), there equally is a result following the result, an ultimate following the ultimate – and this is again the abyss of endless and incessant responsibility, without ever getting unjust satisfaction. This infinite of ethics presents itself to philosophical inquiry and to the mode of this inquiry as a challenge, a task, a duty of invention. The act is at the same time conformity to tradition itself – or at least to a tradition inside tradition (Aristotle, Pascal) – and radically heterogeneous to this tradition. Moving from the truth to the truth, Levinas's desynchronizing transposition equally moves from philosophy to philosophy. It creates – both within and beyond philosophy – the adventure of a disproportion, a transcendence, a disinterest. Levinas manifests a disinterest in philosophy in order to venture into the exploration of the ethical structure of all subjectivity.

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5 *Autrement qu'être*, éd. cit., p. 76.

6 *Autrement qu'être*, éd. cit., p. 75 (emphasis added).

To say that the other is the face of the other thus overtaxes the superlativization of every definition, its exasperation in an indefinable, an infinite. This means precisely that the face is not a plastic form, a sensible appearance, a phenomenon; it does not consist of what I see of it, of what I can touch of it. The face is that which remains out of reach of these figures of meaning (of immediate sensibility and intentional signification[7]). Being the face of the other – necessarily of the other, as we shall see – it decides on the entire appearance of the world, it deforms its own form, it invisibilizes its own visibility, it "takes us beyond".[8] The other thus announces itself as a face among the phenomena of the world, and even, more precisely, as that which undoes all phenomenality: a "hole in the world" as Sartre put it in a text dating from before the First World War, entitled Visages. Somehow, the face is not in the world. The relationship between form and deformation, between a phenomenon and its absence, between visibility and elusiveness, this "relation" between unrelatable terms which the face presents, is the trace of the infinite – but of an infinite which is properly in the finite while nevertheless never being present in it. It is exactly this register of full presence and representation that the face invalidates. One could say that the face runs through the trace of that which never appears – the Infinite – while at the same time appearing somehow in-the-finite, in-finite. Maybe literature is more suitable to capture the face than philosophy is. While watching Albertine sleep, Proust's narrator engages in a meditation about this "in-finite": "Underneath this pinkish face I sensed gathering in the form of an abyss the inexhaustible space of the evenings where I had not known Albertine. I could take Albertine on my knees, hold her head in my hands, I could caress it, pass my hands over it for a long time, but, as if I were handling a stone which enclosed the saltiness of the immemorial oceans or the beam of a star, I felt that I was merely touching the closed envelope of a being which from

[7] The original French text ties up "meaning", "sensibility", and "signification" with a play of words relying on the homonymy of the French *sens*.

[8] *Ethique et infini*, Livre de Poche, p. 81.

the inside accessed the infinite"[9].

We could thus say that the face as the face of the other is, properly speaking, the only expression of alterity. There is no other. There is no alterity, in the strong sense of the word, of an object, or of a subject objectively grasped and understood, or of an other which would be another me, because such an alterity is always reduced to the sameness of the consciousness measuring or considering it. Consequently, there is no way for me to experience the face. In the "science of the experience of consciousness" of the phenomenology of spirit, the subject alien to itself – alienated in and through the other – asserts itself in the other's recognition of its free subjectivity. If it loses itself in this assertion, if it loses itself as subjectivity, as freedom, in the pure eternity of its objective being, it recovers nevertheless from this loss which is the condition of this self-reconstruction. None of this, however, in the submission in which the face immerses me; nothing of the order of a Hegelian Erfahrung. The face comes before all possible coming along; it precedes all experience I might have of it when appropriating it, all "enrichment" of my experience of the world and the others. We are speaking of an ordeal. The infinition is an ordeal; it is the ordeal of the other man, the Other as the absolute other, every other and any other (Derrida), the first one who came along[10] (Levinas). That is, insofar as the infinite can be understood, as we have pointed out, as in-finite, in the finite. An other in the same, such is the "structure of subjectivity" according to Levinas, the most intimate mark of the subject's subjectivity, the inscription of the finitude of a trace which will come to disturb it, do violence to it, desubjectivize it. In this descriptive category of subjectivity, in this structure of the Other-in-the-Same, we can discern a few structural traits as far as the subject is concerned. In this way, we can portray what a subject is, as well as the na-

[9] French original: "Alors sous ce visage rosissant je sentais se réserver comme un gouffre l'inexhaustible espace des soirs où je n'avais pas connu Albertine. Je pouvais bien prendre Albertine sur mes genoux, tenir sa tête dans mes mains, je pouvais la caresser, passer longuement mes mains sur elle, mais, comme si j'eusse manié une pierre qui enferme la salure des océans immémoriaux ou le rayon d'une étoile, je sentais que je touchais seulement l'enveloppe close d'un être qui par l'intérieur accédait à l'infini". (*À la recherche du temps perdu*, Pléiade, III, p. 386)

[10] French original: *le premier venu*.

ture of its relation to the other who faces it. I will discuss at least one of these structural traits: a decisive one since it encompasses all of the others and infinitely over-determines them. More precisely, I wish to point out the trait of the asymmetrical nature of the subject's relation (a formulation which now clearly appears to us as far too imprecise to be honest) to the other. An ethical Me/Other relation is only possible in asymmetry. The reason for this is very simple: in a relation of a face-to-face ethics, I am not the Other, never, and under no circumstances could I possibly be. I and You, me and you, these do not occupy interchangeable positions and are not alternatively experienceable: neither of them could successively also take up the role of the other. This situation, which is ideal-typical of the symmetrization of relations, is present in political citizenship. However, in the rigorous terms of Levinas, this citizenship characterizes something completely different than an ethics; we should thus clearly set apart each of these orders and effectivities. Indeed, in the position I am in, being someone who was to respond to the other, I cannot be replaced by anybody or anything, as is the case for my death. This is so because I myself could never have a face by means of a thematizing reversibilization. If this were possible, I would be implicated in a relation which is not ethical, but rather political or judicial, in which people are juxtaposed to one another as Nebenmenschen (Hermann Cohen), whose places can be interchanged and whose relations can be symmetrized.

The properly ethical relation is structurally entangled in asymmetry. Else we would be changing registers, passing from one domain on to the next. When symmetrizing and equalizing, we jump or overturn into politics in the most strict sense of the term, that is, into the sphere of Justice, as Levinas calls it. When inversing the asymmetry in an asymmetrical way, I find myself confronted with an anti-ethical reversal of the relation, that is to say, in an utterly concrete situation where I, as an individual or a community, would say: the Other is Me myself. The ethical asymmetry thus is the indication of what it is not; being a just politics, it brings about an unjust differentialism from the extreme danger it involves. It pronounces itself in a very articulate manner since the irreducibly dissymmetric positions which it delineates imply practical requirements to which the subject finds itself assigned. The Other differs in his difference; I myself am bound to non-

indifference. The Other calls; Me, I reply; in no way could I not hear the call. The Other has/is a face; Me, I am subordinate to this extreme fragility of the face of the Other. The Other shows himself in the transcendence of this face exceeding all sensible materiality, he is "closer to God than I am"; Me, on the other hand, I respond to this transcendence through the immanence of an immediate material aid: by dressing, feeding, accommodating him. Else, if I respond to the other's transcendence by my transcendence of subject, I fall into the "hypocrisy of the sermon" by seriously undervaluing "the sincerity of hunger and thirst"[11].

Levinas thus touches upon something unprecedented: if the other, and even the absolutely other, is the other man, this expression, the other man, denotes with a powerful precision an asymmetrical inappropriateness. The other and me, we are in no way units of a same genre, two somehow equal individuals which are to be situated indifferently in a relation. The other is not a human being in the way that I am one, in the way that he or she or they are human beings. It thus becomes obvious that the Levinasian thought is philosophically speaking not a humanism. It is, for that matter, on this bending line of humanism and ethics that morality objects to this ethical duo: how am I to do justice to humans, to all other humans, to all these "thirds" to whom I necessarily do violence by subordinating to the singular face of the other? The moral requirement which is opposed to the ethical one is neither illegitimate nor unanswerable, but it can only hold in the aftermath of the immemorial. The other is indeed incomparable, non-interchangeable, he only shows up out of the irreducible and unique singularity of the I, the self which I am and which I am only insofar as this place is untransferable. It is indeed this relation, which is strictly speaking not a relation, that Levinas characterizes as ethical.

When undoing all reciprocity, all reversibility and all isonomy, the asymmetry in particular entails that from an ethical point of view the "relation to the other" does not allow for mediatization. It cannot pass through mediations which would render it intelligible and relative, that is, which would turn it into a relation between terms. This is not possible because the other holds in an absolute, in an absolution of which I am not a part. Levinas

[11] *De l'existence à l'existant*, Vrin, 1990, p. 69.

speaks of a relation/non-relation between me and the other. In the strongest and most extreme sense, indeed, there cannot be a relation in the way that each would be relative to the other, a relation in which I would be the other for the other, and the other another me. We are rather dealing with an exposure, a denudation, the absolute impossibility of escaping the call of a face, my response to it or my renouncing to respond. We are dealing with a subject's structural dis-inter-est for the defection of his being; that is, of his interest, since interest (as Hegel pointed out) means inter-being[12], being in or among. A subject is a being which acquits itself of its condition of being. To be human, to be a human subject, is not to be a being among beings, a being in the being, another being, a class in a general ontology or a region of the being. To be a subject, for the desituated self (dismissed and deposed) thus implies not to have a place in the being, not to have a place there where being-with-oneself[13] means to nomadize the being in its entirety.

Before even constituting a philosophy of alterity, Levinasian ethics thus brings about a theory of subjectivity and its responding structure. This is what is most important. I am being put to question by this face that haunts me, the I is traversed by the other and this transverberation makes up its structure. We can thus come to understand that there truly is a violence of the ethical in Levinas. What appears in the ethical connection as relation/non-relation always and violently constitutes an event; it radically alters the structures of all that appears (i.e. the established order of things) and evidently disturbs, in the strongest sense of the word, my subjectivity of subject, since this appearance which destabilizes all apparition, obliges me to respond or not to respond. In any case, I am obliged through an obligation which does not commence in me. It is, on the contrary, I who commence after this response or this non-response. Subjectivity, penetrated by the other who pierces its self, is structured as having-to-respond. This structuration preceding all I, turns the very use of terms such as "subjectivity" or "response" into a delicate matter, and their usage may sometimes appear as borrowed. The "subject" can both "respond" or not "respond", as we already

[12] The French original *inter-être* refers to the previously mentioned *désintéressement* and *interêt*.

[13] French original: *être-chez-soi*.

pointed out, but we are not speaking here of a choice, since I am not free to hear or not hear the call. Indeed, the response precedes the question, as Levinas formulates it. It is a doing which is not the product of an autonomous decision that sets the interrogation in motion. The having-to-respond is immemorial; it goes way back and precedes all questions I can ever ask myself concerning the reasons why I have responded or not. And often, when I have arrived at weighing the pros and the cons, it is already too late, the time to respond has passed, the time of thinking and weighing has come to abolish it.

As it appears, the ethical produces a radical disruption in the subject which is destabilized in its principles and its origin, disturbed in its assumptions and its initiative; to formulate things in a very euphemistic way, that is. On the other hand, charity, altruism, or, a fortiori, moralizing recrimination always consolidate the subject in itself, in its substantial contentment and its own identity. Another warning imposes itself here if we wish to prevent a contradiction in reading Levinas, one which is less widespread than the contradiction concerning morality in which we take part, but is nevertheless highly prejudicial to the understanding of his oeuvre. To say, as I have just done, that ethics destabilizes, disrupts, desituates and deposes the subject complies to a "logological" constraint, that is, a constraint related to the language saying the being. In other words, the discourse justifying the structures and contents of Levinas's ethics cannot but formulate these in a vocabulary which is that of ontology. It is destined to fix in a said, i.e. in the said of the concept, an ethical saying which actually refers to something which is infinitely more fluid and moving as well as "subject to" an a-chronical and a-logical temporality. It is thus advisable to be wary of the chrono-logy inscribed by the order of the discourse as the necessary ransom for its rigor. Indeed, the subject is always already disrupted, structured as disrupted, if I can say so. Else no subject would ever exist as an "other-in-the-same". If things happened otherwise, i.e. chronologically (first a subject; second its destabilization), the effective, empirical disruption would be nor possible neither thinkable. I am referring here of an objection which has often been made to Levinas (for example by Ricoeur): in order for me to respond for the other or to the other, would I not necessarily first have to come

to grips with myself, assume myself in the authentic manner of the Heideggerian Dasein, before I can turn to the others? Levinas meets this objection by disregarding such a model of reciprocation and chronological interconditioning. Indeed, in his view nothing is less sure than what is presupposed in the objection mentioned and the model it transports. Am I really able to respond in the sense of an ethical responsibility (which is very different from the responsibility of imputation or the penal responsibility), in the sense of a subjectivity structured as since-always having to respond, if I begin responding (or assume myself to do so) from my own being, from my ontological substance and subsistence? Does the objection, on the contrary, not boil down to "somewhat justifying" one's ethical non-response?[14] Such being the case, we can understand why Levinas sought to distance himself from the moral philosophies and the diverse varieties of moralism. All of those consist of reflecting on duties and thinking of them as a more or less superficial or more or less dense crust which agglomerates around an indivisible core of being, the subject. Levinas proposes a completely different figuration and a whole other possibility of thinking the moral link itself. The subject is not, therefore it has no core, neither moral nor pre-moral. The subjectivity of the subject, on the contrary, is a splitting of the self, a loss, an infinite opening. The subject does not direct its approach to the other, it does not take the initiative for it, it does not have the good-will to do it – it is not voluntarily good. It is directed by its drift towards the other. And even if it refuses to partake in it, like Rousseau's "philosopher", this refusal itself is again the indication of this pre-self which is the having-to-respond. Even if I make myself a murderer, this murder perpetrated in an extreme banality and

[14] French original: *"s'argumenter un peu" pour répondre, en raison, de sa non-réponse éthique"*. In a footnote, the author adds that the argument and its formulation are borrowed from Rousseau who strongly senses how obviously *the call* precedes the *reason* (justification). This remark is followed by a quotation from Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (from *Oeuvres completes*, Paris, Le Seuil II, p. 224) which could be translated as follows: "Nothing is left to disturb the peaceful sleep of the philosopher and to keep him out of bed than the dangers of the entire society. One could strangle a fellow human being underneath his window with impunity; he only has to cover up his ears and argue in his favor in order to keep nature from revolting inside him when trying to identify him with the one being assassinated…"

in a confusing ontological easiness is still the sign of a furious impotence before the face. There is no compromise if we are to believe Levinas and read him in the right way. Confronted to the face, "we speak or we kill", as Blanchot writes it in a lapidary way. What a subject says, states, thinks, does, thus appears to flow from a Saying anterior to all signs, gestures and significations of which it can believe itself to be the authorized author in an illusory way, and in which it believes to contemplate its own origin. It is this register that Levinas has thematized as pre-original or an-archic: "The responsibility for the other cannot arise from my engagement, my decision. The boundless responsibility in which I find myself is produced by that which precedes my freedom, by an "anterior-to-all-memory", an "ulterior-to-all-accomplishment", by the non present, par excellence by the non-original, the an-archic, by that which precedes essence or lies beyond it. The responsibility for the other is the site where the non-place of subjectivity locates itself"[15].

It is because of this anarchic aspect that the transcendental model of freedom is radically put to question. For, indeed, as Levinas asks himself with insistence, is the choice for one's freedom really a free choice and can we be truly certain of this? If my uniqueness as a subject resides in my extreme responsibility for the other man calling and if in this irreplaceable uniqueness I cannot possibly flee from it or rid myself of it, my freedom is paradoxically located at the ultimate end of "my" heteronomy. It is obvious that the ethical response is by no means of the order of an obedience. We obey a law, an institution, an hierarchical superior, a function, but never to a person whom, precisely, obedience should not prefer over any other insofar as it is regulated by the preliminary consent to a substantial code of conduct. Ethical responsibility, on the contrary, concerns the type of situation where the limits of regulation and the frame of prescription need to be exceeded by the responding subject without him even wanting to do so: on the spot he cannot but invent the rules of his acts or, more precisely, he has to act on the spot, ahead of all rules. If my self is unique, this is only so through the impossibility of all substitution and all delegation, through my assignment tying me to the ethical moment of response. "To be free means to do only that

[15] *Autrement qu'être*…, éd. cit., p. 24.

which nobody can do in my place".[16] This freedom of uniqueness establishes the ethical discourse. Moreover, it permits us to clearly understand that it is only possible and tenable for the self of the first person. Its extension and universalization would boil down to a reversal through attenuation or anonimization. If Kantian reason presents itself as truly practical by means of autonomy, it is only because the moral subject subordinates to a commandment which is that of reason itself as it imposes itself through the moral law, and independently of others. For Levinas, on the other hand, it is a matter of connecting to exteriority rather than one of autonomy of will. The unconditional moral duty does not come to us through the reasonable will, but through the resistance that the face opposes me. It is not thanks to the submission of will to the law of reason as faculty of the universal that ethics is possible, but thanks to the inaugural and heteronomous fact of the face's word. The law thus appears to result from a facticity: I encounter the other.

Else ethics would quite simply be reversed and wildly converted into a disaster for subjectivity – the disaster of universalisms (me, like all the others!), the disaster of differentialisms (the other, that is me!). This heteronomous freedom where all is irremediably played in the single instant when a response does or does not come, equally allows us to grasp why receiving the other can constitute, and most often indeed does constitute, a traumatism. The traumatism of an untransferable freedom – a freedom so radical and so prevailing that I am in no way free of not being freed of that very freedom – definitively does away with the "firstness" of freedom in the sense of autonomy, its foundational function as the archè of the subject. It is a tragic freedom, surely, since it is exerted entirely in the fine point of an ungraspable instant: a man drowns, a man is beaten, a man is "being strangled underneath my window" and I fail to respond, unalterably, only thinking about it afterwards. But the wording is pleonastic: there is no other thinking than the thinking-afterwards, subjected to the argumentative burden, running the risk of reregistering this non-response in an extra-ethical domain of my responsibility – that is, the domain of the political institution

[16] «La Révélation dans la tradition juive » in *La Révélation*, collectif, Bruxelles, 1977, p. 68 (texte repris in *Au-delà du verset*, Minuit, 1982).

and the juridical administration. Thus freedom is not a structure of the subject consolidating it in its moral or transcendental autonomy; it is nothing but worry and anxiousness, always "younger" than my having-to-respond, since it hits me before all engagement: "I have done nothing and yet I have always been at issue".[17] One could think of this "persecution" of the I by the other as scandalous. The immense force of Levinas's thinking resides in it – insofar as he has showed us that what is "most natural", living and letting die, is most problematic, the most vivid source of our questioning and torments. In its very mineness, in its illustrious "every time", the being – this being which constitutes the existent that I am – can never be its own reason of being.

[17] *AE*, p. 180.

Do We have to Let Ourselves to Be Doomed by Morality? In Response to Jerard Bensussan

Maria Dimitrova (Sofia University)

Some people, including well-educated philosophers, start making a grimace when they hear the name of Levinas, only because it is associated - and should be associated, and deserves to be associated - with morality. In our times of moral relativism, ethics is pushed aside in a corner, overshadowed by ontology. Ontology seems closer to science in its claim for neutrality. And ethics is seen either as unnecessary ballast or as falseness and hypocrisy, or even worse - as a system of repressive rules, required by the rulers to keep the masses in submission.

Ethics, as we know from Marx and Marxism for example, has been always engaged in maintaining the superiority, legitimating a moral of the dominant and/or comforting the oppressed. For Marx, morality is epiphenomenon, construed over the basis of economic relations and dependent on their change – this is how all Marxism joins the long tradition of moral relativism. Conversely, defenders of moral absolutism are bound around the idea that morality is a need of the highest spirit, the satisfaction of which enriches us spiritually (as some spiritual food). To bring this nonsense (usually supported by the utilitarians, hedonists, pragmatists, etc.) to the extreme, we must accept that we need morality for our good digestion. From the point of view of Levinasian philosophy, all of this seems ridiculous. Realizing the stupidity of such (at times even cynical) interpretations and "seeing every day and every hour the impotence of moral standards", today many people are asking why do we need morality at all and why have to speak for it. This is the topic of the first pages of "*Totality and Infinity*" - do we have to let ourselves be doomed to morality?

There is a persuasive urge to think of morality as some moral code, different for different groups and epochs. However, the Levinas' lesson is that morality should not be considered a form of legislation, encompassing the unwritten rules of one community or another, but instead, it must be un-

derstood "*au sense extra-moral*". Morality means recognizing the otherness of the Other, which is not respected enough by laws, standards and codes. The face of the Other, bared before me, stripped from definitions, notions, standards and models, does not allow me to hide behind the unifying and homogenizing rules and thus to transfer the responsibility to the institutions, the collective, destiny, God or some other authority, where the Other is subjected to the common principle. The Other as a face transcends the system with its principles and rules. Morality is inevitable - even when I ignore it and try to avoid the appeal of the Other, the very attempt to escape it is a form of answer – and what an answer by that! There is no escape from a personal responsibility. So, according to the Levinasian philosophy, the relationship between the Other and me, which has always a moral aspect, begins even when I try to play deaf and blind for the Other or treat him instrumentally, reducing him to an object or a means, subjected to my interests, identifying him with a function in a social system. The moral relationship is the "alpha and omega" of all other relationships, even those that seem most neutral. Similar to Descartes, who argues that thinking cannot be revoked, because even when we doubt or deny it, it's still a form of thought (doubt and denial are also mental operations), Levinas states that morality cannot be ignored or eliminated, because the very ignoring or elimination comes with a certain moral significance. Apropos, the same applies to everything else in human existence. Morality or sociality is not determined by our belonging to some group, community, entity, territory, but is derived from our responsibility for the others. It stems from the moral sensitivity of the individual.

The Levinas' philosophy is radical and its radicalism goes "all the way". Using our common habitual concepts, it is hard to determine where its genius lies. Still, if we have to underline the overwhelming reversal of thinking it evokes, then probably first comes the new understanding of sociality. Levinas refuses to induce or reduce the sociality of the individual to his belonging to the Whole – not only to the whole of the Greek cosmos, sustained by its laws, but also to the flexible, always open and indefinite historic totality of the monotheistic cultures. Defining humans through their belonging to some totality, area, territory with its own divisions – the way we classify objects through their belonging to the class and genus – is inade-

quate; it presupposes the point of view of a distant observer and omits the most important – the closeness between the Other and me, where sociality originate.

The relationship, in which "One is for the Other" is not territorial, but moral. Moreover, it does not constitute itself as a symmetrical and reciprocal intersubjectivity, but begins from the high-standing of the Other. The starting point is set by the appeal of the Face, which calls for an answer. The Other is neither below me, nor equal to me. Egalitarianism does not respect him enough. The Other is not sharing a territory with me, which we both habituate and try to parcel. The freedom of the Other is privileged to be high-ranking in comparison with my freedom and coincides with his dimension of Transcendence. Our modern culture does not allow superiority of the Other in relation to me, because instinctively, automatically renders it a relationship of dominance and obedience. While Levinas states that in the relationship between the Other and me, serving the Other is not slavery, but care for him. This care is a necessity, because the Other is a being, directed-towards-death. Only in the presence of a Third one, and therefore of "anyone else", and everyone is "another for the other", the basic social relationship can be generalized, totalized, and politicized.

The Levinas' philosophy sets a very, very high standard. It is as if Levinas has set a record in sport, unthinkable not only for the public, but also for the remaining competitors in that discipline. He sets such a high mark that all other philosophical attempts must be reviewed according to its perspective. But while sport involves only one part of human abilities, Levinas marks the end of a thousand year old way of thinking, which lasted for centuries and at the same time – hopefully – the beginning of another. After Kant, no philosopher would be taken seriously if he didn't take into account in his work the thesis of the categorical imperative; the same way, after Levinas, "*The Face, concerning me not in indicative, but in imperative*" is a thesis, which cannot be overlooked.

* * *

In Levinas' philosophy we find a duplication of a number of categories we use in order to explain the human existence. As in the case of moral-

ity (as obeying of rules) and extra-morality (as caring for the Other), we can likewise talk of:

- transcendence (of the outer world) and extra-transcendence (of the Other);
- passiveness (in sensitivity) and extra-passiveness (in the closeness of the Other);
- desire (directed at the objects of the world) and the metaphysical extra-desire (towards the Other and the infinity, revealed by the encounter with him);
- sociality (as belonging to the whole of society) and extra-sociality (as responsibility for the others);
- justice (according to a legislation) and extra-justice (according to the moral saintliness);
- rationality (as providing the foundation of "I can") and extra-rationality (as questioning myself and seeking a better justice);
- and so on.

The list could go on. Exactly because of this duplication, which Levinas uses to revise the centuries-old understanding of philosophical categories, the reception of his works is so hard. All categories, describing human relationships, receive not only a literal meaning, understood through their place in the totality, i.e. in the system of worldly interests, but also one more – metaphorical – meaning, related to the Face of the Other. It seems as if the ethics is built upon ontology, just as metaphorical meanings are built upon literal, but to speak the truth, the situation is quite the opposite – metaphorical or ethical meanings gave birth to the ontological. We will even take a few steps further in this direction: even though it looks like ethical relationships are conceived through hyperbolizing of ontological ones, this is rather an optical illusion, because for human beings the authentic, fundamental ontology is morality itself. Levinas does not offer us a new morality, but a new interpretation of morality: "*a sense that is not measured by being and not being; but being on the contrary is determined on the basis of sense.*"[1]

[1] Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence.* Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Duquesne University Press, Pennsylvania, 2000, p. 129.

For Levinas the true understanding of morality coincides with my presence in the world, and not with the way I declare what is moral for me or us – not only "I think", "I act", but even the simple "I am" is an answer to the appeal of the others. This is the reason Levinas has to justify himself for philosophizing about morality. He must speak, using the language of philosophy, whose roots are Greek and stem from dialectics. In the dialectical debate each of the arguing sides answers to its opponent with a counter-speech. But for Levinas, understanding of morality is not limited to forming or declaring of some moral maxims; the true understanding coincides with the everyday language, where deeds are the most important, not rhetoric. Besides, for Levinas the Other is not only an adversary, a competitor; neither is he simply a partner in some cooperation, or someone, with whom we try to reach a common perspective through conversation. *Autrui n'est donc que son visage.*

* * *

But the Other's face is ambiguity itself. On the one hand, it fits its outlines, its shape, it is this nose, this mouth, this forehead, and on the other hand, it is "*the invisible in the visible*". These two meanings are not opposite – the otherness of the face is not logical, but meta-logical and meta-physical. The difference between the literal, objectified meaning and the metaphorical, ethical meaning suggests a transition from one level to another. Metaphysics suggests meaning "in excess". Or, otherwise said, the ethical suggests a dive in the depth, because the depth of my world coincides with the height, on which the Other is elevated.

Already Heidegger has announced inauthenticity of average everydayness and indifference. He has reconstructed a motive, which is not Greek, but stands at the foundation of monotheistic cultures: man is "a being, who heard the God's word". In the Biblical culture not only what one does, but even what one thoughts, is a reply to God's appeal. In Heidegger's philosophy, the place of the appealing agency is taken by Being, while in Levinas's – by the Other. Of course, this replacement suggests a different type of world-view and reordering of layers, as after a strong earthquake. Levinas does not reject the ontology, based on the distinction between beings and

Being, but instead asks is it fundamental. He strips ontology from its supremacy and hands it over to ethics. For him, ethics, and not ontology, is the first philosophy.

In ontology, both the Self and the Other receive their meaning within the horizon of being, comparable through the measure of the Third, that is, a mediating part – it could be the principle, the whole, the horizon, the institution, the Third person, etc. The ontological meanings are contextual and depend on their links in the system. But the Other has a meaning in itself and the absolute one. Of course, the Other is being. He is being-facing-death. Precisely this is why I should not leave him alone: I can reply to the appeal and to transform distance into proximity and knowledge into morality. But this does not mean that in proximity I have an ability to situate him within the horizons of (my) world – the Other constantly withdraws himself beyond. That is why, the Other has also a meaning of exteriority, of Transcendence. Levinas follows in the footsteps of his mentor Husserl, who expresses the idea that the Other is the condition of correctness of my world and that each transcendence, including the transcendence of the outer world, exists for me and is comprehensible to me only by virtue of the transcendence of the Other. But for Husserl both the Other and Transcendence are constituted in my immanence, while Levinas refuses to consider the Other as my Alter Ego. The Other is beyond, exteriority, the expression of his face shows a dimension of transcendence, which is not constituted by me. The Other is radically other. Meeting him I become aware of Infinity and in this way I am made to realize *my* own finitude. The difference, the most radical difference – the one which brings to life all other differences – is the difference between the infinite and finite. When facing the Other, who always exceeds the limits of my ideas and expectations, the world shrinks for me from its universal dimensions, common for everybody, to the dimensions of my own world. Then, I can no longer avoid the responsibility, which has fallen exclusively upon me and not upon somebody else.

Already Kant has warned us that when infinity enters the stage, we are facing antinomies. It seems Levinas agrees with him, but thinks that infinity is presented to us not through the effort to extend our conditional truth to the unconditional, but by virtue of our encounter with the Face of the Other. Let

us stress once again, the Face itself, however, is the basic ambiguity. „*The first word of the face is "Thou shalt not kill". It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the face of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all.*"[2] The face of the Other causes all the controversy of experience. The contradiction, stemming from the Face, is created and described – if it can be spatialized at all – as the difference between the levels, at which I and the Other stand. *„The look with which the other faces the world, in its rectitude, means both its frankness and an authority not present in a simply logical alterity, which as a counterpart of the identity of facts and concepts, distinguishes one from another, or reciprocally opposes the notions of them, by contradiction or contrariety. The alterity of the other is the extreme point of the "thou shalt not kill" and, in me, the fear of all the violence and usurpation that my existing, despite the innocence of its intentions, risks committing. ... It is a responsibility that, without doubt, contains the secret of sociality"* [3]

My moral sensitivity coincides with the depth of my subjectivity – this is where the range of my actions is determined, the spectrum of my possibilities, the choice between them, the freedom to choose and act, the true scale of my projects and everything said and done by me in the life-world. In the face-to-face encounter, the Other questions my identity, the seizure of a certain territory by me, makes me doubt the right to habituate this place under the sun, shakes my confidence as an owner of property, be it some characteristics used for self-typology and integration into some kind or genus. Being for the Other, I am deprived of such an identity. But with the Saying (which is impossible without the said as well as without the speaker and the listener), I reaffirm myself as "me" and then can rediscover again my Self. From now on, the return to self, to self-consciousness and self- reflection, to objectification and identification, to seizure and claims for ownership and property, is inevitable. It is important to stress, however, that this rediscovering of one's self in the process of identification is not an end in it-

[2] Emmanuel Levinas. *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo.* Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, 2000, p. 89.

[3] Emmanuel Levinas. Diachrony and Representation. *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other*, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 169.

self, but rather a by-product of the reply to others. The approach towards other remains, but walking the way towards him/her the Self loses itself and finds itself again - already changed, already older. Despite itself. Having exhausted itself, serving the others.

Levinas suggests a reestablishment of the rights of heteronomy. Heterenomy had gone out of use, when Kant privileged autonomy. Someone might point out that namely Kant insisted that the maxim of my behavior should be coordinated with the others, in order to be laid down as a universal law. The difference between Kant and Levinas consists, first of all, in the fact that while Kant sets out from the Self, Levinas does so from the Other. If the maxim I follow as an expression of my will has the pretention of being an expression of the rationality of human nature at all, as it is according Kant's philosophy, this means, that it has to be imposed on others as valid in the same extent to them too. Such a pretention for establishing of a universal moral legislation, imposed on behalf of me onto the others, is rather dangerous. This is the way, in which, usually through laws, the others are subordinated and deprived of their independency. Law has been given the status of the ultimate and absolute value and goal. But, according to Levinas, it is not the law, but the defense of the right of the Other, which empowers me to act, questioning authority and supremacy, encouraging me to seek justice, calling for responsibility – for the Other. My behavior obtains meaning and direction not according to the law, which I have imposed on myself (and therefore on anybody else), but as an answer to the presence of the Other. Without consideration of and attention to the otherness of the Other, my freedom would be foolish spontaneity or would be characterized by instrumentalization of the others. Kant's imperative is not a remedy for these dangers, threatening to develop into malignant mutations. Of course, we cannot reject autonomy - the choice of one's acts on the level of life-world, consciousness, knowledge, determination. While autonomy is intrinsic to the Self, heteronomy stems from the Other. I do not have freedom to not hear the appeal, but I have freedom to say "yes" or "no", and to answer with "as far as I'm concerned…" Thus, autonomy itself has to be the answer to heteronomy and as such is nothing but taking in consideration the appeal of the Other – even before it is understood. The Other questions the spontane-

ity of my will, the caprices and changes of my mind, the egocentricity of my desires, the struggle for satisfaction, and all my ideas and truths. Precisely in this way the face invests reason, freedom and sociality in me. *„La presence d'Autrui – heteronomie priviligiee – ne heurte pas la liberte, mais l'investit"*[4]

Morality is not a response to violence, but to an appeal. In the presence of the Other there is an unarticulated and, we could say, an anonymous call in his encounter with me – apparently some inexplicable trust in me, that I will not leave him without reply, treating him like the objects around, that I will take into account his human presence – as if at this moment his destiny to be human or not depends on me. Subjectivity as moral sensitivity, being traumatic, is the suffering for the suffering of the Other and exactly this provokes my reply. But the true understanding, as we already mentioned, is not only in words, but in deeds. Namely because of this readiness to act the Self cannot stay without rest in an accusative "me', but receives the opportunity to be Self in a nominative, that is, to say "I". Autonomy does not imply that one should act as a sovereign, but rather that one should act in response of heteronomy which motivates him to decide more adequately and to choose his behavior in the urgency of the present, where the other is calling me. Shortly, the help – clothing, food, shelter, etc. – must be found in order to respond to "la sincerite de la fame et de la soif".

Levinas does not confine himself to the abstract humanism, where we state respect for the Other according to the universal law (Kant's imperative); the human community is not formed by multiplication of transcendental subjects, whose common feature is self-consciousness, constituted as "I think, accompanying all my ideas". For Levinas this type of humanism is not humane enough. The true humanism presupposes care for the other in all his particularity and even singularity. In the concreteness of the encounter with him as empirical and historically present being, the care goes along with respect for his otherness. This is a service to the Other, not subordination or slavery to him. It presupposes, however, the transformation of "Thou" into "He", "She", "It", "They" – the grammatical third persons, made topical by a certain categorization pattern. Then the Other is reduced

[4] Emmanuel Levinas. *Totalite et infini.* Kluwer Academic, 1992, p. 88.

to a being among other beings, to a being just like me. *"But the order of justice of individuals responsible for one another does not arise in order to restore that reciprocity between the I and its other; it arises from the fact of the third who, next to the one who is an other to me, is "another other" to me."*[5]

Reciprocity is a relation between the individuals, when they are compared through some common measure. The operation of comparison always suggests a Third party, playing the role of a standing-by observer of the moral relationship between the One and the Other. The unique and unequal, even the incomparable, individuals, are leveled and equalized thanks to the Third. From the position of the Third they are being judged, brought under certain rules, observed, controlled. Individuals become mutually exchangeable and replaceable only from the point of view of the one, who objectifies them. And only when they interiorize his perspective toward themselves and in this way got adhered to it, estranging themselves from one another, their relationships can be dubbed reciprocal – even to themselves. Thus, we all become audience in the spectacle, which is our life together. In multitude humans are deprived of their faces – they are present as anonymous, faceless, without possibility of say. In the totality of society power is always an asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relationship. It is brutal, despotic, when it deprives the "subordinates" of their independence, of their right to speak and consequently of any rights, reducing them to objects. And, quite the opposite, power is just, when it creates and maintains the political framework, facilitating moral relationships. But in this second case we use another word, that is, government. Political and ethical order are not independent and this is exactly why we speak that there is good or bad politics. The criterion is proximity or remoteness of social justice to morality.

It looks I have to stop here. It seems to me that the issue of justice is the hardest nut to crack. Teeth have been broken on it not only by politicians and revolutionists, but also by philosophers.

[5] Emmanuel Levinas. The Other, Utopia, and *Justice.Entre-Nous: Thinking of the Other*. Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 229.

From the caress to the wound: Levinas's *outrageousness*

Jacob Rogozinski (University of Strasbourg)
Translation from French: Sofie Verraest

How are we not to commit an act of violence? How are we no to do violence to the Other, to the revelation of the Other, to his kindness, his "rightness" – to the "sincerity" of a face "which could not lie" – but also to his weakness, his destitution, to the nakedness of this face which exposes itself at all times to the possibility of injustice, of outrage, of murder? How are we not to do violence to the face of the Other who summons me? How are we, for example (but this is obviously more than a mere example), not to do violence to this eminent face of the Other, this enigma listening to the name of Emmanuel Levinas, and to his legacy?

If we refuse to take up the role of the disciple, of transforming his body of thought into "an oracle where 'the said'[1] is immobilized", if the true fidelity to a thinker necessarily involves some injustice and infidelity, *how are we not to do violence* to Levinas's work from the moment we attempt to read it? This question is, however, an ambiguous one which can be understood in two ways. At first glance, it asks *how to avoid* committing violence; it takes us down a road leading away from the rages of history, from the struggle to death and the allergy of the other, towards peace and a pacified understanding of the text we want to decipher. In this case, we would be dealing with an ethical question, with *the* major question of ethics. But the question can also be understood differently, as the carrier of a certain indignation, a revolt: *how do I keep myself from* committing violence? Why would I not, here and now, give in to a justified anger towards this body of ideas which, while pretending to prohibit all violence, is itself nevertheless committing an extreme violence? Why would I not do so in spite of this prohibition which Levinas's own line of thought cannot help but violating,

[1] In the French original, Levinas uses the term *le dit*, here translated as 'the said,' as opposed to *le dire*, translated as "the saying".

as if it were constantly flouting the very Law it enacts? Or would I maybe do so precisely *because* of this prohibition, that is, because an ethics of non-violence were bound to be an illusion, because all condemnation of injustice and war would unavoidably bring about *another act of violence* which would, if this expression makes any sense, be the violence of the Good? If we would understand this question as a theme, a meditation on the impossibility of ethical non-violence, on the necessity of passing on to merely "economizing violence", it would lead us back to a domain which was already explored, notably by Derrida. It is not in this direction that I wish to set out. Rather, I will attempt to inquire into the violence of "the saying", which is anterior to all conceptualization and thematization; a *hyperbole* characterizing Levinas's approach which seems to be his peculiar way of practicing the *épochè*. He himself would describe it as "passing on to the superlative", as "sublimation", "exaggeration"[2] , or "emphasis": "exasperation as a philosophical method"[3]. I would rather give it a name which he, errors excepted, never uses: *outrageousness*[4]. For this term, deriving from the word *outrage*[5], designates the act of *moving out of*[6], of passing beyond (*ultra*) a limit, of ex-ceeding[7] it. Such hyperbolic violence alone could uphold all of the excess, all of the immoderacy of a line of thought which claims to lead us beyond the being. Previously testifying to this in *la République*, was the ironic astonishment with which Glaucon received the idea of the *épikeina tès ousias*: "In the name of Zeus, Socrates, there we have a *daimonikê huperbolê*!", a demon hyperbole, a quasi-divine transcendence.

It is this surprise, this sideration, which always inspires me to read Levinas, and notably his last work *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, where the exaggeration amplifies, takes an ever more radical path. How do we receive a saying of such an excessive nature without necessarily

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2 The original, and perhaps more appropriate, French term employed by Levinas is *surenchère*.

3 French original: *l'exaspération comme méthode de philosophie*. Cf. "Questions et réponses", *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Vrin, 1982, p. 141-143.

4 French original: *outrance*.

5 The same term is employed in the French original: *outrage*.

6 French original: *passer outre*.

7 French original: *outrepasser*.

being outraged[8] by it? How are we not to resist, with a violence itself *exasperated*, a line of thought which is so violent, so outrageous that it holds me "guilty of surviving" the other, even already "guilty of existing"; that accuses me "of a mistake that I have not made freely"; charges me with a debt which "increases while being paid off", and even ventures upon an untenable praise of persecution: "without persecution, the I refuses to accept defeat"?[9] Let us clarify that by the term hyperbole is not only understood that range of expressions which is so frequently used in this book where we find the exaggeration of the *more* ("a passivity more passive than any passivity", "the more just I am, the more guilty I am", "more guilty than any other", etc.) or the exaggeration of the *never enough* (a proximity which is "never close enough"). Other than that, our usage of the word hyperbole equally designates a certain way of concatenating motifs through repetition and radicalization which "makes an idea pass on to its superlative, and, ultimately, to its emphasis"[10]; for example, from the uniqueness of the I to its *chosenness*, from the proximity of the other to his *haunting* me, from my exposure to the Other to his *persecuting* me… Or a generic notion is presented as a borderline case: from psychism to *psychosis*; from responsibility for the other to the necessity to take his place, to sacrifice myself for him without reserve. Or, yet in another way, a simple virtuality (sensibility as "vulnerability") is transformed into an effective experience (vulnerability as "haemorrhage", as being "wounded to death"). Those are some of the many hyperboles, passing on to the limit, at the same time sublime and terrifying, and which should be taken seriously, *literally*. Derrida already vividly emphasized this fact concerning the major motif of *Totality and Infinity*: "the face is not a metaphor, it is not a figure of speech. The discourse of the face

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8 The French original, *excédé*, equally plays on the linguistic affiliation with previously mentioned terms such as *outrance, outrage, outrepasser, ex-cès* which all refer to Levinas's philosophical approach of hyperbolization.

9 French original: *sans la persécution, le moi relève la tête*. Cited from the original French of *Otherwise Than Being*, i.e. *Autrement qu'être,* second edition, Livre de Poche-Biblio, 1990, p. 177. All references to this book are from now on incorporated into the text itself.

10 French original: *qui fait "passer d'une idée à son superlatif, jusqu'à son emphase"*.

is not an allegory"[11]. We should come to the same conclusion as for the hyperbole and the collection of motifs developing in *Otherwise Than Being*. Levinas insists on it concerning the expression "mal dans sa peau"[12]: this "is not a metaphor *in itself*", but "the *in itself* of the contraction of ipse-ity". The entire lexicon of stricture, of denudation, of skinning which accompanies it should thus be considered "better than metaphors", "the exact trope of an alteration of the essence". In other words, a trope foreign to all rhetoric, where the linguistic usage would coincide exactly with the thing itself, with the archi-phenomenon of a torsion of the Self, "in itself already out of itself".[13] We are speaking of the marvel of a trope which would also be a *too much* [14], the paradox of a saying which is fully adequate for a phenomenon only because of its inadequacy, its surplus, its infinite excess. As such, the Levinasian "sublimation" seems to go back to the extreme violence of the Kantian sublime. Through the boundlessness, the disfiguration of sensible figures, the sentiment of the sublime presents the unpresentable of the supra-sensible Ideas and of the ethical Law. Through its outrageousness, the Levinasian hyperbole resonates the saying of an ethics without Law.

We could ask ourselves what the status of this hyperbolic saying is, and how it relates to the categories of ontology, to the phenomena which phenomenology attempts to describe. This saying is often presented as an act of rupture, of "interruption", and Levinas sometimes tends to give credence to this interpretation. However, he seems to admit that there is a correspondence, a certain continuity between the approach of phenomenology (and/or ontology) and his own in stating that it is "the over-determination of the ontological categories which transforms them into ethical terms"; that the phenomenological description of the appearance of the other "turns into ethical language"; or that "the tropes of ethical discourse prove to be suitable for certain structures of the description". To put it otherwise, ethics

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[11] Originally cited in French from "Violence et métaphysique", *L'écriture et la différence,* Seuil, 1967, p. 149.

[12] A French expression which is literally translated as "bad fitted in one's skin", and is used when one feels uneasy with or about oneself.

[13] French original: *en soi déjà hors de soi*.

[14] The original French *trop* plays on the formal resemblance with the previously mentioned *trope*.

should *rely* on phenomenological descriptions; Levinas is actually less concerned with breaking with the latter than he is with "over-determining" them by giving them an ethical significance. Several notable consequences follow. First of all, we need to acknowledge that this type of exaggeration does not correspond to a *break* with phenomenology (as for example Derrida claims it to be in his *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*); a fidelity – however infidel – to the analyses of Husserl remains all along. But we should equally concede that the "tropes" of ethics are not to be reduced to pure *prescriptions*, precisely because they still contain a *descriptive* part, or at least a certain "adequacy" to the description. It would thus be a mistake to regard Levinas's thought as a logic of the "prescriptive phrase", as Lyotard did, or to conclude from it that the motifs of obsession, of being held hostage, of persecution, of sacrifice, etc. would have no ontological or existential consistence – that is, would in no way affect our concrete existence. It would be incorrect to think that these motifs merely open up the ultimate horizons of the ethical conditions to us, in their extreme yet non-actual possibilities; that borderline-situations are forever to remain foreign to our experience, merely susceptible of orienting it, in the same way the inaccessible "ideal of practical reason" orients moral action in Kant[15]. Quite the opposite. What is really at stake in the Levinasian exaggeration is the description of experience as if it were already confronted with these extreme situations – or continuously would have to confront them. For this exaggeration is *at the same time* prescriptive and descriptive, it precedes the distinction between *Sein* and *Sollen*, or is situated beyond it. On this level of radicalism, all traditional demarcations fail; it then boils down to the same thing to say either that I *have to* sacrifice myself without reserve for my persecutor, or that I *am only me* if I accept sacrificing myself in this way.

What is the purpose of this hyperbolic outrageousness? Is it only aimed at the categories of the same and the being? Everything seems to suggest that, when radicalizing, Levinas's ethics equally turns back *against itself*, against that which, in its own discourse, tends to *betray* – in every sense of the word – its own violence and confess to a hidden mistake by re-

[15] The author adds that, in his opinion, this is the interpretation currently proposed by J.M. Salanskis.

vealing that it remains under the yoke of the same, that it is still a captive of the discourse and the concepts of ontology. In this way, the approach of *Otherwise Than Being* can be defined as an *hyperbole of a hyperbole*, since this book also attacks – in a more discrete manner – certain major affirmations of preceding works; Levinas somehow *redoubles the violence* by going back over the *already* hyperbolic statement of these works, in order to both intensify and rectify it. The ethical saying is – as we all know – inseparable from an incessant *retracting*[16] of what was said in the past, and Levinas himself acknowledges that, in *Totality and Infinity*, he had contented himself with "simply inversing the terms" of the ontological difference "while privileging that which is"[17] (i.e. the other) "to the detriment of the being"[18]. But this reversal is nothing but the "first step in a movement" of taking ethics "beyond the ontological difference".[19] Attempting to think the self, the Other and their relation-without-relation by freeing them from their secular submission to the being, such will be the vocation of ethics from now on, such will be the stake of this hyperbole which appears to be "more ontological than ontology, an emphasis of ontology"[20]. All motifs of the ethical discourse as well as the style, the atmosphere of this line of thought are profoundly affected by this. Such being the case, the I, which was formerly defined by its selfish *conatus*, by its power of identification and its sensual possession of the world, now gives way to an I without power and without qualities, and that receives its uniqueness and identity entirely from its preassignation to the Other. The hyperbole of the I then amounts to its destitution, its "de-position". As for the face, of which *Totality and Infinity* still praised its "sincerity", its "absolute authenticity" comparable to the veracity of the Cartesian God[21], it is from now on typified by its "ambiguity", that of a "mask" where the trace of the Other "appears and then is erased". One

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16 The French original contains a wordplay opposing the ethical saying (*dire*) to the act of retracting (*dédire*).

17 French original: *l'étant*.

18 French original: *l'être*.

19 Cf. his preface to the second edition of *De l'existence à l'existant,* Vrin, 1978, or his preface to the American edition of *Autrement qu'être*.

20 Originally cited in French from *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée,* p. 143.

21 Op. cit., Nijhoff, 1984, p. 172-176, etc.

more step, one more turn in the hyperbolic trope, and this face which used to be that of my victim (or the eminence of the schoolmaster who teaches me) would become that of my persecutor. The intrigue of the self and the Other would no longer be thought of in terms of a relation of pupil to schoolmaster, of a son to his father, but rather in terms of persecution, of haunting down, of traumatism. And the scene where this intrigue is tied, the site of the encounter would no longer be the same: instead of an unbridgeable separation and exteriority, we would be dealing with an intimate entanglement where the Other manifests itself as *Other-in-the-Same*. These shifts, these turnarounds, these mutations are of such broad scope that it seems to me that we can distinguish a "first ethics" of Levinas (the one of *Totality and Infinity*) from a "second ethics".

It thus seems appropriate to inquire into the evolution of the Levinasian thought, to ask ourselves if this radicalization of ethics does not lead to an impasse; if these hyperbolic motifs do not in the end appear to be inconsistent; if, as was already the case for the I, Levinas's ideas concerning the Other as elaborated in *Otherwise Than Being* do not bring about a *deposition* of the other, his neutralization, his revocation to the benefit of an anonymous alterity. We would then be speaking of a reasoning which is not accidental, but rather the inevitable consequence of the Levinasian exaggerations. As a discerning reader could note, this emphatic *épochè* makes that we are no longer concerned with enabling that which is shown to show itself – i.e. we are no longer concerned with phenomena – but rather with "showing something else" at the limits of the visible: "the superlative, far from rendering more clear, more visible that which it submits to exaggeration, rather profoundly alters it"[22]. It is this *alteration of the Other* – but also of the I and of the relation between both – which should be analyzed. Is the radicalization from one book to the other still a simple prolongation of the same project, the same purpose? Or does the inflection imposed by *Otherwise Than Being* on the contrary bring about a complete reversal of perspective, comparable to this "revolution" Levinas found in the transition from the second to the third *Metaphysical Meditation*? On the one hand, his out-

[22] Originally cited in French from R. Calin, *Lévinas et l'exception du soi,* PUF, 2005, p. 242.

rageousness could only consist of taking things *to the limit*, of developing all implications latent in his thinking, without there being a real rupture. But, on the other, it could also perpetuate itself *beyond* its limit. Let us give an example: in *Totality and Infinity*, it is the nakedness of the face, its destitution, its absolute vulnerability which summon my infinite responsibility towards it; and this summons is so imperious that this pleading face can, *à la limite*, come to haunt me as an obsession. That which chases me relentlessly, which literally *per-secutes* me, thus is the violence of the Good; a certain continuity holds when we pass from the epiphany of the face to persecution. And yet, the direction of this relationship can be inversed, and the same term can come to designate the "maliciousness" of the Other, "the face of the fellow man in its persecuting hatred". The ethical summons, then, is so immoderate – so excessive is the violence of the Good – that it can only properly express itself in terminology evoking the most extreme evil (persecution, hatred, being held hostage…).[23] Consequently, the two adverse poles of the ethical experience become indistinguishable. If they are actually the same terms, are we still speaking of the same violence, the same persecution then? How are we to avoid confusing the face of the humiliated victim with that of his torturer? The outrageousness of Levinas's thought makes it pass beyond a divide, covering an abyss which used to separate two distinct versions of the Other. The implications of such a hyperbole are frightening; having to "respond to the persecutor" (up to the point of having myself accused *in his place*, sacrificing myself for him…) does not have the same scope if this face persecuting me is that of the weak, the poor, the victim, or, on the contrary, that of the SS. If ethics would refuse to distinguish between these two faces of the face, to celebrate the "integral passivity" of the persecuted *in all cases*, it would come to repudiate the revolt of the ghettos.

The same difficulty arises when we consider the relation of the I to the Other. Whereas the first ethics would regard it as an infinite distance, the second on the contrary seems to situate the Other in an overwhelming prox-

[23] The author adds that Ricœur managed to acknowledge "the enormity of the paradox comprised in expressing by means of maliciousness the degree of extreme passivity of the ethical condition" – cf. *Autrement, lecture d'"Autrement qu'être" de Lévinas,* PUF, 1997, p. 24; and already *Soi-même comme un autre,* Seuil, 1990, pp. 390-392.

imity. But this divergence may be illusory, as the reference in *Totality and Infinity* to Descartes suggests – a reference to the "idea of the infinite in me" which makes the relation between I and Other conceivable as an *intimate exteriority* (an "extimacy" Lacan would have said), that is, as a "surplus", an "overflowing" of the Same by the Other, a separation in immediate proximity. We could thus speak of a "transcendence in immanence", some sort of an inherence, a residing of the in-finite *in* the finite[24]. The Other thus announces himself *as the Same*, as a trace left "in" the I, in the depths of my flesh, while at the same time infinitely exceeding me. In reality, the analyses found in *Otherwise Than Being* merely make explicit what was already stated in *Totality and Infinity* by taking into account all of the consequences implied – presumably in response to Derrida's objection emphasizing that the completely Other[25] can only be expressed in the language of the Same while *presenting itself* as a mode of the Same or of the I[26]. From the "first" to the "second" Levinas, continuity still seems to get the upper hand. Or the meaning of this *in* of "Other-in-the-Same" – this transcendence in immanence – would have to change completely in the second ethics… If, before, we could speak of an inflation of the I, of its outpouring *towards the Other*, we are now faced with the exact inverse movement, some sort of a penetration of the Other *in the Same*: a pre-original *injection* which has always pierced the I, even before I was myself. Once again, the apparent homonymy of the terms masks a decisive rupture. It is undoubtedly at this point that the difference with the first ethics is most prominent. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas insisted upon the necessity for the I to "conserve its secret", to preserve its intimacy against the indiscrete reach of the Other, following a demand which is at the same time ethical and political since "the

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[24] Cf. *Totalité et infini,* p. XIII et 170, et *En découvrant l'existence,* Vrin, p. 172. Sur cette interprétation de l'in-fini où le *in-* signifie à la fois le "non" et le "dans", renvoyons à *De dieu qui vient à l'idée,* pp. 105-106.

[25] French original: *le tout-Autre*.

[26] Cf. "Violence et métaphysique", p. 167-168, etc. The author adds that paradoxically, at the same time when Levinas seems to give way to the Derridean objection by coming to regard the Other as "Other-in-the-Same", Derrida seems to meet Levinas's position when conceding the possibility of a completely Other. In *Faire part* (Lignes, 2005), Rogozinski has given an account of this back-and-forth movement and its consequences for Derrida's thinking.

pluralism of society is only possible on the basis of this secret"[27]. In *Otherwise Than Being*, conversely, he emphasizes our "unfettered exposure" to the Other, "leaving the subject no possibility to withdraw in his secret".

As such, the injection of the Other-in-me has seen me through, has "brusquely exposed me without any possible evasion"; since it traverses me from side to side, since it penetrates me all the way into my interior *conscience*, we can conceive of it as a *perforation* of the I by the Other. What are its consequences? What happens to the Other when his alterity introduces itself in the very heart of the I? Whereas *Otherwise Than Being* devotes long analyses to the effects of this perforation *on the I* – the traumatism, the fission, the torsion of the self it provokes – Levinas nonetheless fails to evoke its consequences *for the Other*. This is so because he straightaway defined this perforation as an "intrigue of the Other in the Same, *which does not boil down to the Other opening up to the Same*" (emphasis mine), as if, unlike the I, the Other could pass this test while remaining *unaltered*, absolutely intact, shut-away from all contact, all contamination by this I which it haunts. The I's agonizing opening up to the Other, its being skinned alive by him, thus would be answered by this enigmatic closure of the Other, who would resist, close himself up to the suffering, to the distress of the I, while at the same time penetrating the I and eroding it into the depths of its flesh. "The darkening of the world never attains the light of the Being"[28]; it is in these terms that Heidegger pointed out (in 1947…) the sacred character of the Being (*heilig*, i.e. always *safe*, unharmed), however great the scale of the disaster affecting man may be. Strangely, it seems that this assertion (should we call it a postulate? a bet? a faith?) that *there is something unalterable* persists if we move, with Levinas, "from the sacred to the holy"[29] – as if, past a certain limit, the "separation" implied in the biblical *kadosh* and the salutary guard of the *Heile* would close up on each other and *nearly* merge. This could put to question the all too easily assumed self-evidence of certain demarcations: the one between the Being and the Other, between ontology and ethics, or between Athens and Jerusalem,

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27 Op. cit., p. 29, cf. aussi p. 93.

28 "L'expérience de la pensée", *Questions* t. III, Gallimard, 1966, p. 21.

29 French original: *du sacré au saint*.

the "two sources" of our occidental religiosity. To put it in Joyce's terms: *Greekjew is Jewgreek – extremes meet*.

In the case of Levinas, this position could certainly be justified ethically as an attempt to safeguard the Other, to protect him "in a motherly way" against all offense, against all outrage from the side of the I. It would be grounded in the absolute dissymmetry of the ethical relation which, while letting the Other infiltrate in me, forbids me to introduce myself in him, to violate him while seeking to "unveil" him, to "understand" him, to lock him up in a concept. "Were you there when I created the world? … Did you, once in your life, command the morning?" … Who am I, then, to dare to ask of the completely Other that he "opens up" to me, reveals me his secret? But, on the other hand, does this prohibition to question the Other not imply renouncing the exercise of thought itself, and notably the questioning of the consequences of the act which injects him in the I? Is it possible for the Other to engage himself in this way in the Same without being altered by it, without becoming the Other *of* the Same, an Other already disfigured by the Same? How far can his intrusion of the Other in the I go? Does it not run the risk of annihilating the I, of dispossessing it completely of the self – of my body, my duration, my ipseity – when it does not even leave it the option to receive the Other, to either respond or not to his call with a *here I am*? The problem when it comes to this motif of "the Other-in-the-Same" is not merely to be situated in the *in*, i.e. the modalities and effects of the Other's injection in me – but equally in *the Other*, the status of this enigmatic alterity which has always been perforating me. Is the *same* name of "other" suitable for naming both the absolutely-Other – infinitely separated from the I – and an alterity with which I am one, up to the point where it cracks me open? This Other-in-me – is he still *another*? Does he still have a face? We could assume that none of this is the case, that we should rigorously distinguish between the epiphany of the face of another, who always approaches me *frontally*, in the directness of the face-to-face, and this pre-injection of an anonymous alterity which haunts me from the depths of myself. But then we would be forgetting that the face is not a visible face; it does not have an a priori assignable place: it gives itself in the ever singular event of its revelation and, in this sense, the entire body can *make up the face* as well as a voice or a hand being stretched out. If the event of the face is measured by

the "disturbance" it provokes – by the interruption of my narcissistic auto-affection – then the traumatic penetration of the Other in the I is eminently, excessively "face", at least insofar as we speak of the encounter with an other as analyzed in *Totality and Infinity*. If approaching the face via face-to-face contact tends to disappear in the second ethics, it does so to the benefit of a *more-than-face*, a revelation without epiphany of a "face" without a visible face, an archi-face which is no longer that of another.

But Levinas would never consent to this. A case of modest self-restraint or rather of blindness? Keeping him from asking such questions is the outrageousness of his thinking which takes him beyond the limits of the delimitated area of every phenomenon when trying to "show something else", to approach the enigma of an *other Other* – but without overtly recognizing this possibility of the Other's division.[30] Carried away by an exaggeration which gets lost in itself, the second ethics indeed tends to identify the Other-in-me with the other, as if these two terms were necessarily synonyms – for example in this passage where the "responsibility for *Another*" is defined as "the *other* at the very heart of myself claiming the Same, the extreme tension of the command exercised by *another* on me in me, the traumatic hold of the *Other* on the Same…" (emphasis mine). It happens to be the case that this identification is not self-evident. If it is true that this Other who haunts me and persecutes me affects me in a pre-original manner, even before appearing to my consciousness, then how would I be able to recognize, identify him *as* an other without doing violence to his indetermination?[31] If we wish to respect his mode of donation, we can do nothing more than to designate him as an Other=X, an anonymous alterity. We are then faced with an imperative which is at the same time *ethical* (respecting the neutrality of the Other while avoiding to violate his secret) and *phenomenological* (describing the phenomenon as it shows up, without imposing for-

[30] The author adds that, on this subject, Lacan's thinking seems to be more open to the different ways in which the "other" gives himself; he could be called more "phenomenological".

[31] The author recognizes here the interrogation of the "unfathomable anteriority" of the Levinasian Other as explained, "in a rather exasperated manner", by M. Haar in "L'obsession de l'Autre"*, Emmanuel Lévinas,* Cahier de l'Herne, 1991, rééd. Livre de Poche, p. 526.

eign determinations on it). Taken literally, however, this imperative forces us to break with a major thesis of phenomenology affirming that "the *first stranger in the self* (the first *non-me*), is *the other me*"[32]; we no longer have the right to determine it in this way. Levinas himself, however, remains absolutely faithful to this assertion of *Cartesian Meditations*, even when he distances himself from Husserl when refusing to assimilate the other to "another *me*", in order to respect, more than Husserl did, the radical alterity of the First Stranger. As such, the entirety of Levinas's oeuvre testifies to his obstinate fidelity to this thesis of his master. But considering the "first non-me" as another is not necessarily the only possibility authorized by Husserl's approach. To this decisive question – *who* is the First Stranger? – the founder of phenomenology has equally given another answer: in certain manuscripts of the thirties, he indeed came to designate l'*Ur-hylè* – the "material" of the primary sensations by which the I is originally affected – as the *Ichfremdkern*, the "core" *in me* of "the stranger in me". The discovery of an Other-in-me thus appears to be neither Levinas's nor Derrida's – except that, in the case of Husserl, we can not speak of an other, but we should consider an alterity *that I myself am*, since the I "is indivisibly one with (*in eins mit und ungetrennt*) its most profound hyletic foundation"[33]. These primary sensations of movement – of displacement and obstruction, of tension and relaxation – and these *Empfindnisse* – these perceptive "sentances" of heat or cold, of ruggedness, of whiteness, etc. – which affect me before I am intentionally directed towards an object, all of this belongs to my immanent life, is one with me – while at the same time *equally* manifesting itself as other than me, as the announcement in me of a stranger-to-me. Faced with the enigma of the First Stranger, it is the whole of traditional demarcations between the Same and the Other, the I and an other, immanence and transcendence, which comes to falter. Previously unobserved questions then crop up. If this Other=X is at the same time mine and foreign, how does this double character manifest itself? Does his foreignness – which is not *abso-*

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[32] "*Das an sich erste Fremde (das erste "Nicht-Ich") is das andere Ich"* - Husserl, *Méditations cartésiennes* §49, Vrin, p. 90 (modified translation).

[33] Cf. texts cited by N. Depraz, "Temporalité et affection dans les manuscrits tardifs de Husserl", *Alter* n°2, 1994, pp. 72-73.

lutely foreign to me – unavoidably bring about a divide, a fission of the I? Is it impossible for me to come to recognize this Stranger as *mine*, as an opaque part of my self? To reconcile with him without merging with him? What relation could there be between this immanent alterity and the transcendence of another? When I encounter another, will I not *project* the alterity of the other-in-me onto this other outside of me; will I not confer certain of its traits to him, identify him with this alterity? An other would then be nothing else than my *double*, the replica or the mask of the stranger-in-me. What would be the consequences in the domain of ethics? If we are to distinguish at least two modes of the Other, two kinds of alterity, that of the face of another and that of the Other-in-me, has the time then not come to put an end to the equivocal uniqueness of the name of the "Other", to abandon the *monotheism of the Other*?

Levinas could not ask himself these questions because he remained faithful to the first thesis of Husserl, the one which defines the original foreignness as an other. This fidelity is maintained throughout all successive exaggerations – first when he identifies an other to the completely Other, and next when he reintroduces the latter in me as an Other-in-the-Same. What Levinas in all cases refuses to take into account is the possibility of an *other alterity*, more radical than that of the other. At some point, he has nevertheless evoked an "other than another, otherwise other, an other of an alterity which is prior to the alterity of another, prior to the obligatory ethics of the fellow man". He specifies that this *otherwise Other* is "different from all fellow men, transcendent up to the point of absence, up to its possible confusion with the commotion of the "*there is*"[34], i.e. with the impersonal "insignificance" of the being[35]. But is this archi-alterity not that of the First Stranger in me, of Husserl's *Ur-hylè*; it is to this alterity that the name of "God" refers. Could it be identical to what he calls the Other-in-the Same? If this were the case, it could lead us back to the classical thesis of a God "more intimate to myself than me myself"… This theological interpretation,

[34] French original: *il y a.*

[35] *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée,* p. 115. The author adds that it is impossible for him in this context to inquire further into this "possible confusion" between the non-sense of the Other and that of the Being, which disconcerts and destabilizes the entire Levinasian foundation.

however, appears to me as erroneous, precisely because Levinas identifies the Other-in-the-Same *with the other*, with an ethical alterity which is distinct from the divine alterity. In spite of everything, the outrageousness of his thinking made him move them ever more close to one another, up to the point of identifying the ethical illeity of the face and the "glory" of the Sinaï, "the language of what is beyond the being" and the name of God. Under the single term of "Other" three different determinations are confused; the difference between them is covered up and denied from the moment it shows.

It is this confusion between different dimensions of the Other – whether it is deliberate or not is not the question – which characterizes the second ethics; under this term Levinas juxtaposes certain traits of the alterity=X (its obsessive proximity, its pre-injection in me) and those of the other as completely Other (his infinite exteriority, his radical separation from the I). This *double condition* of the Other, these two incompatible natures are simultaneously affirmed in such a way that the alterity of the completely Other enters *as such* into the core of the I and makes it burst open. In order to describe this paradoxical situation where the being-self is defined as a fission of the self, as being torn away from the self, he speaks of a "body stripped of its skin", of the "haemorrhage of the haemophiliac". Again, those are not mere metaphors, but rather a bodily inscription of the ethical hyperboles. The body does not represent, but it is in reality "the contraction of the ipseity"; the subject is "of flesh and blood", "bowels within a skin, and thus susceptible of (…) giving his skin"[36]. Once again, we notice a conception of the ego as an "incarnated I" testifying to Levinas's fidelity towards Husserl, to his notion of a self which is originally *Ichleib*, "flesh of the ego".

As such, all motifs of the second ethics could in a similar way be re-registered in the bodily domain where the motif of the *skin* plays a major role. As for the I "bound up with the self", tied to its ipseity, Levinas claims that it "feels uncanny in its skin"[37], tucked in "the tunic of Nessus which is

[36] Original French expression: *donner sa peau pour*: sacrifying oneself for the sake of, dying for the sake of.

[37] Original French expression: *être mal dans sa peau*.

his skin". He describes the Other-in-the-I as a "splinter which burns my flesh", an "other-in-the-skin"; and the vulnerability of the I, his sacrificial exposure to the Other as a "denudation beyond the skin". In this way, Levinas – maybe without knowing it – meets Freud's thesis defining the I as a "projection of the bodily surface", "an I-body", that is, a *I-skin*. But its function is not the same for both thinkers. In the eyes of the founder of psychoanalysis, the "skin" is a *surface of protection* (bodily or psychical), a *Reizschutz* which helps the subject to resist the excitations from the outside world or from the that[38]. In the case of Levinas, it is rather a *zone of exposure* which makes the perforation of the I by the Other possible. Instead of enveloping me, protecting me, my skin makes me suffer some sort of an *evagination* where my flesh turns inside out, exhibiting my most secret intimacy. The "denudation" of which he speaks is one of being skinned alive, a tearing apart which rips me away from myself, and it is actually my "own" skin tearing itself apart: it is almost as if there were "no longer an opposition between having a skin and being flayed or skinned"[39]. All of these motifs reappear in Levinas's new way of looking upon the *caress*. The second ethics defines it as "the non-coincidence of contact", a "dehiscence" where the "discrepancy between the approach and the approached" is revealed; that is, where the irreducible distance between the I and the Other within me is maintained. Describing the caress in such a way, the second ethics appears to continue anterior analyses outlined in *Time and the Other*, and subsequently in *Totality and Infinity*. However, if the caress was already defined there as a "beyond contact" – a "hunger" ever unappeased, an experience of the "ungraspable"[40] – these analyses took into account the non-coincidence, the incessant "evasion" of the caressed flesh by invoking the vulnerability *of the Other*, the "extreme fragility" of the feminine which brings him to shy

[38] For further reading concerning this thesis of Freud, as explained in his essay on *Le moi et le ça*, and its theoretical and clinical implications, see D. Anzieu, *Le Moi-peau,* Bordas, 1985.

[39] J.L. Chrétien, "La dette et l'élection", *Lévinas,* Cahier de l'Herne, p. 271.

[40] Cf. *Le temps et l'autre* (1946), reed. PUF, 1983, p. 82-83, and *Totalité et infini* pp. 233-238. These analyses are without a doubt directed against Sartre, who, on the contrary, conceived of the caress as taking possession of the other, an attempt (doomed to failure) to capture his freedom through incarnation.

away, to avoid all bodily contact as a "profanation" of his reserve. In the view of *Otherwise Than Being*, the caress always proves to a vulnerability, but it is no longer that of the Other, of the Beloved: it is that *of the I* in its devotion, its "immolation" of the Other. While caressing the body of the Other, I hurt myself, I cut myself on his contact; I let myself be lacerated by this body that I caress, be torn apart by it up to the point where I "sacrifice my skin". In reality, this being skinned precedes all caressing, all external contact with the Other, since *I have him in my skin*, he has always perforated me, torn me away from myself. We are faced here with an "exaggeration of tangency", where the motifs slip from hyperbole to hyperbole – from pre-injection to perforation, and further on to being skinned and haemorrhage – up to the point of wounding, "wounding to death", as the truth of the caress and of all relations to the Other. Paraphrasing an author from which Levinas sought to distance himself, but who appears to be closer to him than he thought: *the Other-in-me is the hell*[41].

How would it be possible to escape this hell in the direction of which the outrageousness of the second ethics precipitates us? How are we to think bodily contact without over-determining it throughout a series of hyperboles? By describing it as it is given, neither as a caress, nor as a wound, but simply as contact, as a skin being touched by a skin. In which singular experience is this phenomenon originally given? If we are to believe Husserl, it is given in the act where the touching flesh recognizes the touched flesh as its own flesh – what Merleau-Ponty calls the tactile "interlace", "chiasm". As described in *Ideen II* or in *The Visible and the Invisible*, the most original phenomenon of bodily contact is this self-experience where my flesh *touches itself* while touching. Levinas refuses to take this classical analysis into account quite deliberately, because it supposes the priority of the auto-affection over the hetero-affection, whereas he posits as a principle that the incarnation plays on the contrary "in a broader intrigue than the self-apperception, an intrigue where I am tied to the others before being tied to my body". If one is to accept this postulate, one has to conclude that contact is necessarily altered, disconnected from the self by the alterity of the foreign flesh: "in the contact itself, that which touches and that which is

[41] French original: *l'Autre-en-moi, c'est l'enfer*.

touched are separated, as if the touching creating distance, always already other, had nothing *in common* with me". This is why "the caress lies dormant in all contact" and, in all contact, the wound. In defining the touch as an agonizing exposure of the flesh *to the Other*, in refusing to envisage the eventuality of a tactile *auto*-affection, Levinas once again proves fidelity – even up to his ultimate implications – to Husserl's thesis identifying the First Stranger to the other. Today, it is precisely this thesis which should be questioned. Through the experience of the chiasm, indeed, I discover that an irreducible gap widens between my flesh and itself: I experience a stranger *in me*, an anonymous archi-alterity which does not boil down to the alterity of the Other, whether that of the *alter ego* or of the face of another, or to that which the word "God" names. In me too, that which touches and that which is touched are separated, *as if* my flesh were "always already other" – and yet I discover that this other flesh that I feel is another pole *of my flesh*; that the First Stranger I encounter is a part of my own flesh, which hides from itself and understands itself wrongly as a transcendent Thing. Before tying myself up with others, I have first tied myself up with my flesh, that is to say, with myself.

Such being the case, it is time to return to Descartes, but to another Descartes than the one praised by Levinas: to the Descartes of the second *Metaphysical Meditation*, the one that discovered in the original truth of the ego an element of *resistance* to the hold the Other has on the ego – the Other as this great Deceiver which should finally be revealed as an illusion the ego loses itself in. Let us keep ourselves from disregard: while we are indeed refocusing on the ego, affirming the priority of his auto-donation over all transcendent donation, this certainly does not mean that the vulnerability, the obsession, the traumatism, the entire martyrdom of the Self as admirably described by Levinas disappear as if it were by magic. Rather, their significance becomes profoundly different: if the Stranger haunting me is no-one else than me myself, we can from now on envisage, beyond the wretchedness and the hardship, the possibility of an I-flesh reconciled with itself, having overcome its dreads to a certain extent. From this point of view, the entire dimension of ethics should be reconsidered, since it is my primordial relation to myself, to my own flesh, which founds the possibility of my rela-

tion to the Other; and the alterity of another from now on appears as a projection transcending this archi-alterity which I first encounter in myself. This leaves open the question how – through this screen representation, this specter that I project onto the Other – I am nevertheless to make my way towards him, how I am to approach the others *in truth*, beyond the obsession and the phantasm[42]. Levinas's ethics can from the outset be considered some sort of an antithesis, a version *in negativo* (in the way that we speak of a photographic "negative") of this phenomenology of the I-flesh. It can equally be regarded as one of its privileged *revelators*. In other words our proximity to Levinas is more intimate than it may seem to be at first glance; may our debt towards him "ever increase while being paid off".

[42] See Rogozinski's book *Le moi et la chair, introduction à l'ego-analyse,* Cerf, 2006.

Levinas' Outrageousness as a Grotesque: in Response to Jacob Rogozinski

Maria Dimitrova (Sofia University)

Emmanuel Levinas – his philosophy, his world, his ethics – permits, and almost encourages, his depiction through the grotesque.

It is very rare to encounter the genre "grotesque" in the field of philosophy. "The lovers of wisdom" seem to prefer the stuck-up, pompous and inflated maxims, conjoined in heavy, monolithic solemn tractates. This is not the case in literature and visual arts. There, masterpieces can be found in the grotesque style. I'll mention just a few; for example, in painting Hieronymus Bosch, Jericho, Dali etc.; in literature, François Rabelais, Ionesco, Beckett and, of course, the unrivalled Kafka. Everything, which in the apodictic discourse is elevated, spiritualized, deified, reversely, becomes "the other of itself" through the grotesque style – the sacred is reduced to its incarnations, but they are somehow disgusting; ideology is naturalized, but we perceive this type of natural form as more or less misshaped. The grotesque is really hard to take and very often we try to escape the discomfort it causes.

The first feature of each grotesque picture is its ambivalence. It is created by a clash of opposites, typical of the author's attitude towards the object of depiction – in your text such an object became Levinas' legacy. The creator of grotesques, however, projects his own ambiguous attitude towards the topic resulting from mutually exclusive values and evaluations as an appropriate expression of the very problematic objective state. The confusion of the heterogeneous moods and the lack of resolution of the conflict is a distinguished characteristics of the grotesque.

In our case it is true that, on the one hand, we can transform Levinas' body of thought into an oracle where "the said" is immobilized, showing our strict fidelity, our submission to the Master, but on the other hand and simultaneously, we must concede that true fidelity to a thinker involves necessarily some injustice and infidelity. And only when the ambivalence of this attitude towards Levinas is transferred to Levinas' philosophy itself, we can reach the excessive controver-

siality of the grotesque: "*Levinas' body of ideas, while pretending to prohibit all violence, is itself nevertheless committing an extreme violence*". When the caress is literally identified with wounding, we can talk easily in a grotesque style about Levinas' outrageousness.

Emmanuel Levinas himself emphasizes on multiple occasions that the method he has used in his works is hyperbolization. His term "beyond" does not refer to a world, beyond our world but to the travel beyond the borders of any world. "Beyond" is not simply "above" or "over". "Beyond" is the dimension of height, in which every "above" or "over" is situated and becomes relevant. "Beyond" is extraterritorial, while in the grotesque it seems territorial. When the extraterritorial meaning of "beyond" is reduced to the territorial "above" and "over" and claims to take their place, they all come together in "down here" and form a combined whole – the entirety of corporeal, worldly, territorial existence. Thus, for the common perception the result is a totality, but this totality is a heterogeneous formation as when instead of wings, hands are attached to a bird's body. If wings are attached to a human body, this is a sort of uplift, hyperbolization, which turns the human into an angel or an angel-like being. Levinas' ethics wants to show us that my Self, becoming "me", can be elevated, inspired, to fly beyond his attachment to the totality of worldly interests. For Levinas, this happens only when the Self is not merely for-itself, but for-the-Other. Levinas uses hyperbolization for heightening, which should make us understand that everything in connection with morality exceeds our "normal", "average", "reciprocated" relationships. His hyperboles insist on what is "more in less". The contradiction between ethical and ontological spans throughout his philosophy and exceeds tremendously our traditional understandings of humanity. In Levinas' humanism, ontology is subordinated to ethics and every return to the old "ethics in the boundaries of ontology" looks as though turned upside down. Indeed, let's ask ourselves, is it possible to assume without absolutization, without augmentation and enhancement, that *"Nothing is more grave, more august, than responsibility for the other, and saying, in which there is no play, has gravity more grave than its own being or not being*"[1].

[1] Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, 2000, p. 46.

The high-flying ethics of Levinas draws with itself also the ontology to such extent that the ontological merges with the morality - the Self becomes itself when and as far as it is for the Other. While in the grotesque portrait of the Levinasian metaphysics ethics is reduced to the level of ontology and to the happening within the horizons of (my) world. In view of logic of being, my Ego has a leading role, because it functions as a beginning. Reversely, according to Levinas' conception, the first one is the Other. Levinas tries to warn his readers on multiple occasions about this possibility for reduction of his philosophy. He insists again and again that the vertical relationship, i.e. the relationship in depth or height between the Other and me, should not be projected in the flatness of being's parameters, but, instead, the terrestrial existence must be elevated to its metaphysical meanings.

Perhaps it is not possible, as Levinas does, to argue without extravagance or amplification that ethics is not reducible to any codes of rules of one or another community as well as any principles, even strictly personal. When the Other is presented in his dimension of transcendence, we must say (though it might seem an exaggeration) that the moral subject is without relax at the service of the heterogeneous appeal of the Other. It is impossible to state without a kind of sublimation, which looks as overplay, that through the face of the Other and his eyes a Good is looking at me: *"A Good in relation to which being itself appears. A Good, from which being draws the illumination of its manifestation and its ontological force. A Good in view of which "every soul does all that it does*"[2]. As if this humanism, for which no other humanism up to now has not been humane enough, this excessive Levinasian humanism, provokes our desire to ground it and take a sober look at what all this means in the categories of being. Exactly the urge for soberness drives us to turn against Levinas and makes us slip on the downhill, which leads to the grotesque.

But once we arrive at the grotesque bottom, the dimensions "up" and "down" disappear. Then, both the existence of such thing as morality as well as the philosophizing about it, also disappear. The bird, which has hands instead of wings, not only cannot fly, but is even devoid of its symbolic or

[2] Emmanuel Levinas. Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other.Translated by Michael Smith and Barbara Harshav. Columbia University Press, New York,1998, p. 200.

metaphorical value to represent the very opportunity of flight beyond. The journey towards the grotesque begins precisely through the grounding of the absolutes. But, in contrast to irony and satire, which also walk this path and which bring down *the Most High* and turn it to an object of mockery, the grotesque is not concerned only with a trade of places for high and low, but also directs its efforts towards diminishment of a distance between them reaching even a sort of platitude and even their full identification.

While the ironist and satirist retain their position of absolute freedom and supremacy over the mocked character, the creator of the grotesque tries to speak as a detached and dispassionate observer, keeping cool even though he himself feels confused and uncertain about the controversy and absurdity of the same situation, in which he has placed the character of his creation. This situation looks grim and fearsome because of the unbalanced proportions of things and the implications that until this moment only habit prevented us from seeing the disproportions and the strangling horror in it. The grotesque claims to reveal the demons that haunt us, to point out the deformations which we ignored previously, and conversely to demonize the dreams in pink, which we created for ourselves; ultimately, it claims to show us that the remedy we habitually take is, in fact, a poison. The aim is to disgust us, to make us turn our heads and refuse the opiates, i.e. the hyperbolizations, which we believed were our salvation. So, the question then is, whether Levinas' ethics is too elevated and by this way intoxicating?

Well, what's so bad about bringing metaphysics down to earth? What happens if we try to defend the unbounded autonomy of the Self? Is it not true that, whether we like it or not, we enclose the Other within the schemes of our own narrow-mindedness? Is it not true that my Ego, and not the Other, is in closest proximity to me? Isn't egocentrism the most reliable coordinate system? In response to these questions, we would like first to note that if this is the case, then, the hierarchy falls apart: "*Il ne peut y avoir de sens dans l'etre que celui qui ne se mesure pas a l'etre*"[3].

The operation of hyperbolizing most commonly uses the ontological terms in ethical sense. But there is such a vast gape between the strictly ethical and the

[3] Emmanuel Levinas. *Humanisme et an-archie. Humanisme de l'autre homme*, Fata Morgana, 1972, p.81.

common ontological meanings that it cannot be compared even to the difference between heaven and earth. For example, passiveness, opposed within a totality of being to activeness, is one thing, and passiveness (more passive than any passiveness) which coincides with vulnerability and subjectivity of the Self, hearing the appeal of the Other, is a quite other thing; similarly, there is incommensurability between the juridical guilt, sought in the court after the deed has been perpetrated and the guilt, which is moral and precedes any deed and makes me more guilty than any other even before I have perpetrated anything; in the same way, there is an enormous distance between our everyday understanding of responsibility and the responsibility, which connects me with transcendence, with infinity, and can never be depleted by the answers I give as a limited, finite being; besides, it is out of the question to compare intimacy, which is moral in its essence and for that is never close enough, and the intimacy, which is carnal and spatial. According to Levinas' philosophy, I could never take the place of the Other, no matter how much effort I make. The Other eludes the range of my capabilities and I cannot catch up with him, no matter how faithfully and dedicatedly I follow the trace, left by him. As if the magnification, which Levinas uses, is so magnificent, that it provokes an opposite reaction and fear of some inappropriate, unreasonable intoxication and something like an ethical delirium. And as a kind of resistance, the creators of grotesques, seeking to avoid the out-of-place sublimity and the exaltation of one extreme, compared to another, so typical in hyperbolization, ignore fully the distance between the extremes and present them as continually blending with one another even to the point of their fusion into a strange, scary, and incompatible combination. However, this combination does not "fly in the sky"; although it looks fictional, it is perceived as the very bodily existence, inseparable from earthly conditions. Because of that the grotesque impact is horrifying and at the same time ridiculous.

In this regard something very important must be pointed out about Levinas' philosophy, which prevents it from being mocked. Tirelessly Levinas reminds again and again not only that there are different levels of descending into the deep, but also that we need a mediating of the Third. Once we have left the field of the ethical relationship (if such a leave is at all feasible as responsibility cannot be escaped), we get into a reflective attitude toward the others and a reflexivity presupposes the presence of a third per-

son. Even though Levinas focuses on the face-to-face relation, which is par excellence the direct relation, he never forgets that the Third is already looking at me with the eyes of the Other (and together with the Third also in principle everybody else). The Thirds must not be ignored, if we don't want to alter or ridicule Levinas' stance. "*Cette troisieme personne qui, dans le visage, s'est deja retirée de toute revelation et de toute dissimulation – qui a passé – cette illeité n'est pas un "moins que l'être" par rapport au monde ou penetre le visage; - c'est toute l'enormité, toute la demesure, tout l'infini de l'absolument Autre, echappant a l'ontologie."*[4]

Levinas needs the series of hyperboles precisely to show us that "bodily contact" is not just given and we could not describe it without over-determining. "*The body is not only image or figure here", "the expression "in one's skin" is not a metaphor for the in-itself; it refers to a recurrence in the dead time or the meanwhile which separates inspiration and expiration… This recurrence is incarnation… In it the body which makes giving possible makes one other without alienating."*[5] According to Levinas, the subject is not in time, but is diachrony itself. In the identification of the Ego there is the ageing of him and it is the diachrony of an election without identification. Uniqueness is without identity. Not an identity, it is beyond consciousness, which is in itself and for itself. The diachrony that one will never "catch up with there again" prevents the one from joining up with itself and identifying itself as a substance. It is the diachrony due to an election that denudes and impoverishes. Without the demand from the Other the ethical (that is human and not naturalistic) meaning of the ageing is lost.[6] The thesis that "*Before tying myself up with others, I have to tie myself up with my flesh, that is to say, with myself*" and that "*it is my primordial relation to myself, to my own flesh, which founds the possibility of my relation to the Other*" is not an antithesis of Levinas' ethics. Concerning this Levinas writes: "*One may in particular wonder whether such a "relation" (the ethical relation) does not impose itself through a radical separation of the two hands, which in point of fact do not belong to the same body. It is that radical separation and the entire ethical*

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4 Emmanuel Levinas. La signification et le sens. *Humanisme de l'autre homme*. Fata Morgana, 1972, p.59.

5 Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, 2000, p. 109.

6 Ibid., pp. 56-57.

order of sociality, that appears ... even in the hand one shakes".[7] The thesis, privileging a leave from the Self, which is not a reply to the appeal, heard from the opposite shore, but a reconstruction of the circling around myself, cannot be acknowledged as a version *in positive*, which uses Levinas' philosophy as its photographic negative; it is rather a transfer of meanings from one field to the other and vise versa, from the non-locus to locus, without a mediator, during which the meanings become the other of themselves and ultimately induce a feeling of absurd: an incapability of the subject to break free from the centripetal wandering around himself as a center. The thesis and antithesis, united in one by the grotesque, even when thought of as the front and back side, can be considered equal only when it is allowed an illegal reduction of meta-language to language, devoid of the dimension of height and overlooking a metaphorical sense. Only in this way immediately (without preserving any distance between them and without an understanding that the suffering within me receives a meaning as a suffering only because of the suffering of the other) the caress and the wound can be perceived as phenomena which are mutually exchangeable and of the same order, and Levinas' language can be dubbed "outrageousness".

As to what regards the perspective in which I see things, I agree with Jacques Ellul, who says in his book *The Humiliated Word*, in view of the extreme violence attributed to language, that nothing is more senseless than the argument, heard thousand of times in today's world, that speech and words are terroristic. It seems he is convinced by personal experience, that the people who say this so easily have not experienced themselves the difference between the violence of the words and the violence of the lash of the whip, between the roaring human mouth and the silent barrel of a gun. In the grotesque these two extremes are merged and make us shiver, for wherever this merge occurs, it is monstrous. One of the lessons from Levinas' books – from the first to the last, including *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being* – teaches us that where the Word is spoken and the Other can be heard, the shooting of guns and revolvers has either been postponed or silenced.

Perhaps this will sound unoriginal, as so many have done already, but

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[7] Emmanuel Levinas. On Intersublectivity. Notes on Merleau-Ponty. *Outside the Subject*. Translated by Michael B. Smith, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994, pp. 101-102.

I would also like to join the respect shown towards Levinas by Maurice Blanchot: "*In Emmanuel Levinas' book – where it seems to me, philosophy in our time has never spoken in a more sober manner, putting back into question, as we must, our ways of thinking and even our facile reverence for ontology, we are called upon to become responsible for what philosophy essentially is, by entertaining precisely the idea of the Other in all its radiance and the infinite exigency that are proper to it, that is to say, the relation with autrui. It is as though there were here a new departure of philosophy and a leap that it, and we ourselves, were urged to accomplish*."[8]

But at the same time I know very well that the appearance of the grotesque signals the end of some monolithically serious myth. Labeling some belief as a myth already presupposes distance, suspicion, reflection, and end of the faith. The grotesque describes exactly the myth's picturesque agony. And grotesque has as its function not only to demythologize and represent the death of the myth but our liberation from it as well. In this way, it could be a beginning of another style of thinking and quite new culture.

[8] Maurice Blanchot. Knowledge of the Unknown. *The Infinite Conversation*. Translated by Susan Hanson. University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 51.

The "persecuted" Other: Levinas' perception of Kierkegaard

Vasiliki Tsakiri (University of Patras)

Considered the founder of existentialism, Kierkegaard is usually described as prioritizing hypostasis over essence, as his notion of the existence substitutes for the more traditional notions of the soul, the cogito, etc., promoting thus a holistic understanding of the human being (Wahl). Indeed, Kierkegaard distinguishes between two different meanings of the verb "to exist", viz. one which "touches" on the ordinary meaning (temporal and spatial actuality)" and another having a "special meaning, qualitative becoming in view of which ordinary existence could more accurately be termed subsistence" (Kierkegaard, 1985: 298, n.6). The main characteristics of existence are thus summarized in the following manner: First, existence cannot be the object of logic and science and it cannot be disclosed in an objective manner, and second, the existent person has the potentiality to become what Kierkegaard calls a "single Individual". In this respect Kierkegaard traces in human history proto-typical, paradigmatic figures of human beings that could serve as examples of this state-of-affairs. Moreover the notion of the Single Individual represents personhood as not static and identical but as constantly reshaped and recreated subject to the doings of each individual human being and therefore as subject to *risk*. It follows that under this perspective personhood becomes a *task* to be undertaken or neglected by each human being rather than a mere *given*. This is the reason why Kierkegaard sees the attainment of this mode of existing as a "second birth" performed through a "qualitative leap", or as he formulates it, the "special qualitative meaning of 'to exist' is expressed as a redoubling, a coming into existence within its own coming into existence" (Kierkegaard, 1985: 298, n.6).

The highest form of qualitative leap is for Kierkegaard the "leap of faith" which entails the openness of the human being towards the absurd, the paradox, the divine. This leap is linked with a way of fundamental comportment primarily towards the divine, and by default also towards the hu-

man and the cosmic that Kierkegaard calls Religiousness B. Kierkegaard uses this term in order to underline the possibility of attaining a paradoxical relation with the divine, in contrast to the respective philosophical attitude (Religiousness A) that aims to wrest under concepts and thus "normalize" both the human and the divine. Since Kierkegaard's narrative is heavily premised on the notions of the Fall and of sin, it is hardly surprising that he sets the acknowledgment of the "moment" of the Fall, this "first leap", as a prerequisite for the attainment of the mode of existence characteristic of the Single Individual. Importantly, this first leap is in Kierkegaard's view "present" in every human being and binds therefore the history of every human person to that of humanity, as "every subsequent individual begins in the very same way but within the quantitative difference that is the consequence of the relationship of generation and the historical relationship" (Kierkegaard, 1980: 90). Now, every such leap is the meeting point of time (as ordinarily understood) and "eternity" and as such it forms the very presupposition of human freedom, the latter being conceptualized in the guise of "being able to"; that is, potentiality without an object.

In this way Kierkegaard wishes to overcome the idea of an "empty", "formal" and homogenous time (plaguing for example Kant's conception of time as an *a priori* form of intuition), while introducing the concept of *repetition*, which among other Kierkegaard's key concepts was later modified and became widely known through Heidegger, especially in the guise of authentic repetition in *Being and Time*[1]. Kierkegaard describes repetition as "a transcendent, religious movement by virtue of the absurd when the borderline of the wondrous is reached" (Kierkegaard, 1983: 305). In this respect, the - pivotal to Kierkegaard's meditations - biblical figures of Job and Abraham could be treated as representing archetypal figures of repetition. Especially the story of Abraham is of great importance, because it is perhaps the most telling example of the manner in which Kierkegaard attempted to surmount the confines of traditional morality without however in my view succumbing to the temptation to abolish altogether ethical life. In itself a "scandal of reason" and rejected by Kant on the grounds that it contradicted reason as it went against the principle that humans "ought to hazard nothing that may be wrong" (Kant, 1960: 173-174), Abraham's story was in Kierkegaard's eyes simply impossible to translate into ethical-philosophical lan-

guage. Thus considered from the philosophical-ethical point of view, Abraham is but the potential murderer of Isaac, while for Kierkegaard he serves as the best example of the "leap of faith". Abraham's exercise of freedom converges with the "leap of faith", which for Kierkegaard happens always within the realm of the finite (i.e. in the socio-historical world), but opens up human singularity towards the infinite. The leap of faith is a paradoxical movement by virtue of the absurd, entailing a passage from finitude to infinity *and* (most importantly) a return to the finite. In this respect, although one acknowledges that in the finite world not everything is possible, one simultaneously, and equally passionately, believes that since for God everything is possible, everything becomes also possible in the finite world by virtue of the absurd. In other words Kierkegaard attempts to capture with this formulation the enigmatic impregnation of the finite by the infinite, a state of affairs that could be described as a collision between time and eternity through *repetition* (Kierkegaard, 1983: 46).

Moreover, Abraham's story presents us with what Kierkegaard considers as crucial characteristics of the single individual, namely silence[1], solitude and secrecy. Especially the idea of secrecy is of utmost importance as it underlines the impossibility of translating singularity into universality, of converting the inner experience of the single individual into signs belonging to the system of language. Derrida rightly observes that silence and secrecy are in truth interwoven, underlying both Abraham's attitude towards the ethical order and the divine. Thus, Abraham doesn't speak of what God has ordered him alone to do, he doesn't speak of it to Sarah, Eliezer, or to Isaac. He must keep the secret (that is his duty), but it is also a secret that he *must* keep as a double necessity because in the end he *can only* keep it: He doesn't know it, he is unaware of its ultimate rhyme and reason. He is sworn to secrecy because he is in secret. (Derrida, 1998: 155)

This uttermost secrecy, the mystery-like nature allegedly characteristic of both the individual human being and the divine arguably explains why Kierkegaard's project is grounded on the supposition of *paradoxicality of human inwardness* as his concluding phrase in *Fear and Trembling* suggests: "Either there is a paradox that the single individual as the single individual stands in absolute relation to the absolute or Abraham is lost"

(Kierkegaard, 1983: 120).

In Kierkegaard's formulation Levinas sees mainly the development of an opposition between a tension-less exteriority (signifying the social and ethical orders) and a passionate interiority ridden by a secret that ultimately defines human subjectivity. More importantly, Levinas traces the origins of this conception of the human subject in Christian consciousness and "even to the pagan roots of Christianity". He also links it to the "archaic tension of the human soul", viz. "the tension of the soul consumed by desire" that in his view (contestable to be sure) brings Kierkegaard's thought close to the fundamental principles of Hegel's speculative philosophy (Levinas, 1998: 27-28). It is certainly ironic that Levinas would link Kierkegaard with his sworn enemies, i.e., Hegelianism and paganism. It has to be noted for purposes of conceptual clarity that Kierkegaard developed the idea of a "second ethics" via a reformulation of Aristotle's canonical distinction of the sciences. Kierkegaard includes in what Aristotle called *first philosophy* the "totality of science which we might call ethnical [pagan] whose essence is immanence". This he juxtaposes to what he calls *secunda philosophia* - and within it second ethics - i.e., "that totality of science whose essence is transcendence or repetition" (Tsakiri, 2006: 27; Kierkegaard 1980: 21). Although by *second ethics* Kierkegaard means mainly *Christian ethics*, it is important to bear in mind that *second ethics* do not point to an external imposition of moral rules but rather signify an existential ethical view. Thus, inwardness, "authentic" existence, appropriation and transcendence are more or less synonymous with proper ethical existence. Consequently central conceptions like "love as duty", "sacrifice" etc, does not take the form of Kantian maxims, for they do not claim objective validity and universality, but are on the contrary subject to individual experience, inwardness and appropriation. The demands generated by second ethics are "specified by genuine divine commands and not merely by a moral law that can also be thought of as a divine command" (Quinn, 1998: 352). Until those demands are *appropriated*, they remain to the state of *untruth*, while the transition from the state of untruth to that of truth presupposes a *redoubling of the existence,* an act of becoming a new person (Tsakiri, 2006: 27; see also Kierkegaard 1985: 14-22).

It is no secret that Kierkegaard's seeming dismissal of the ethical order

(or to be more faithful to his intentions, the "teleological suspension of the ethical") found a profound critic in Levinas, who in contrast saw the infinity of every individual human being emerging out of, and secured by, the ethical realm. Thus, Levinas argues that it is not at all clear that Kierkegaard located the ethical accurately. As the consciousness of responsibility towards others [*autrui*], the ethical does not disperse us into generality…on the contrary, it individualizes us, treating everyone as a unique individual, a Self. (Levinas, 1998: 34)

However, it is debatable whether Levinas himself understood Kierkegaard's conception of the ethical in its right terms, since his interpretation of Kierkegaard rests almost exclusively on *Fear and trembling* and neglects therefore a host of important writings, such as *Either/Or*, *Works of Love*, etc. (Westphal, 2008: 2). Importantly, Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* is a treatise on the love for one's neighbor which is premised on the human being's love for God. Here, love is not dependent on desire or preference and therefore cannot be classified as ego-oriented; on the contrary it is *commanded* love unbound by cultural, sexual, racial or other elements (Kierkegaard, 1995: 44-60). Although a difference in scope between the two thinkers is undeniable, it seems plausible to suggest that they both delineate a transcendent state-of-affairs, irreducible to universality and the totalizing powers of reason. In effect it seems that the two thinkers operate in seemingly reverse ways. In Kierkegaard's case the love of one's neighbor is mediated by the love of God, whereas for Levinas the love of God is reached through the path that opens up as consequence of the love of one's neighbor (Westphal, 2008: 70-71). Also, Kierkegaard's ethical sphere in *Fear and Trembling* refers to the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, which as Westphal rightly observes Levinas describes as "history" and "politics", which he attacks as totalizing and inherently violent (Westphal, 2008: 53).

Given Levinas' fierce critique of totalitarian ontology it is striking that he seems to be suspicious of what he sees as a primarily protestant element in Kierkegaard's thought, i.e. his "protest against systems", which culminated in his view in a mistrust towards the system of language. The paradox lies here for Levinas in the fact that Kierkegaard was able to unfold his argument against the totalizing effects of language only from within the hori-

zon of language. On the one hand Levinas acknowledges the positive import of this mistrust, in Kierkegaard's foresight regarding the culmination (or "end") of philosophy in totalitarianism, in which "we would cease to be the source of our own language and become mere reflections of an impersonal *logos*, or roles enacted by anonymous figures" (Levinas, 1998: 28). On the other hand his critical stance towards the Kierkegaardian project starts rather subtly by indicating the possibility of Kierkegaard's thought culminating in a distraction of thought that "could give rise to further acts of violence" and proceeds to the open expression of doubt whether human existence "is inaccessible not only to speculative totalitarianism but to Kierkegaardian non-philosophy as well" (Levinas, 1998: 28).

In a quite important passage Levinas argues that Kierkegaard interprets the story of Abraham in terms of an encounter between a subjectivity raising itself to the level of the religious and, and a God elevated above the ethical order. But the story can also be taken in a very different sense. The high point of the whole drama could be the moment when Abraham lent an ear to the voice summoning him back to the ethical order. And there is another story that Kierkegaard never mentioned: the occasion when Abraham enters into conversation with God concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, begging him, in the name of the righteous who might be living within them, to spare those accursed cities. (Levinas, 1998: 33)

Obviously, Levinas refers here to this part of the story of Abraham, where the "angel of the Lord called unto him [i.e. Abraham] from heaven and said: Abraham, Abraham: and he said, here am I. And he [i.e. the Angel] said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: For now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Genesis 22.10-12). The point he wishes to establish is that the most important part of the narrative is that where Abraham "paused and listened to the voice that would lead him back to the ethical order by commanding him not to commit a human sacrifice…that he could distance himself from his obedience sufficiently to be able to hear the second voice as well" (Levinas, 1998: 34-35).

It is quite striking that Levinas interprets Kierkegaard's treatment of the story as a propagation of irrationality and violence, which is always closely knit with the subject's attempt to transcend the social and ethical

realm. In this sense not only does he distance himself from Kierkegaard's conception of divine being but he also arguably hermeneutically violates Kierkegaard's original intentions. For one thing, Kierkegaard was not wholly unjustified in placing the emphasis of his analysis on the relationship between Abraham and God, as the *reason* given by the angel for the cancellation of the sacrifice is that Abraham had already proved his faith by following God's command. Interestingly, Levinas remains silent about this part of the biblical text, the further elucidation of which has potential significance.

Despite his criticism of Kierkegaard on the issue, the paradoxical state of affairs that renders Abraham's inner truth (and essentially the inner truth of every human being) incommunicable and ambivalent, inspired Levinas to develop his important notion of "persecuted truth". As Derrida (1998: 174, n.29) did not fail to observe, Levinas clearly saw in Kierkegaard's thought something "absolutely novel in European philosophy", namely "the possibility of arriving at truth through the ever-renewed distress of doubt, where doubt is not a mere occasion for reconfirming one's certainty, but an element of certainty itself" (Levinas, 1998: 35). Thus, the persecuted truth lies beyond misinterpretations and misunderstandings and rather retains in its secrecy an element of *epiphany* within the sphere of singularity. In Levinas' works the very notion of the epiphany is intended as a reversal of the powerful dominance of subjective gaze, a surrendering to the nakedness and powerlessness of the other person. It is indeed the gaze *of* the other, the gaze that "supplicates and demands, deprived of everything because entitled to everything, and which one recognizes in giving" (Levinas, 1969: 75). It is evident that Levinas' attempt to substitute ethics for ontology as first philosophy[1] informs his concept of the persecuted truth, as does his insight that we can detect two modes of knowing in the history of western metaphysics. The dominant one, ontology, sublates otherness into sameness; it transforms the other into an idea/representation generated within the sphere of the same. An alternative mode of knowing, which respects otherness is also present though in the history of philosophy, e.g. in the privileging of the good over being in Plato and in Descartes' idea of the infinite (Kemp, 1997:58-63). Traces of this conception are detectable in his second comment on Kierke-

gaard, where Levinas argues that for Kierkegaard the importance does not lie in the distinction between faith and knowledge, or uncertainty and certainty, but rather in the difference between a "victorious truth and a persecuted one" (Levinas, 1998: 35-36).

Thus in Levinas' interpretation of Kierkegaard, the Kierkegaardian God is revealed only to be persecuted and unrecognized, reveals himself only in the measure that he is hunted…[a] God "remaining with the contrite and humble (Isaiah 57: 55) on the margin, a "persecuted truth" is not only a religious "consolation" but the original form of transcendence. (Levinas, 1996: 71)

It is once more evident that despite his acute criticism of Kierkegaard's alleged overlooking of the ethical/ human dimensions of the story of Abraham, Levinas finds in Kierkegaard's formulation some sort of precedent to his own position. However, he still finds fault with Kierkegaard's conception of the "suffering truth", which he finds *merciless* as "it does not open us out to others but to God in isolation". More emphatically, Levinas argues that the kind of existence promulgated by such a conception of truth, i.e. a kind of existence "whose inwardness exceeds exteriority and cannot be contained by it, thus participates in the violence of the modern world, with its cult of Passion and Fury" (Levinas, 1998: 30). This suspicion of the Kierkegaardian conception of truth and subjectivity is understandably coupled with an attempt to attain a higher understanding of the issue, which is sought in the overcoming not only of Kierkegaard's position, but also of the quasi-phenomenological idea of truth qua disclosure introduced by Heidegger in *Being and Time*.

Levinas remarks, therefore, that the persecuted truth is not a truth that happens to have been mistreated and misunderstood. Persecution and that humility that comes with it are themselves the modalities of truth…It cannot be one phenomenon amongst others merging with them as if that were where it belonged for it comes from beyond…The idea that a transcendence of the transcendent depends on its extreme humility enables us to glimpse a kind o truth which does not take the form of unconcealment. The humility of a persecuted truth is so profound that it will not even venture to present itself in the Heideggerian clearing. (Levinas, 1998: 36)

Levinas rightly detects in the very idea of unconcealment a force that

progressively wrests the transcendent and brings it to the realm of immanence, while the "persecuted truth" paves the way for putting an end to "the entire game of unconcealment, where immanence always has to triumph over transcendence" (Levinas, 1998: 36). Indeed, in Levinas' philosophy both God and humans (in the guise of the Other) are primarily conceived as interrupting the game of appearance, of this coming-to-presence that founds western metaphysics. The Other always manifests himself "without manifesting himself", seeks recognition "while preserving his incognito" and thus is an enigma that ultimately resists "the indiscreet and victorious appearing of a phenomenon" (Levinas, 1996: 70).

In the context of Levinas' philosophy it is considered almost sacrilege to attempt the thematisation of the human face, because the "trace in which the face is ordered is not reducible to a sign" (Levinas, 1996: 92-93). Levinas offers an insightful elaboration of the notion of trace and its relation to the notion of face. In a theological-ethical manner, he links directly these notions with rupture and consequently with the disarrangement of some kind of order (Ricoeur, 1988: 125). The way in which Levinas formulates this issue in this long passage is a telling example of this linkage: the Other proceeds from an absolutely Absent, but his relationship with the *absolutely Absent* from which he comes *does not indicate, does not reveal,* this Absent; and yet the Absent has a meaning in the face…The beyond from which the face comes signifies as a trace" or, "a face is of itself a visitation and a transcendence...To be in the image of God does not mean to be an icon of God but to find oneself in his trace...To go toward Him is not to follow this trace, which is not a sign; it is to go toward the Others who stand in the trace of illiety. (Levinas, 1996: 60, 64)

Despite Levinas' critique of any conception that relates sign and trace and regardless of whether Kierkegaard would endorse Levinas' approach as far as the problem of the person being the image or icon of God is concerned, one can say that for Kierkegaard the struggle to touch upon the mystery of the human existence is an attempt to trace the face of the others or/and of God. The impossibility of a direct communication/communion with God or with fellow human beings is not merely an urge of inwardness; it rather indicates the need to escape the superficial, the seemingly present,

and to remain open to the call of the abyss of radical otherness.

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The Quest for Justice versus the Rights of the Other?

Ernst Wolff (University of Pretoria)

1. Ethics, politics and human rights

In his initial reception, Lévinas became known above all as a philosopher of an extremely demanding ethics, an ethics of an infinite responsibility to the other, issued from a heteronomical, asymmetrical "link" with the other. But, as mentioned, recent Lévinas scholarship tends toward interest in the political aspects and implications of this philosophy. Abstracting from the divers interests and themes of authors on this subject, it seems that most of them are in one way or another concerned with the relation between ethics and politics; that means the transition from the ethical face-to-face with the other to the question of justice. In this regard, readers of Lévinas most often argue for one of two scenarios. According to the first, the heteronomical relation to the other with its infinite appeal to my responsibility is limited in politics by the plurality of others and thus equality is established between me and the other. This is the role of the State: not the limitation of man being a wolf for man (Hobbes), but the limitation of my otherwise infinite responsibility for the other. Thus equality is based on fraternity. And this equality in turn would be the basis for a politics in which the rights of the other are expressed in human rights. These rights of the other are my obligations. The second reading insists that institutionalized justice (including the law and declarations of human rights) is never a sufficient expression of justice and therefore the State should perpetually be called to improved justice. In such an attitude, in such a politics of prophecy, I am obliged to testify to the other (even if its means going against the normal functioning of the State) and thus to call the State to greater justice.

In both of these readings, recognition is given to the fact that politics, left to its own devices, left to develop itself according to its own inherent logic, could not and should not be considered sufficient justification for the State. Rather, politics should be in perpetual exchange with the ethical im-

perative imposed by the originary ethical appeal (as in the case of the first scenario) or should more energetically be interrupted or interfered into in response to the originary, an-archical ethical appeal (as in the case of the second scenario). Both of these readings reflect on the way in which the system of institutionalised justice is exposed to the significance of ethics; both recognise the fact that for Levinas politics, the domain of justice, is secondary to that of ethics.

The aim of my paper is not to refute these readings – they correspond, each with its own accent, with the ideas of Levinas. Or to be more precise: they correspond with what Levinas considered to be the political implications of his ethics. What I shall do here is to ask: even if we remain within the framework of Levinas' ethics, have the number of possible implications thereof for politics been exhausted? Are there not perhaps some other ways to translate the heteronomical significance of the other for the subject in the domain of politics? And if there is such another way of being truly levinasian in the quest for justice, what would this entail for "the rights of the other"?[1]

2. Levinas' interpretation and reinterpretation of human rights

In order to set up my argument, I would like to unpack what Levinas says about rights, human rights, and the rights of the other[2]. He identifies in human rights discourse an attempt, parallel to his own, to reflect on ethics in politics or the "beyond politics within politics" (Derrida). The human rights discourse and Levinas agree that a State cannot be left to its own devices, and this holds not only for totalitarian States, but also for democratic ones. The judicial, legislative, and executive powers of the State should be sub-

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1 The current essay is a resumption and an extension to the domain of human rights of problems that I have developed in detail in my *De l'éthique à la justice. Langage et politique dans la philosophie de Lévinas*. (Phaenomenologica 183) Dortrecht: Springer, 2007. It takes the place of the essay announced on p. 157 of this book.

2 The texts that I shall refer to primarily, but not exclusively – the three essays gathered ("Inderdit de la representation et 'droits de l'homme'", "Paix et proximité", and "Les droit de l'autre homme") under the title "Paix et droit" in *Altérité et transcendence* (pp.129-155), "Les droits de l'homme et les droits d'autrui" in *Hors sujet* (pp. 159-170) and "Droits de l'homme et bonne volonté" in *Entre nous* (pp. 215-219) – are all from the 1980s and attempt to exploit his ethics to contribute to the theory of human rights.

mitted to ethical scrutiny. This is done by emphasising a certain importance or significance of the unique individual over against the interests of the State or the majority of its citizens. But Levinas is convinced that his philosophy of ethics is superior to the discourse of human rights as a way of reflecting on the State and on rights, and he follows two strategies to argue this. First, he indicates the weakness of the human rights discourse, and then, secondly, he situates the justification and understanding of human rights within a particular locus of his own work, namely within the question of justice, in order to reinterpret it in terms of the rights of the other. I shall now look at these two strategies in turn.

2.a. Weakness of the human rights discourse

Human rights are all liberties or freedoms of will, according to Levinas[3]. Such freedoms or rights would of course have posed no problem if it were not for the fact that there are a multitude of bearers of these freedoms. If the autocracy of monarchs and emperors is replaced by a democracy of common citizens, what protects society from degrading into a war of everyone's freedoms against that of all the others?[4] What safeguards the law against contradicting claims of the urgency of specific rights?[5] How could the liberties of every individual be compatible with all liberties of all of the others, without these liberties losing their essential character? [6] In order to answer this question, one would have to penetrate to the true origin of rights as inalienable and independent of contextual demands: where do they come from?[7]

The Kantian solution to this problem, that Levinas identifies in the human rights discourse, consists of a recourse to practical reason: the free

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3 Cf. *Entre nous* 216.

4 *Hors sujet* 165: "Mais les droits de l'homme […] ne courent-ils pas aussi le risque d'être démentis ou offusqués par les droits de l'autre homme?"

5 Cf. *Hors sujet* 164.

6 *Entre nous* 217: "En quoi et sous quel mode, en effet, la volonté libre ou autonome que revendique le droit de l'homme pourrait-elle s'imposer à une autre volonté libre sans que cette imposition implique un *effet*, une violence par cette volonté subie?" Cf. also *Hors sujet* 166.

7 *Entre nous* 216: "la question du *devoir être* même de ce droit reste ouverte."

will submits itself in free exercise of its reason to a universal law of which the will is itself the legislator.[8] Or as Levinas correctly states: "The will that obeys the order of a free will, would still be a free will, just as a reason that submits itself to reason [would still be reason – EW]."[9] Thus, by practicing freely the practical reason, the good will is autonomous; its submission to the universal law is the very exercise of its freedom and by no means a way of compromising its freedom, even though it entails a self-limitation of its freedom in the instauration of justice.

But Levinas identifies some tensions in this justification of human rights: is the limitation of rights for the maintenance of justice not already a way of treating the other as means rather than as end alone, and thus in contradiction with a basic maxim of the universal law?[10] And besides, once institutionalised, the enforcement of the state of law and human rights necessitates the recourse to the means of the State, which are sometimes violent.[11] Hence also the anguish experienced in the face of the recourse to violent means even though the use of it could in certain contexts be legitimised.[12]

A second criticism of this approach to human rights is that its understanding of reason is too simple. The will has not been exhaustively analysed by its relation to the universals of the practical reason, suggests Levinas.[13] The will and the exercise of freedom, i.e. human freedom, is non-heroic, since it is corporeal[14] and thus subject not only to reason but to the forces of the body and of history that acts on it and coerces it in directions not prescribed by the practical reason, which is also at the mercy of forces that decentres the subject.

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8 Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Königlich Preußichen Akademie, [1786]1903), Bd. 4 (Paul Menzer, ed.), p. 405.

9 "La volonté qui obéit à l'ordre d'une volonté libre serait encore une volonté libre comme une raison qui se rend à la raison." *Entre nous* 217 (all translations are my own).

10 Cf. *Hors sujet* 166.

11 Cf. *Hors sujet* 167.

12 Cf. *Altérité et transcendence* 142.

13 Cf. *Altérité et transcendence* 154; *Hors sujet* 166.

14 Cf. *Liberté et commandement* 38.

2.b. A new understanding of human rights

When Levinas then sets out to reconsider human rights he does so by situating the question within the framework of his own work and in particular in the question of justice. Levinas is not against the institutionalisation of justice, in fact, he considers this as an inevitable outcome of any reflection on justice.[15] But he is convinced that if considered from the point of view of his ethics, justice will be institutionalised in the form of liberalism. And he hastens to define the liberal State as one where "by law, justice always seeks and endeavours to become better. The liberal State is not a purely empirical notion – it is a category of ethics according to which the people, placed under the generality of laws, retain the meaning of their responsibility; i.e. their uniqueness as elected to respond."[16] If we, then, want to understand Levinas' reinterpretation of human rights, we have to situate it within the question of the liberal State, that is characterised by an improving justice, and this in turn is possible only if we take serious the position of the subject as uniquely elected and responsible for the other. Only the elected, responsible subject could call the already institutionalised system of justice in a specific context to an improved justice; only such a subject could act as prophet.[17] In other words, we are referred once again to the crucial transition from ethics to justice.

The essence of this transition or translation could be summarised as follows. I find myself face to face with the other in an asymmetrical situation: the alterity of the other consists of an ethical appeal that has all initiative "before" my ontological, hermeneutic existence. This alterity invests

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[15] Cf. for example *Totalité et infini* 334-335: "dans la mesure où le visage d'Autrui nous met en relation avec le tiers, le rapport métaphysique de Moi à Autrui, se coule dans la forme du Nous, aspire à un Etat, aux institutions, aux lois qui sont la source de l'universalité.", *Autrement qu'être* 251: "L'Etat [est] issu de la proximité" and *Dieu, la mort et le temps* 214: "Les institutions et l'Etat lui-même peuvent être retrouvés à partir du tiers intervenant dans la relation de proximité."

[16] *Autrement que savoir* 62: "de droit, la justice se veut toujours et s'efforce d'être toujours meilleure. L'Etat libéral n'est pas une notion purement empirique – il est une catégorie de l'éthique où, placés sous la généralité des lois, les hommes conservent le sens de leur responsabilité, c'est-à-dire leur unicité d'élus à répondre." Levinas refers to the liberal State, but without defining it in these words in *Hors sujet* 167.

[17] To which Levinas refers explicitly in *Hors sujet* 167.

me with an ethical imperative to an infinite responsibility and thus my subjectivity is at its origin heteronomical. Henceforth, each and every aspect of my existence has the character of being a response to the originary appeal. My entire existence stands under the obligation to translate as good as possible the appeal of the other into reality; in other words, I have to testify about this imperative, I have to obey it. But there is not just one other, there are always more – the thirds. And the moment there are three others, the unproblematic but highly demanding meaning of the other for me, is troubled. Since I cannot answer to all the legitimate appeals made on me, I am now forced to ask questions about my own limited capabilities in answering the appeal of all of the others in order to respond to what is most urgent and to where I could be the most effective – "Who comes before whom in my responsibility?"[18] This question is the essence of the transition or translation of ethics to justice; it is the question of justice in terms of ethics. In order to answer this question, I now have to compare the others, establish principles, write laws, etc. I have to work for the realisation of justice and even for the institutionalisation of justice. But without that institutionalisation, the State, ever being an excuse for not prophesying, that means: appealing to that institution, in the name of the other, to improve its justice.

It is within this perspective that Levinas justifies and reinterprets human rights as the rights of the other: human rights are not founded on each citizen's autonomy, but are implied in the idea of heteronomy. All human rights are developments of the basic imperative: "Thou shalt not kill!", which is at the same time my obligation to let the other live. Nobody can be responsible for the other in my place. Moreover, I have to obey this obligation way beyond the demands of institutionalised laws, in fact, I have to do so to the point of sacrificing myself for the other, to the point of becoming saintly.

This would then be the orthodox way of understanding Levinas' contribution to the theory of human rights. It consists of three essential elements: /1/ the accent on the right of the other, /2/ the importance of constantly prophesying, that means to call justice to greater justice, and /3/ and the injunction to sacrifice yourself in saintliness for the improved justice, for the rights of the other.

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[18] "Lequel passe avant l'autre dans ma responsabilité?" *Altérité et transcendence* 148.

3. The contradiction of the thirds and the vulnerability of the rights of the other

But still, I am not convinced that everything has been said on this subject. Let us reconsider the question: "Who is the other, whose rights are to be defended?" The answer to this question is not "the other" – the bearer and originator of rights is not the other – but the third. Let it be stated clearly that I never encounter the singular other, I always only encounter the thirds.[19] And there are four things that the third doesn't do that are often overlooked, not only by Levinas' commentators but, at least to some extent, by Levinas himself. These points are crucial if we are to understand the nature of the agent of politics in Levinas' philosophy.

First, the third does not limit my responsibility. We know that Levinas thought that the State is the situation in which my infinite responsibility for the other is limited by the presence of the other others, the thirds. And this is correct in a certain sense: my responsibility to any particular other is de facto limited by my responsibility for any other other. But the sum of my responsibility for the thirds remains infinite; it is never accomplished or exhausted.

Second, whilst leaving intact my uniqueness as elected to respond to the other, the third doesn't leave untouched my heteronomical relation to the other. Since the significance of one other is contradicted[20] by the significance of another other for me, I have to pose the question of justice: "Which of the legitimate appeals made on me should be considered the most urgent?", that is, "Who comes before whom?" Or to put it differently: since the heteronomical link between one other and me is contradicted by the

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[19] "There are always at least three people. […] As soon as there are three people, the ethical relation to the other becomes political and enters into the totalizing discourse of ontology." // "Il y a toujours au moins trois personnes. [...] Dès qu'il y a trois personnes, la relation éthique à l'autre devient politique et entre dans le discours totalisant de l'ontologie." "De la phénoménologie à l'éthique", p. 129.

[20] "The third introduces a contradiction in the Saying of which the meaning in front of the other went up to that moment in one way. This is, in itself, the limit of responsibility, birth of the question: What do I have to do in justice?"// "Le tiers introduit une contradiction dans le Dire dont la signification devant l'autre allait, jusqu'alors, dans un sens unique. C'est, de soi, limite de la responsabilité naissance de la question : Qu'ai-je à faire avec justice ?" *Autrement qu'être* 245.

heternonomical link between another other and me, I have to arbitrate between them. But just as nobody could answer to the singular other's appeal to me in my place, just so, nobody could answer to the plurality of appeals in my place. Only I could answer the question posed by the plurality of others, the question of justice. I say what is to be done in justice, I give the law, and nobody can do this in my place. In this process, it is inevitable that I give privilege to some thirds before some others. What is more, nothing obliges me to submit myself to the dictates of reason or to the opinion of others concerning the most desirable form of justice. In other words, the plurality of heteronomical relations to the others, thus constitutes me as subject of politics to an extreme and individual autonomy.

Third, the third does not relieve me of the obligation to realise justice for the thirds. Translating the imperative of the other into reality is explicitly included in the obligation of translating ethics to justice.[21] In front of the thirds, I still have to work for the actualisation of justice, in fact, of a very demanding justice, one whose obligation on me goes way beyond the demands of institutionalised laws. In fact, I have to work for justice – the justice that I myself define – to the point of sacrificing myself, that is, to the point of becoming saintly.

Fourth, the third does not allow direct interference of ethics in politics. Faced with the appeal of the other I never give myself immediately and unconditionally to the other. I always have to ask myself first the question of the urgency of the appeal of this other, compared to the appeal of that other. Thus, it is not true that ethics questions, undermines, challenges or interferes in politics. Nowhere is politics, the State or any institutionalised form of justice directly exposed to ethics. These institutions are only challenged, questioned, prophesied against by someone – me – who answers the question: "Who comes before whom?". The only form in which politics is exposed to prophetic criticism is in the form of an answer to the question of justice. The political subject mediates between the appeals of the others and the political institutions.

Where does Levinas' thought on ethics lead us in the face of the plurality of others? It leads us to politics as exposed to a political subject that is

[21] See note 20.

– the irreplaceable elected one by all the thirds, elected for a mission for which he is infinitely responsible, responsible beyond and independent of already institutionalised demands and obliged to actualise justice at whatever cost he deems fit, even to the point of sacrificing himself for the actualisation of this mission of justice, but, who is at the same time autonomous, the first and singular authority on what form justice needs to take, and on what existing institutions of justice ought to be undermined in the name of the other and at the same time no question is asked about this subject's competence or suitability for this task.

This is the person responsible for interpreting and safeguarding the rights of the other. Since human rights are to be understood as the rights of the others, since human rights are derived from a far more profound imperative, namely "Thou shalt not kill!", the guardian of human rights is subjected to an extremely demanding task. Levinas is correct when he identifies this task as stretching beyond institutionalised obligations: the political subject as prophet has to constantly call for an improved justice and as saint should personally sacrifice himself for the realisation of this justice. I am the ultimate institutor and guardian of the justice of the State, of its judicial, legislative and executive powers.

Levinas is of course completely impotent to give me any advice on how to go about in my demanding task, since the originary ethical appeal is an-archical, that means, there are no rules, principles or guidelines directly derivable from the original imperative. And if he were to give me any guidelines, these would only constitute another element in my complicated question of justice: "What comes before what?" Hence, in Levinas' philosophy, politics is constantly exposed to people who are ready to sacrifice themselves in order to actualise their specific notion of justice that they consider as being truer to the appeal of the other and superior to or more urgent than the form of justice institutionalised where they are. We could call such people "saints"; we could also call them fanatics or terrorists. Despite the spirit of his texts, but not against the letter of it, there opens up an abyss of possible interpretations of Levinas' ethics that, even though they strive to remain true to the originary appeal of the other, or in fact, because they strive to remain true to the infinite appeal of the other, lead to ethically undesirable consequences.

Nothing – not even institutionalised human rights – protects the other against my idea of how to safeguard and maintain the right of the other. The consequence of a Levinasian frame of thinking is that the other does not have the right to be protected against my efforts to realise what I consider the most just dispensation for humanity. The rights of the others are not protected against my ideas of when it would be desirable to suspend them in the name of an improving justice. Levinas' politics is one inspired by a demanding, self-sacrificing ethics, but for the same reason it carries in it the danger of being a politics of the war of every citizen's notion of justice against that of the others.

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There is Justice and Justice: In Response to Ernst Wolff

Maria Dimitrova (Sofia University)

The significance of Levinas' philosophy, as well as that of other great philosophers, is understood and measured not only through the problems posed and the solutions offered but also, and maybe even more, through the conclusions that can be made from them – through the unsaid, drawn from the said. Everything connected to justice and human rights in Levinas's thought is drawn from his interpretation of morality. That the Other concerns me not in the indicative, but in the imperative – so far I don't see how this record in ethics can be exceeded. Levinas deduces the ideal of holiness from the opportunity to give the Other priority over myself:

> *The only absolute value is the human possibility of giving the other priority over oneself. ...I am not saying that the human being is a saint, I'm saying that he or she is the one who has understood that holiness is indisputable*[1].

When it comes to morality Levinas is always radical and his position is unambiguous: morality starts from where I can place the Other above myself. But did Levinas have any hesitations about political categories? Did he himself give way to ambivalent and contradicting interpretations in the field of social and political philosophy?

It is well known that the novelty of Levinas' position stems originally from his arrangement of ethics as first philosophy. The placing of practical (moral) philosophy before the theoretical/analitical one, respectively of responsibility before freedom, gives us back the faith that there is an absolute. But this absolute coincides neither with the whole of the Cosmos, nor with the whole of History, nor of the State or Society in general, not the Self, nor the Common Good, but the Other. What a shock, what a scandal, and what a

[1] Emmanuel Levinas. Philosophy, Justice, and Love. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*. Columbia University Press (New York: 1998), p. 109

blow to our egocentric culture – I am responsible not only for myself but, before everything else, for the other. The resonance of such a turn is fascinating. But after the awakening and sobering up, the words of Levinas are like an oxygen mask in the suffocating outbursts of doubt in regard to morality. His philosophy, for which he himself states that its task is not to construe ethics, but only to find the meaning of morality, is healing. In our tormenting suspicions that faith in Transcendence, and Transcendence itself, are forever destroyed, the Levinasian philosophy shows us a way out of this state of incredulity. The other as a face proves the existence of Transcendence and it is constitutive for the sociality of the Self. From the Face of the Other, Transcendence is present to me. To deny responsibility for the Other, i.e. sociality, means to deny humanity. This also means that there is a need to rehabilitate something like an eternal orientation for human thoughts and deeds, even though in a way, different from that of mythologies, theologies, and theodicies. This orientation, or direction, or absolute, is no longer presupposed by the comforting of religions and does not follow from scientific proofs, political programs, or legislative measures, but makes them possible and allows for them to be judged. Morality as a care for the Other is the last criterion for justice and rights. This is why there are good and bad politics, good or bad laws, good or bad institutions and systems – because there is an absolute starting point in view of which they can be evaluated and judged, and thus to be transcended and improved accordingly. Levinas says that Transcendence is what turns the Other's face toward me. The face breaks the system. It comes from the beyond and is a rupture in being. How does the Other affect me? The face that looks at me affirms me. It speaks to me. It is in this that it renders possible and begins all discourse. Face and discourse are tied. If I recognize the Other as an addressor calling me, I believe in him. The face to face structure is initially a structure of faith or trust. Men who credit one another form a society.[2]

However, is there not a danger to abuse this original trust? Is there not a possibility to commit an act of violence while feeling summoned to respond to the appeal of the face? Is the perspective ending with intrusiveness

[2] See Emmanuel Levinas. The I and the Totality. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other, p. 34.*

upon the Other's life and coercion over him on my side entirely excluded? What protects the Other from my interference in his fate? Has the Other any right to be protected in this case? Can he be protected? Since everyone is going to follow his own view about responsibility and justice, can the competition and struggle be avoided among the ones summoned to protect the right of the other? Is this not a fault of a prophet to extend his particular vision to the size of universality insisting upon the change of the political order of the whole of the state? Would not this philosophy serve as a justification of terrorist suicide acts if the self-sacrificing devotion to the struggle for the right of the other demands spending the life of the protector?

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Levinas insists that the question of justice is brought forth still in the relationship between the Other and me, but because with the eyes of the Other a Third is looking at me. In my encounter with the Other we are immediately joined by a Third, but this Third doesn't have his own life, his own eyes and face, he cannot exist separately from the otherness of the Other – the Third is an abstraction, created by my constitutive abilities and is only the idea or conception of the Other. I always encounter the otherness of the Other, but my understanding sticks to him like a cloth and thus hides his bareness – he is viewed in the light of the categories through which I perceive him. Always in my encounter with the Other from the face of the Other also the Third is present for me. The third party isn't there by accident – the Other is not only listened to, but also observed how he speaks. My "I think" grasps it thematically. And Levinas' lesson is that first justice – attention to the face of the other – thus is found to be the source of objectivity of the visible.

My responsibility for the Other cannot be ceased – it is a passivity more passive than any passivity opposed to activity; it is bottomless – infinity in me: the more I attain to my duties, the more they grow. The relationship with the Other is not created outside of the world, but questions my world. This is the dimension not in width, but in depth. Depth is not visible from the perspective of the Third, and is not visible at all, as it is the clandestine intrigue between the Other and me. Only in the indirect perspective

of the Third, in the panoramic presentation of the conversation from the point of view of Reason, which is by definition universal, the infinite height of the Other or, which is the same, the endless depth of the Self (its never-ending responsibility) is made finite. In the world of the third person infinity means replicating a finite being over and over again. This is an illusion of infinity or an unauthentic infinity, extrapolation of finitude through continuous multiplication. But ethical infinity (between the Other and me) is something different from the ontological extrapolation of the Same to the dimensions of quasi-infinity. [*Authentic* – M.D.] *Infinity then manifests itself in the finite, but it does not manifest itself to the finite*[3].

Levinas notes that the infinity is wrong or negative if it is only a negation of the finite: something becomes an other but this other likewise becomes an other and so on *ad infinitum*. He underlines that the Infinity that is appealing to me from the face of the Other does not coincide with that wrong or negative infinity as the Other does not become likewise an other and the end is not reborn, but moves off, at each new stage of the approach, with all the alterity. In my encounter with the second, third, fourth, and so on – already positioned in the sequence and hence measured through a unifying scale of the third – the otherness is each time a new visitation in the passage from the One to the Other.

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In Levinasian philosophy, like the notion infinity, all categories about human relationships have different meanings, depending on whether they are understood ethically or ontologically. According to Levinas, justice can be understood ontologically as already institutionalized social order, carried by the Third (i.e. all third persons, including the Self), but nevertheless justice can be understood in the ethical perspective as still non-institutionalized justice, called for by the prophet.

In the domain of institutionalized justice, judging means to bring the particular case under the common rule. Reason is precisely the ability to transfer from particular to common and vice versa. Judgments refer to ob-

[3] Emmanuel Levinas. A Man-God. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, p. 54.

jects, people, situations, as well as to everything within the whole of the world. Exactly in this summarizing and typifying judging – and isn't all judging typifying? – immediacy of the relationship with the Other is lost. Judging by norms and standards always refers to the Third. Through formalism and codification similar cases can be treated in a similar way – formalism is possible because of the common form, to which the Other is reduced, being the other of any other. Then justice is handed out according to this common form, common rule or common law and it has validity for everyone, even for the Self. By this way, justice is conformity to the law. In institutionalized justice the relationship between people is mediated by the law to such an extent as if everyone is correlated only and merely to the law, and not to the other person – an act is deemed a crime, because it trespasses, violates or does not abide to a law, and not because it has caused damage to the Other. But crime can be defined also as trespassing the Other's right, regardless of legislature – then, the reason would not be the law, but the insult to the Other; the concerned would not be the law, but the other person. Themis hands out justice blindfolded while the eyes of the prophet watch vigilantly and continuously.

Sometimes, the right of the Other is violated but the rest of the people don't even suspect that, hence they do not realize this injustice. The exceptional sensitivity to the suffering of the other is a prophet's distinguishing characteristic. A true prophecy is inspiration. I respond without understanding of some order urging me to speak and go. A true prophecy is an obedience preceding the hearing of the appeal, this is obedience prior to all representation, a responsibility prior to commitment, prior to thematization. Prophecy makes language irreducible to an act among acts. The order is found in the obedience itself, the order has never been represented for it has never been presented. The command from exteriority sounds in the mouth of the one that obeys and becomes an "inward voice". I know not from where I have been a receiver of that of which I am author. Due to the sincerity of the saying all man's spirituality is prophetic. But so far as the prophetic is projected upon the surface of the understandable (the said), saying, if it is not completely effaced, is experienced as a trace.

The very search for justice, without which justice is impossible, is inspired by charity. Justice as such is not a struggle for power and is not a re-

sult of the play of political forces, but presupposes the interference of charity. *Charity is impossible without justice and justice is warped without charity*[4]. The question is whether law takes precedence over charity. If justice is not concerned for its own injustice, then nothing can hinder the moral decay and the escalation of violence within the State. The moral crisis is inevitable, if prophetic voices in defense of the unjustly ignored or injured other are stifled or neglected. Levinas explains that the prophet is the first to hear the appeal, the first to respond to it in the given situation. *There is something like heteronomy here, which one can call inspiration – and we will go as far as speaking of prophecy, which is not some kind of genius but very spirituality of the spirit. That is the meaning of the verse from Amos, "The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophecy?" – as if the prophecy were simply the fact of having an ear.* The mission of the prophet is to give concrete shape to the imperativeness of morality, translating it in the language of justice. He is a mediator of a reversal of heteronomy in autonomy. Thus the movement for correction of the existing notion of justice and establishing of better justice begins "from his mouth". The prophet calls for the liberation of the Other from the classifications and divisions, which confine to him as some external description and reduce him to an element of the system. The prophet in me resists bringing the Other under principles and classifications, substituting him with the anonymous one. Injustice is already present in the depersonalization of the Other by his reduction to the Third. The prophet articulates the infliction a wound to the Other. By this way the prophetic voice demands change of the existing policies, the work of the institutions, the established system, etc. – all this is questioned. The current government legislation and the current ideas of rights face criticism and are shaken – they have to justify themselves and the existing order. In the horizons of the world, justice cannot do without restricting the Other and his enclosing within the system, even if this classification and typification is fully justified. However, as Levinas underlines, morality, on the contrary, demands not restrictions on the Other, but self-restrictions in order to make room for the Other. My Self is called upon to revise its own (even if often naïve) im-

[4] Emmanuel Levinas. Philosophy, Justice, and Love, *Entre Nous*: *Thinking-of-the-Other,* p. 121.

perialism. *Messianism is that apogee in Being – a reversal of being "persevering in his being" – which begins in me*[5]. The face of the Other sobers me in the self-referential logic of my existence, awakening the prophet in me. The I is the one who, before all decisions, is elected to bear all the responsibility.

Justice begins with the question, which I pose to myself, but is an answer to the imperative presence of the Other in front of me: Am I not the usurper of this place under the sun? Is there a justification of what I am or what I want to be? This question undermines the identification of the Self with the order taken as granted and awakes its sensitivity to otherness. *Subjectivity as responsibility is commanded at the outset; heteronomy is somehow stronger than autonomy here. ...The word ordonne in French means both having received orders and having been consecrated.*[6] It is the other who is first and there the question of my sovereign consciousness is no longer the most important question while in the mortal strife of freedoms, namely the sovereignty, is the stake.

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According to the Levinasian philosophy the prophecy must always be ready to challenge and provoke the State and its citizens to better justice. But it does not follow from this that each initiative to articulate the rights of the Other and realize them as juridical order are left to the particular individual. On the contrary, if we speak of justice, *it is necessary to allow judges, it is necessary to allow institutions and the state; to live in a world of citizens, and not only in the order of the Face to Face.*

The prophet "*always speaks before the king*"[7]. He is urging him to see what the law actually means, thus reminding him of ethics. When legislation does not serve the right of the Other, but is used merely for criminalization of deeds, people are treated and judged as if they are merely the particular

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5 Emmanuel Levinas. A Man-God, *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, p. 60.

6 Emmanuel Levinas. Philosophy, Justice, and Love, *Entre Nous*: *Thinking-of-the-Other*., p.111

7 Emmanuel Levinas. Philosophy, Justice, and Love. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, p. 106

examples of the clauses and paragraphs, as if they exist per rubrics and articles - this kind of calculation happens in the totalitarian state.

A state in which the interpersonal relationship is impossible, in which it is directed in advance by the determinism proper to the state, is a totalitarian state. So there is limit to the state. Whereas, in Hobbes's vision – in which the state emerges not from the limitation of charity, but from the limitation of violence – one cannot set the limit on the state.[8]

Each state, including the liberal one, when left to its own imperfect laws, organized as power distribution and an instrument of legitimate repression, tends to become totalitarian. As truth turns into dogma, when not rediscovered, as beauty wears and fades, when not transformed, in the same way justice becomes injustice, deviates and can even involve cruelty and perversions, if not overlooked by generosity, that is, if we are not searching for better justice. Institutional justice, that relates to the Third or to "everyone", "every next one", is never just enough. Similar to morality, when it falls asleep, relying on its past achievement, justice becomes a caricature of itself. To prevent this from happening, it needs never-ending self-critique and concern by the liberal state in view of guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of the citizens. But while rights are perceived as "my rights" and their defense consists in making expansionist claims by separate groups and individuals within the whole, the state is torn apart by contradictions and struggles. In the state of Hobbes these conflicts are limited or reconciled through the social contract, legitimating the violence of the sovereign. Then, because of their striving to survive and the fear of punishment, the sides in the conflict are temporarily pacified within the borders of the state. Peace achieved through legitimate violence is not authentic peacefulness but merely a temporary calm before the new storm, for it does not rely on the search for social justice but on legislation, which is readily backed by sanctions and force. The limits of this state tend to expand with the expansion of authority to exercise coercion by the state institutions (by the king, the "state aristocracy", the state apparatus, or the nomenclature). Levinas speaks of another form of peace – the messianic peace, where there are limits to the state, set by charity. The messianic peace is achieved not by fulfillment of jurisdic-

[8] Ibid., p. 105.

tion, which is an instrument in the hands of the rulers; messianic peace is achieved by the just men and women. *The just state will come from just men and women*.[9] Levinas criticizes German idealism because it did not understand that the pronoun "I" cannot have a plural form. In divergence of Kant's transcendentalism, Levinas writes that *between the conception in which the I reaches the other in pure respect ... but is detached from the third party, and one that transforms us into a singularization of the concept of man,... a third way emerges, in which we can understand totality as a totality of me's, at once without conceptual unity and in a relationship with one another. Respect attaches the just man to his associates in justice before attaching him to the man who demands justice in a totality of injustice. While the totality of justice rests on relationship between individuals, other than the respect of reason. The commandment I receive must be also a commandment to command the one who commands me. It consists in commanding a being to command me. This reference of a commandment for a commandment is the fact of saying We, a constituting a party. ... We is not a plural of I.*[10]

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According to Levinas every true speech is a commandment. For our contemporary democratic culture, such a concept of speech is scandalous. In our time it is believed that true speech is the dialogue, and dialogue is a form of mutual exchange – a form of contracting between the partners, achieving shared understanding of what interests them. It is not only the command, but even an admonishing tone is unacceptable. It is believed that good manners and mutual advantages presuppose tolerance shown towards the right of the others to express their opinion. It is assumed that not only coercion but even the simplest instruction would hinder communication. In dialogue each side should have equal chances of maintaining an independent point of view and thus be an equal and sovereign participant in the discussion. This means that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to achiev-

[9] Emmanuel Levinas. Philosophy, Justice, and Love. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, p. 120.

[10] See Emmanuel Levinas. The I and the Totality. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*.

ing mutual consent, a shared result, or a final decision. Discussion would then be reduced to exchange of information, perspectives and evaluations, which are played as a form of gambling because they confront and exclude each other but have a common stake and follow common rules. Any discussion would be reduced to the dialectics between questions and answers and the goal – the common – would unify the participants. The relations of the participants would be symmetrically positioned around something Third – the topic of discussion. The Third is the common place, which allows for finding a common language and overcoming of the particularity of each position. Conversation establishes a shared world or common horizon. Only then the separate positions, united as parts in a whole, are recognized as equal, but in their quality of relative truths. Relative – this means they are not completely denied and rejected. But let's not forget that if they are not completely denied, it is only under the condition that they will give up their claim for sovereignty. Otherwise they will be forced to silence. Only if they allow being transformed into something third, which they are not, only if they subordinate to the supreme authority, speaking on their behalf, only then they will be preserved. From this moment on their supporters will link together only by media and will not be able to speak directly with each other. Mediation is done through the universal principle, the absolute spirit or Reason, hiding behind the backs of the participants in this story. This Reason, which is revealed, while hiding, because it rules over the separate freedoms through his trickeries, actually hinders human speech: not only does it bend the meanings of the conversation, but destroys the word itself, as it turns upside down everything it names, transforming it into something else. The dialectical Reason speaks in this way on behalf of this denial. It does not annihilate the person but only deprives him of his independence.

Of course, the shared world can be established not by means of tolerance, which allows the participants to exchange their views, so that they are dialectically taken off, but by means of open warfare between them where the goal is to silence your adversary. Then the war of each against each starts with the attempt to impose one's own point of view as universally valid. We know these struggles, in which one speech is opposed by another speech and each one of them claims to express "the true faith", "the com-

mon good", "the ultimate justice", etc. History is the tale of these wars between religions and ideologies and in which the heads of the enemies have fallen and the blood of the unbelievers was shed; the *truth triumphant*, the truth of the winners in the battle, has suppressed the *truth persecuted*, the truth of the victims. Speech could also be a mode of violence and an act of reverting to the other's existence as an object. Speech, then, is a relationship between freedoms which limit or deny each other striving to constrain the pretention of the other participant. While in a speech (as a responsibility), the collocutors *are transcendent in relation to one another. Neither hostile, nor friendly.*[11]

* * *

Levinas knows that with each speech the said betrays the saying, that when we use speech as the vessel of information, we forget the addressing of the Other. Language is logos, but also an appeal and response. Conversation is a form of approaching the face before an articulation of things in the world and the Other "in his quality of…". Before it establishes symmetrical and reciprocal relationships between the parties, referencing their perspectives towards something third, speech is attention to the expression of the Other. As Levinas says: *Speech is an exchange of ideas about the world. Together with the hidden thoughts it carries, together with the vicissitudes of sincerity and the false picture it draws, language presupposes the uniqueness of the face, without which speech could not begin.*[12] The thematic, interpretational and motivational relevance, united around the figure of the Third, are conditioned by the relevance of the Other. The face of the Other is independent from my initiative and my power. It questions my freedom to construe images and ideas, to understand and evaluate, to give meanings to things and others. It commands my ability to see, think and make judgments. It itself is judging me and makes me search for the truth in justice, i.e. to doubt the rights of my spontaneity. In short this means that I am endlessly instructed by the Other and that from the face of the Other I

[11] Emmanuel Levinas. The I and the Totality. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the Other*, p. 35.
[12] Emmanuel Levinas. Totalite et Infini. Kluwer Academic, 1971, p. 220.

learn sense. The Other is the condition, as well as the last sanction, for the rightness of the world, in which I am always a local.

In the dispute, the only way to overcome the identification of any of the sides with the reason (the principle or the whole) is its awakening to otherness and exteriority. *An exteriority without violence is the exteriority of discourse. The absolute of the interlocutor upholds the search for justice. Its mode of being and making its presence known consists in turning its face toward me, in being a face. This is why the absolute is a person*[13]. Our private affair is made public with his speech and then the I is in relationship with a human totality. Because of that a conversation is called to play a privileged role in the work of social justice.

Insisting on one's own conception of justice and rights in opposition to the other within a totality presupposes withdrawal of the attention paid to the difference of the Other. Inside the totality, which seems impossible to create without injustice, the awakening to the different is disturbing. Reason identified with universality, absorbed by its rightness and truthfulness, does not put itself under question easily. *Let us not forget the perennial false prophets who flatter kings. Only the true prophet addresses the king and the people without truckling, and reminds them of ethics.*[14] The otherness of the Other, his incommensurability with me, with my separate existence, thoughts and belongings, is recognized by me precisely as a questioning of my spontaneity, i.e. as ethics. The moral subject is not defending its own most correct and truthful conception; the moral subject is an endless farewell with my imperialistic Self that is hateful to myself; it is the very spending of myself for the other without any rest or any opportunity to lay my head. It is the infinite passivity or passion or patience in me as if my exceptional uniqueness is reduced to that incessant event of substitution. "That is me" is the fact of emptying myself of being but this permanent loss of Self is the very process of identification - not on the base of Same but as uniqueness. Redemption, however, is not a form of self-sacrifice and is not suicide, but on the contrary, it is the life of the Self for-the-Other. Levinas

[13] Emmanuel Levinas. The I and the Totality. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the Other*, p. 22.

[14] Emmanuel Levinas. Philosophy, Justice, and Love. *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other,* p. 106

criticizes Heidegger that *"to die for..." appears for him as a "simple sacrifice"*[15]. According to Levinas, when one is for the Other – in love and/or hate – his own life and death no longer concern him: the primary question is not to be or not to be but how being is justified. The one's existential temporality is the process of unconscious ageing where dying for the Other, dying his death, takes priority over "authentic" death. *This future of death in the presence of love is probably one of the original secrets of temporality itself and beyond all methaphor.*[16]

[15] Emmanuel Levinas. "Dying for…", *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other,* p. 216.
[16] Ibid., p.217.

II. GOING BEYOND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Virtual and Real Relativity

Serghey Gherdjikov (Sofia University)

Here the topics of *the virtual* and *the relative* are joined together. New concepts of relation, virtuality and reality are devised.

Relation is a definition. It is not something detached but is the very 'thing'. Relating is virtual defining. 'This' without 'that' is not this. 'I' without 'you' is not I. 'West' without 'East' is not west. 'Man' without other living beings is not man.

Relativity in awareness can be a virtual freedom for a synthesis of definitions, relations and descriptions, and a real freedom for a syntheses, identification, and life process.

Which is real and which is not, if things are definite only in relation? Which is real and which is not in a global inter-relating and virtual communication?

The virtual pertains to all *artefacts*. The reality of artefacts, and especially of signs, lies in their *being related to a meaning*, their reality is relational. Meaning is understood as a moment of a human life process.

The scheme is elaborated in two spheres: virtual and real relativity analogous to special and general relativity (Einstein). This theoretical scheme is developed into a study, giving new solutions to a series of problems concerning information and meaning, the world and language, identity and difference. Four areas of real and virtual relativity are studied: language (*linguistic relativity*), logic (*logical relativity*), concept (*conceptual relativity*) and description (*descriptive relativity*).

1. Initial considerations

The natural attitude is a real, indefinite position, which can be stated as 'living as a human being'. 'Me-here-now' is a centre, a zero-point frame of reference where things and events of the world are defined.

In the flow of life we experience: *the world is immediate, unconditioned, non-relative*. Natural attitude is spontaneous and unrelated; it can be described as *spontaneous sensation, perception and description in a natural language*. The speaker finds an unrelated world and extrapolates:

The world is one and the same for different preceptors and descriptions.

Life flows not as an undifferentiated flow, but in flowing forms, mutually defining each other, thus *defining a human living form* and *a human world*. This is the real sphere where human beings acquire meaning.

In logic and mathematics the symbol *aRb* is accepted for a relation. It is elaborated in philosophy by Bertrand Russell.[1]

New proposition: *R has no reality* along with the separated *a* and *b*.

Definition 1. *Relation*: One with reference to other.

When writing '$a > b$' we are defining *a* with reference to *b*, but are not stating a third thing between them. So, *relation is virtual* with respect to the relata, and thus the definitions in their mutual reference are *virtual*. To virtual relations 'correspond' *real connected qualia*. What distinguishes the real from the virtual with sufficient clearness is that *the real can live without the virtual and the virtual has no life without the real.*

Taking awareness of relativity. In Husserl's phenomenology the position of living (*Erlebnis*) is absolute. But even when I say 'life', 'I', 'world', I am situated in a *particular language* and only there have those 'evident things' any significance. For there are no detached elements prior to language: life, I, consciousness, world, thing, etc., which Husserl takes to be absolute units of the natural attitude.

The awareness of relativity shakes natural attitude.

Identity and differences are relative.

The world is not something in front of us, it is a life of our own. The

[1] Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, 1914 (London and New York, Routledge, 1995), pp. 56-57.

world beyond or, more exactly, prior to 'subject-object' ('language-world') is *life* which comprises also communication by speech.

Computer simulations, in which one is able to communicate, to produce, to buy and sell, to win and lose, to act analogously to one's state in society put one in a situation radically different from the familiar division of nature and spirit. Which is real and which is not? Here a clear answer is given: real is what we are born in, what we live and die in. *We cannot be born, live and die in a computer simulation.*

Definitions of the world are made in languages. The world contains language, life contains speech. Prior to languages there isn't so far anything definite beyond spontaneous sense perceptions: there are even no 'I', 'thinking', 'thing'. The pairs of concepts ('subject-object') are virtual, symmetrical, homogenous syntheses, not real entities. Contradictions are heterogeneous syntheses.

Cultural relativity. Different language communities, depending on the distance between their languages, may not only maintain different statements about the world, but talk in *different categories*. *The greatest differences* we find exactly between those concepts we assume to be *universal* and *common to all mankind*: 'God'. 'being/non-being', 'absolute/relative', 'subject/object', 'I/world', 'necessary/accidental', 'freedom/non-freedom'. Neutral talk is a *classical illusion*, analogous to the illusion about neutral results from measuring distances and time-intervals in mechanics. *It is neither possible nor sensible to look for 'truth' somewhere 'in between' those diverging concepts.*

There is no such thing as 'language' employed by all people to exchange neutral information about an independent world. 'Language' is a *form of speaking* in a local life.

Western categories and concepts: substance ('Universe', 'elementary particle'), necessity ('energy' that is being conserved, 'laws of nature', which are eternal), 'objective world', 'observing subject'.

'Gravity'. Languages are really related to human life's processes. From *pure languages* making statements of the world and expressing each other by means of translations ('virtual relativity') we move on to *living people* talking about their lives ('real relativity'). People are speaking in the

form of their life-process. Languages gravitate toward human form, not to some language, and this does away with relativism.

'Inertia'. Languages are fixed to local forms of common living. Communities fix local identities. In reality people understand each other with difficulty; they pass by or repel each other.

The source of meaning is a life process. The horizon of 'relativity' in the present theory and study is the spectrum of dispersion, the area of discrimination between the definitions and descriptions of the world in the flow of *information* and especially *speaking and writing (respectively, listening and reading)*.

A 'classical domain'. The 'classical domain' is a domain of a *homogeneous and isomorphous linguistic space-time* where the statements and communications between speaking individuals and communities come into being.

Classical linguistic gravitation. Each language is assimilating and shaping world forms, describing them in its own form.

'Invisibility' of language. A mother tongue is 'invisible' as one of the languages; i.e. it is not taken awareness of with respect to other languages. (The eye is invisible for itself.) It is not recognized as one language on an equal footing with other languages. *The interference of language into the world remains unseen.* In this situation people are convinced of the existence of a unique World and a unique Language, of a unique Grammar and a unique Logic.

A 'virtual sphere'. As a 'virtual sphere' I designate *the domain of artefacts and especially signs*. The virtual has no reality without respect to the real: the flow of world-ing. A sign is a sign with respect to an object of reference; an artefact is an artefact with respect to a function.

The poles 'virtual-real' are relative. The virtual is virtual with respect to the real, and the real is real with respect to the virtual. The virtual is real as a sensible form. The real is virtual as a passing experience, not a permanent reality.

Franz Boas formulated relativity as a methodological rule: 'The scientific study of generalized social forms requires … that the investigator free himself from all valuations based on our culture. An objective, strictly scientific inquiry can be made only if we succeed in entering into each culture

on its own basis'.[2] This is known in anthropology as 'principle of relativism'.

Relativistic illusion. Acknowledging relativity entails the acceptance of a position, which is a mirror image of the 'Absolute': '*Anything is relative*'. But anthropological relativism has a limit (a 'human nature' is postulated). The contingence of the I and the communities (Richard Rorty) does not imply the absence of an individual and community to be maintained against disappearance.

A new definition of *Relativism*: Relativism is non-discrimination between virtual and real.

A 'real sphere'. As 'real sphere' I designate the domain of the immediate living of individuals and communities. *The real cannot be created and destroyed.* The idea of 'being' is involved here. What one experiences cannot be synthesized and deleted, cannot be edited and corrected. It is real to be that human being.

Definiteness of relativity. We have to quit relativism. To do this we have to *define relativities*. Seemingly there is no foothold in relativity, but in fact *the foothold is exactly in relatedness.*

So far the theory of real relativity has not been developed, i.e. a theory describing the curved space of global communication and description of the world while avoiding its reduction to the level of classical understanding. This 'general' theory overcomes the relativism of the 'special' or virtual theory. It overcomes absolutism dominating classical philosophy and, partially, theoretical physics, as well as contemporary relativism.

2. Definitions and propositions - real and virtual

Definition 1. *Relation*: One with respect to other.

Axiom 1. Every definition is a relation.

Consequence. There is no definiteness outside a relation.

Definition 2. *Synthesis*: connecting separate moments in a life process.

Definition 3. *Real* is here: experienced, *quale*, phenomenon, flow of living forms.

Definition 4. *Real relation (connection)*: unity of *qualia* as moments in

[2] Boas, F. *Anthropology and Modern Life*, 1928 (Dover Publications, 1987), p. 205.

a life process.

Real relatedness/relativity: definiteness of moments in a life process, meaningfulness.

Definition 5. *Real position*: moment-locality of living as a human being: 'me-here-now'.

Principle of real relativity:

Meaning is a moment in a life process.

Definition 6. *Virtual*: definiteness of meaning.

Axiom 2. The virtual is synthesized as a non-living artefact with a life meaning.

Definition 7. *Virtual relation*: definiteness in two or more signs. 'This' is together with and different from 'that'. Insofar as defining is relating, different relations yield different definitions. Unrelatedness is indefiniteness. The non-relative is indefinite.

Virtual (semiotic) relativity: signs being defined in relation to other signs.

Reference is to say virtual-real relatedness, conferring of meaning.

Definition 8. *Virtual projection*: Real-virtual relatedness, projection of meaning into a sign (of a sign into another sign by means of a common meaning).

Sign is contingent and it is not caused by its referent. It is chosen for to referee it – the definition of the sign is teleological. This act is projecting of a meaning into a sign, semiotic synthesis.

Axiom 3. Language is a frame of reference, in which the semiotic form is defined and through it the real phenomenon.

Definition 9. *Virtual position*: a moment-locality of a semiotic act in the centre of a frame of reference of a language: 'here-now-I-designate-that'.

Principle of virtual relativity:

Sign forms are defined with respect to a language.

These definitions and propositions are only *rules of an investigator's game*.

3. Virtual and real definiteness (information)

Virtual information (Axiom 1). Taken virtually, 'information' is a series of units, variety, definiteness. It is limited by 'noise' - lack of definite-

ness (Shannon). Here no meaning, no understanding, no subject is introduced.

Relation (definition) has as a minimum two units and can be indefinitely multiplied. Thus definiteness grows. This formulation is directly confirmed by the definition of a unit of information - a choice between two alternatives - *not one unrelated unit*. The amount of information for one and the same description may vary with varying systems of signs.

Real information (Axiom 2). Here an *act* of finding (creation) emerges: something is being experienced or done. Here meaning, understanding, 'subject' is introduced.

Taken as reality, information is 'variety ordered by meaning' and meaning is a 'life process'. *In relation to meaning variety is accidental.* Taken as reality, *information is not present prior to an act of synthesis*.

Qualia are real – signs are virtual. *Qualia* are organized in forms of life processes (phenomena) and thus acquire their meaning.

A definition within the pair 'virtual/real' avoids the confusion of the semiotic definition: *in reality a sign cannot stand in place of anything except of another sign.* The word 'red' does not really replace the sensibilium *red*: looking/talking cannot stand one in the place of the other. Here one can see how the opposition real/virtual relativity throws semiosis into relief.

A paradox of 'virtual information'. What will play the role of a sign depends on our decision. E.g. it is our choice that the presence and absence of electric current designate the states 1 and 0. The paradox is that *information is independent from us and, nevertheless, depends on us* - the location of ink drops in water does not depend on us, but the choice of this location as a defining characteristic depends on us.

Consequence of Definition 7. *The degree of definiteness equals the amount of different relations, in which something is defined*. That fits precisely to the notion 'amount of information' - Shannon: 'The choice of a logarithmic base corresponds to the choice of a unit for measuring information. If the base 2 is used the resulting units may be called binary digits, or more briefly bits'.[3] This is a decisive confirmation of the thesis

[3] Claude Shannon, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communications', *The Bell System Technical Journal* 27: 379–423, 623–656, July, October, 1948, p. 38.

about definiteness as a relation between two at least. *Zero definiteness is in the one unrelated to something else*. In absence of another number, '1' has no meaning.

Information 'as such' is unreal. In contrast to matter, *information has no mass and energy*. In reality any information is carried by a material form characterized by energy and as such it is being destroyed and turned into noise. Only the information carrier, as matter-energy, is liable to entropy.

What distinguishes variety from information is the difference between disorder and order. Order is introduced by *the synthesis of meaning*. Thus the digits 4371 are disorderly until entered as a code for access to a safe. If order is detached from meaning anything in the world becomes information and the concept loses any content.

The processing of information is not synthesis of information. Information can be transformed without being changed. This is a projection of one information, the *program*, onto another information - the *data*.

Consequences:

1. An 'artificial intelligence' cannot create information without our own decision that it does.

2. Without us knowing the state of an 'artificial intelligence' this state is not meaningful information.

Pure information does not exist anywhere in the world. Taken as reality, information is an 'act of meaning'.

3. There are no 'data' without somebody taking them as such.

The two aspects of *entropy*, ignorance and indefiniteness, taken as 'subjective' and 'objective', come down to a life process. They are not different.

4. There is no artificial life and no artificial intelligence.

5. There is no virtual world.

4. Virtual relativity

Virtual (semiotic) relativity: definiteness of signs with respect to other signs.

Relative is everything that is 'that' as well as 'another' and is neither 'that' nor 'another' outside a definite reference. Something turns into something else 'under our very eyes', something is already another thing, suffice it that we relate it to something else. This is not a fantastic conversion of

things. A human is human only with reference to non-human forms. 'Human', in absence of other living beings, is immediately reduced to 'living being'. 'Living', in absence of non-living, is immediately reduced to 'existent', and 'existent' without non-existent melts into indefiniteness.

Relativity of the 'thing'. 'This' is 'this' only with respect to 'that'. Without 'that' there is no 'this' (Zhuangzi). 'Sky' is 'a space above earth', 'earth' is a surface 'under a sky'.

Virtuality of 'the thing'. As Hilary Putnam put it: ''Objects' do not exist independently of conceptual schemes. *We* cut up the world into objects when we introduce one or another scheme of description'.[4]

For the virtual area one can *disregard energy* and deal with *information* only. In virtual space-time *energy is absent* or is reduced to zero, is ignored.

In virtual space-time the laws of physics are not applied, life and consciousness as a live process are not included. The virtual does not live - it is not born and does not die.

Consequence of Axiom 2. A sign is defined in significance. An artefact is defined in intention/function. Creation of an artefact is creation of meaning.

From all the above it follows: there is no live word, digit, number or statement. There is no 'live computer programme', 'live machine', 'live concept', 'live theory'. One cannot live in a virtual world.

Consequence of Axiom 3. Each of the frames of reference defines its own places for the signs, its own positions of designating, expression, description, its own definitions of referents and meanings.

Definition: *'Virtual space'*: a set of virtual sign-points defined in a language.

Taken virtually, one can move everywhere without any limits, but in reality this requires a carrier and a programme (a book, a telephone, a computer in front of a living individual).

Definition. *'Virtual time'*: a series of linguistic operations or syntheses defined in a language. Taken virtually, one can travel in time without any

[4] Putnam, Hilary. *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 52.

limits. In reality one remembers only the past and expects the future.

Consequence of Definition 9. No more than one position can be occupied at a time.

Consequence of Definition 9. One cannot be aware of two points of view at a time.

Consequence of Definition 9. *A statement, in which different sign systems are present, is devoid of meaning.* People converse also in mixed languages, but they interpret them in communicative acts. Formally, i.e. virtually, mixing of signs renders them meaningless. This is why unanswerable questions arise with respect to expressions like 'The brain thinks'. In the latter physiological and psychological language are mixed.

Consequence of Definition 9. A language is defined with respect to another language. A virtual position is defined with respect to another one. When lacking a reference to another position one's own position is indefinite. It is merely a zero-point. It is the virtual analogue of the imaginary 'transcendental subject' (Kant, Fichte, and Husserl).

Language: a programme for virtual syntheses.

Consequence of Axiom 3. *Language is virtual, in contrast to speech.* Language is analogous to a programme for recognition, description, explanation, prescription, speech action. Thus the problem of the relation between language and speech is beautifully solved.

Consequence of Definition 9. A computer programme is a virtual language for the possible operations performed on it.

Virtual inertia.

Consequence of Definition 9. Position is conserved in a state of rest or drift – it is not changed without exertion of force.

Position moves spontaneously and unconsciously (analogously to 'rectilinear motion') - drift.

Consequence of Definition 9. Position is consciously changed - solution of a cognitive or communication problem.

Consequence of Definition 9. Becoming aware is a synthesis of a new reference (definition) or series (a sequence of definitions).

Statement - virtual definition.

Definition. *Statement*: synthesis of a linguistic form.

A statement in the sense of virtual relativity is meaningful speech, *syn-*

thesizing (engendering) at least one unit of meaningful *information*.

Consequence. There is no difference as to form between definitions and propositions. 'A straight line is the shortest distance between two points' is a definition as well as an axiom, according to its position in the network of propositions.

At a most primitive level one can say: *I-human*, one can point to oneself and say: John. But this already amounts to a synthesis of meaning. The elementary syntax: „S-V-O' (subject-action-object) has the form of a live act. This is a synthesis or, more exactly, a re-synthesis against *the spontaneous decay of meaning into indefiniteness*. Who does synthesize? – The speaker together with the other speakers. What do they synthesize? They synthesize their own collective form of life.

Consequence. Grammar has meaning as a network of forms of life processes.

'Grammar-semantics' as virtual-real. Grammar has its semantics: it is the real meaningfulness of virtual grammatical form. The distinction between grammar and semantics is relative. It is a consequence from the relative independence of the virtual on the real.

In reality grammar is local. Grammars alien to our own can use an adverb as subject (Japanese) and a noun form as predicate (Chinese). Some languages are inflected and some are not. Local grammar is a form of the frame of reference of local language ('Background Language' - Quine 1968).[5]

Consequence. No universal grammar exists.

Local ontology depends on local grammar. Grammar traces out the 'ontology' within which people belonging to the linguistic community are thinking. It supplies them with categories like 'subject-predicate', 'subject-copula-object'; 'noun-verb-noun'. Those categories are only relative *a priori*. Local 'ontology' is *the position, the form of descriptions* made in the language of native people.

Demonstration is real reference. Reference is defining of a sign together with other signs with respect to a quale, phenomenon, experienced. Without demonstration, pointing to the referent outside any language, there

[5] W.V.O. Quine, 'Ontological Relativity'. *The Journal of Philosophy* LXV (1968), pp.185-212.

is no definiteness in the world. Without correlation with other words there is no defining in speech.

Synthesis of a description. Description is sign synthesis: extended defining in the form of speech or text.

Definition. *Descript*: a unit of description.

'Descript' is a word or symbol carrying the status of an element from a local description of the world. A descript may be a local concept: 'spirit', 'totem', 'deity'; category: 'being', 'essence', 'idea'; a scientific notion: 'energy', 'mass', 'velocity'. By means of sufficiently specific groups of descriptions, a culture can be recognized.

Communication - internal and external: *interchange of information between linguistic individuals and communities.* Communication can be defined as a game (e.g., a language game, Wittgenstein) according to rules and using a language not necessarily understandable outside that game.

Communication corresponds to movement in mechanics. Here it is transfer of information, not of matter. In communication one assumes information to be transferred directly without distortion until one comes upon incomprehension.

Projections

Consequence of Definition 8. *Translation is projection*. Translation is re-statement in another language. Taken virtually, translation is a transfer of information accompanied by its transformation from one language into another. Virtually, information can be transmitted from one code system to another. E.g., one and the same number can be written in different numeral systems. In the process no information is lost.

Words, statements and descriptions are projected from their reference area into an imaginary area: finite→ infinite, accidental→ necessary, being→ nothingness. A concept referring to something at hand is projected into a polar concept for which nothing at hand is present.

Transcendence. Virtual projection spontaneously passes beyond the limits of validity, due to unawareness of the human form of the 'objective' world that is being described.

'Virtual linguistic relativity' is the mutual determination between words, statements and languages. Linguistic relativity is *virtual* with respect

to the *real* one.

5. Real relativity

Worlding

Consequence of Definition 2. In reality, life synthesizes forms in space-and-time as *life process*.

Synthesis of meaning. Life processes are syntheses of meanings with reference to a re-synthesis of the living form. Those processes confer meaning to the virtual processes.

Consequence of Definition 3. *The real is the non-virtual* living, *worlding*.

The real is not 'world' in front of us ('objective reality'). Real is the *living-of-the-world*. We do not live *in* a world but live the world.

Experiencing is non-relative, but I am me only with respect to someone else (we as against others). We humans are humans as against other beings. Life is life by virtue of overcoming death.

Consequence of Definition 4. *A real form is 'that' together with another.* A colour-form without sound, smell, taste and touch melts into 'sensory form', blue without non-blue melts into bright, 'brightness' without darkness melts into absence of light.

Ego and Positions

Consequence of Definition 5. 'The transcendental Ego' purified from 'empirical individual' is empty.

Definition. *Attitude*: 'mental aspect' of position. We are perceiving, thinking and acting in durable forms. We describe the world, communicate with others and act, unconsciously tuned in to certain forms of speaking and acting. While we (re-)synthesize meanings our awareness is selective and contextual. An attitude confronts *evident* and *impossible* things, in which it traces out its boundaries.

'Evidentness' is 'invisibility' of attitude. Evidentness is what is taken as evidently true because of the invisibility of its conditionality and dependence on attitudes and grammars. A statement-evidentness is an oxymoron: there is some e*vid*ence only to *vision*, only *qualia* are evident.

'I think, therefore I am.' 'I am in the world'. 'This world exists'. 'The world is independent from me', 'A human being is a spirit (soul)-body'.

Inertia and inertness of attitude. Position is conserved in a state of rest or drift - it is not changed without exertion of force.

Consequence of Definition 8. *Projection of attitude.* We are projecting our visions of objects that are invisible in the world, and those visions are moments of an attitude. A Christian believes in Jesus' invisible body, a shaman visualizes spirits as ethereal spectres, a scientist imagines micro-particles, waves and strings as real.

Real communication

Definition. *Linguistic field*: space of linguistic acts and forms of a language.

Speaking and hearing, writing and reading are life processes in a field, not virtual transfers of information. For natural languages every translation changes information according to the differences in particular units and rules. There are *no rules for translation between different grammars* and, nevertheless, translations do exist. This is explained by real relatedness.

It follows that translation, taken as reality, is *projection of meaning into another language.*

Translation is transfer of meaning. But meaning as life process is local and cannot be transferred. A meaning is projected into a meaning by means of *description of life processes.*

In reality natural languages are not completely determined. Hence, translations between natural languages are not completely determined (indeterminacy of translation – Quine).[6] Our scheme of a virtual–real gives a new explanation of the 'translation indeterminacy' together with 'indeterminacy of the referent' and 'ontological relativity'.

'Subject–object' is projection of a life process. Subject–object as a cognitive form is projection of the life process in a state of perceiving by the body of the world external to it. The subject is not internal to life but is what is re-synthesizing itself.

Free attitude: precondition for understanding and cognition. The free

[6] Quine, U.V.O. *Word and Object* (MIT Press, 1964): 'An effect of recognizing this limitation is that the enterprise of translation is found to be involved in a certain systematic indeterminacy; ...' (ix)

attitude is awareness of the gravitation of life processes. Free attitude is adopting a position with *awareness of relativity*, seeing one's position in relation to other positions. For the free attitude there is no evidentness and each statement is visible as relative. In this attitude progresses the grasping and description of 'the other positions'.

The virtual defines life in order to organize it under the conditions of the environment and in presence of rivals and co-habitants. *The virtual directs* on the right path - the one on which live form is being re-synthesized.

The virtual 'is carried' by the real. The virtual does not exist outside the real: the real is its 'carrier' and 'creator'.

The real is indefinite with respect to the virtual. The world does not speak. No form in the world determines a word to denote it. Sensation, image, perception, thought are indefinite with respect to language. Taken virtually, entropy is noise, taken really, it is indefiniteness of meaning.

No propositions can be drawn logically from perceptions (Popper).

Indefiniteness of 'language' with respect to the 'world'. Language is not determined by the world; in particular, it is not a picture of the world. Words and *qualia* (elementary experiences) are incomparable.

Grammar is not determined. A given local grammar cannot be drawn from the forms of life of the respective community. This follows from the indefiniteness of the world to language.

Denoting is undenotable. No sign system is able do denote denoting itself – relating signs to qualia. Semantics is developed in a meta-language, in which a phenomenon is represented by a name ('white snow') (Tarski 1944).[7] There is no language capable to voice a statement about a phenomenon: 'meta-language' inevitably talks about qualia by means of names, using either a conventional or an artificial grammar. Pointing to a sensible form and uttering the name does no more avoid this situation: pointing is a sign - 'that here'.

The sensible world is not congruent with description, but it is exactly that world that sets the boundaries of the describable. There is no grammar in it, but it is exactly its form that is the source of grammar in its several ver-

[7] Tarsky, A. 'The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 4 (1944).*

sions. In the sensible world there is no definiteness comparable to definiteness in words, but it is exactly *qualia* that set the horizon of words. There is not one single description of a group of phenomena, but people from distant cultures reach understanding in their perception of natural phenomena.

There is no universal metaphysics and ontology. There is no universal concept even for time. Concepts and beliefs like Being/Nothingness, Absolute/Relative, Necessary/Accidental, Possibility/Reality are specific, local.

There is no definite world independent of language, prior to and in front of language. But there is a shared world of humans: their lives. Language interferes in the world invisibly and many linguistic notions appear to us as essences.

The real relativity has projections on three levels of human life: individual, community, global mankind.

Individual real relativity. As reality speech is inseparable from breathing, the movements of vocal chords, mouth and lips. The information carried by speech points to a form, state or doing. Statement is a vital act, not just interchange of information. Live speech does not stand against an external world but defines meaning. Grammatical form is adapted to communal vital interest.

Local real relativity. Real communication is not an informational, but a vital process. Taken as reality, communication is an energetic process: we share attitudes, emotions, thoughts and co-ordinate our activities. Information is motionless: what is moving is structured energy (e.g. discrete impulses). Information is given meaning wherever it is taken as information; i.e. it is recreated. When acquiring meaning, it is being 'bended', distorted when transmitted from one individual to another, from one community to another.

Intersubjective projection. People interchange not just messages, but experiences. Language only ideally (virtually) is an expression of thoughts and interchange of information. As a real process, *communication cannot be accomplished and observed from a neutral point of view*. In communication we synthesize forms of expression and behaviour, which are socially adequate and acceptable for the others, we 'bend' individual meanings so as to synthesize a real communal meaning.

One's own form is in part socially projected insofar as unconscious meanings are projected into conscious definitions and are distorted by a social Ego. *Intersubjectively projected form* is that part of individual form, which results from virtual projection of somebody else's life processes. Un-

derstanding somebody else's statement is projected form.

Global real relativity.

With differences taken account of, languages are understandable, meanings is communicable and the world is one for all languages in one form of life: *the human form*.

'Gravity'. Languages are shaped in the field of human life's processes.

Communication - a 'gravitational interaction'. In communication understanding is attained by means of live meaning, in real relativity. Communication, in the sense of real relativity, corresponds to gravitational and accelerated movement in mechanics.

Communication curvature. Communication 'curves information' by its very accomplishment: we understand others *by means of our own experience.* In fact, *this is no curvature, but a right line of communication* in a 'non-Euclidian' space.

Qualia, identical for human individuals, are 'gravity centres' of linguistic phenomena. Words are shaped in the *field of qualia*. Thus, however distant, languages converge towards human form.

Thanks to human form, meaning can be created and projected wherever humans live. Globality is the circumstance of all life processes and, especially, of human cultures being situated on *the planet Earth*. Locality is the circumstance of a community being situated with respect to other communities on the Earth. Real relativity allows *defining the world in all sorts of languages and cultures*. Analogously, 'general relativity' in mechanics allows the formulation of laws of motion in all sorts of moving systems: inertial as well as non-inertial.

Real translation 'transfers' meaning, not reference. As a real process translation is transmitting of meaning, not of words or grammar. Reducing translation to a formal replacement of words according to rules renders it senseless. This happens in computer translations guided by translation programmes, despite of programmers having applied dictionaries and grammars in the best possible way. The transfer of meaning is problematic. According to local real relativity every community creates and lives with its own meanings, which may be lacking in other communities. In this case a projection

by analogy is made and a *live situation is described*.

Indeterminacy of translation. Real translation is not a complete translation. Real communication between individuals and communities is never a complete determination of referents or meanings, except for purely formal calculi. There is *entropy*, e.g., talking at cross-purposes, distortion, annihilation of meanings. This entropy is a result or local orders.

Rival meanings. In conditions of plurality of individuals and communities competition for the same resources is present, for synthesis and resynthesis of life. Communities' vital processes interfere and clash. The values of certain communities are incompatible with those of others. The life of certain communities is incompatible with the life of others.

Cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication is interchange of meanings between individuals from different cultural communities (native-alien). It is unintelligible from the point of view of virtual relativity and relativism. Cross-cultural living, in which someone is alien, is strained between the local meanings of one's own and the foreign culture. But it does exist and is subject to development, which confirms the global character of linguistic forms related to human form.

6. Solutions of problems

As a result, our investigation game produces some new solutions.

Vital meaning. Life exceeds all possible meanings. It is unrealistic to look for 'the meaning of life' - a humanitarian ideologem, which never offered anything sensible beyond life itself, but only subjection to virtual projections: God beyond the world, a Good beyond good and evil things, Beauty beyond the beautiful, Truth beyond truths.

The world exceeds all possible descriptions. Every description is temporary and local. There is nothing untouchable in great ontologies, theories and 'facts'.

Freedom-unfreedom. Conceptions of freedom in different cultures on the planet diverge up to incompatibility. In the West freedom is above all freedom *of the person* and in the Far East it is above all *freedom from the person*.

In the real relatedness of great local concepts like *freedom* to human form, freedom of the person is individual spontaneity of the life process and freedom from a person is getting awareness and surmounting of individual ego-projections.

Unawareness is taking the virtual for real. The attitude is taken for an innermost, interior I. Habitual thoughts are taken for 'evidence'. Habits of mind are taken for true intuitions. Grammatical form is taken for ontological essence. Convictions and opinions are championed without awareness of relativity.

Identity. One's identification with an opinion, conviction, theory, position is an Ego: a non-free identity through unconscious acceptance of real attitudes and virtual projections as essences..

Critiques between positions are senseless if positions and sharing of the common human situation are not taken into account. That situation itself does not speak any particular language to be exalted above all other languages.

Anything can be proven or refuted from appropriate positions, insofar as proofs and refutations involve concepts and descriptions. Therefore in experience any ultimate proof of a theory is altogether impossible.

In the final account identity has a reverse power: it makes one dependent. In freeing ourselves from this virtual identity we find natural, spontaneous, *mutable identities* in the gradation: individual-community-humanity-life.

Global awareness. The live awareness of relativity makes our mental forms conditional and we do not expect them to be unconditionally the same as other people's. We are ready for surprises, we explore and acknowledge other people's attitudes and categories like religion without a God and a fate, freedom without individual independence, nature without the division in 'human' and 'animal' and world beyond the division 'nature-culture'.

We realize the relativity and conditionality of the I, the Absolute, Necessity, Causality, Freedom.

This brings us nearer to planetary wisdom: we all, despite of our differences, are human and living beings and have to uphold our unconditional life against the destructive forces of the Universe.

Cultural relativity. The network of concepts and propositions about virtual and real relativity explains the phenomena of linguistic and cultural relativity observed and described by investigators of distant languages and cultures – linguists and anthropologists.

Artificial–natural. In the present study virtual is distinguished from real as artefact from life. Life can never be artefact. As a consequence, one is not able to create life from a non-living thing. Another consequence is

that one is unable to create artificial live intelligence.

One cannot live in a virtual world. One is not born, does not live, neither die in the virtual. It is inhabited by images and signs.

A rule of the mirror. Relating is defining. *Always look for yourself in the other, the alien, your mirror-image.* Thus you are being defined. 'The transcendental subject' is invisible for itself. The eye does not see itself. One is not aware of one's position and in this sense it is a zero-point, a reference point. Only in 'mirroring' the 'transcendental' becomes empirical and the invisible becomes visible. The unconscious is taken awareness of.

West–East. Taking the East as an underdeveloped cultural area is a West-centred misunderstanding. Taking the East as a location of great Truths is an illusion. In the perspective of the West an 'Eastern mysticism' is discovered – a projection-concept derived from 'Western rationalism'. A 'contemplation' is discovered as a polar concept of 'action'. These 'discoveries' are fictions corrected by an insight into the alien from the standpoint of a free attitude. We can understand the others and the aliens. The relativism on the West–East axis dissolves on the level of human form.

'Western description': specificity. The Western description of the world is that description, which has been shaped in the wake of Western civilization in Antiquity and has developed till our days in Europe and North America. In categories it can be stated in the following way:

- *logos*: language and the world have one and the same form;
- *subject–object*: man is subject and the world is object, 'objective world';
- *culture–nature*: man is cultural being and nature is external to man;
- *spiritual–material*: 'spirit' is mixed with 'idea' and thus is virtualized as opposed to 'body' mixed with 'matter';
- *civilized–savage*: 'We are the civilized, and the rest are barbarians' – position of great civilizations;
- *human–animal*: man is exceptional as a thinking being, and all the other living forms are lower in comparison to him;
- *scientific world view*: science is objective and unlimited, and shamanism, religion and common knowledge are subjective and limited;

– *rationality*: the Western world is rationally organized in *technology, economy, society and state* by virtual ends indirectly linked to the re-synthesis of life.

Absolutism–relativism. There is no hope for the discovery of absolute truths. Truths cannot be stated in non-relative formulas. There is no special way to state the human. That is not to say that the horizon of truths is boundless: all live truths are reduced to the human form of life.

Rational–irrational (mystical). The rational does not come down to logic. There is no 'Reason' and 'Understanding': concepts result from the ordering of perceptions by means of languages. The rational is synthesis of a life process with human coming to awareness and comprehension. It is life's shortest way through the non-living. Life transcends rational estimation and converts the rational into irrational. The world, taken independently of descriptions, is unknown and this is the 'mystical' (Wittgenstein).

Spirit–nature. This is a purely Western opposition unknown in other great cultures. In this attitude a human being is divided into a 'spiritual essence' and 'natural basis', the latter not belonging to human being. The meanings of this attitude reduce life to vegetating devoid of meaning, on the one part, and to speech, on the other part, which is attributed unconditional sense. This attitude is non-free (or un-free) and is freed by acknowledging it as virtual projection.

Human-animal. Asymmetric position polarizing one species against all the others. 'Human-animal' isolates humans from the other forms of life. It brings with it the conviction in man's superiority, but within the inevitable human measure. The other creatures must be subject of our rule and may be subject of destruction. Such position is deadly on planetary scale.

Subject-object. There is no 'object' along with the 'subject', 'in front of' or 'against' it. There is no place where the subject ends and the object begins. The description of one's position coincides with the description of one's world.

Transcendental-empirical subject. What is experienced is a life process. This is a real, non-relative process, but not a transcendental one, since 'I' is related to 'the other'. The 'I' does not see its own position, but whatever it sees it sees it from that position. This is a zero-position. *The tran-*

scendental subject is an optical illusion, to which the invisible, local, empirical I corresponds.

Knowledge-reality. The classical opposition *'knowledge–reality'* is strongly misleading and describes the world inadequately dissociating it from the 'subject'. The question about the conformity of knowledge to a transcendent thing (Husserl 1907) is a pseudo-problem. From the present study's point of view there is no opposition 'knowledge–reality', since *reality is immediately experienced*. This experience coincides with authentic cognition, while 'knowledge' is description in a sign system.

Humanities-natural sciences. There is no 'Spirit' or 'culture' distinguished from 'nature' as 'unique' from 'universal'. There is no special sphere of texts, the meaning of which is outside the experienced world. One cannot be born, live and die in a virtual world, in a language, in a culture. The classical division holds back humanities from the area of scientific investigation and natural sciences from the domain of artefacts. The study of artefacts spontaneously grades into scientific one and the other way round. Only essays employing metaphorical language are incommensurable with science. On the other respect, scientific description itself is a form of culture.

Corresponding concepts: families, language games (Wittgenstein), cultural relativism (Boas), linguistic relativity (Sapir, Whorf), human nature (empirical cultural anthropology), translation (theory of translation, radical translation, untranslatability), clash of cultures (Huntington) cross-cultural communication (understanding, being at cross-purposes, conflict, cultural disaster), reference (denotation), semantic framework (Carnap), conceptual scheme (Quine), information - amount of (Shannon), information - meaning (Kastler), world cultures (Spengler).[8]

[8] This article is based on S. Gherdjikov, *Philosophy of Relativity* (Extreme Press, Sofia University Press, 2008), part I. Герджиков, С. *Философия на относителността* (София: Екстрем, УИ „Св. Кл. Охридски', 2008), част I.

III. NON-STANDARD TRAITS OF 20TH CENTURY AND RECENT PHILOSOPHY

The De-pathologization of Madness: Multiple Personality and the Discourse of the Multiple in Hollywood Cinema

Temenuga Trifonova

Although discipline-specific histories of doubling and multiple personality—Karl Miller (literature)[1], Paul Coates (film and literature)[2], Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (anthropology)[3], and Ian Hacking (philosophy)[4]—attribute the emergence of the double and the multiple in public discourse to different historical, social, cultural and political factors, ultimately they all testify to the transformations which these two phenomena have undergone under the influence of new technologies of reproduction such as photography and cinema. Having left the confines of the nineteenth century illness model, doubling and multiple personality have gradually acquired a more general, philosophical, cultural or metaphorical meaning. Our current fascination with the multiple is symptomatic of the persistence in the (post)postmodern age of the Romantic fascination with "The Double". In *The Double in Literature* Paul Coates draws attention to the Romantics' ambivalent attitude toward the Double: on the one hand, the Romantics were afraid of the Double since it demonstrated "the feasibility of the self's total

1 Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987).

2 Paul Coates, *The Double and the Other: Identity as Ideology in Post-Romantic Fiction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

3 *Past Tense: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. ed. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

4 Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995).

reification by science" but, on the other hand, they embraced it because it stood for the unconscious.[5] The doubling of the self was a reflection of the increasing mediation of reality, to which cinema contributed by producing a boundless, self-perpetuating and continuously frustrated desire. Cinema—the art of doubling par excellence—eventually rendered the Double in literature redundant and trivial[6].

> The antithesis between the "here" of the individual and the "there" of others is translated into internal space. Perhaps its main agents are the media, which create a society that is all mediation and phantasmagoria, never encountered directly. …The structure of imagination is one of frustration. But if frustration evokes aggression as a response, the only aggression here is directed inwards, toward self-splitting. The overdevelopment of the sense of sight in the modern era is bound in with this frustration: you can look, but you cannot touch, it says.[7]

Doubling was not only an effect of the rise of a mass culture that stripped every object of its individuality; it was also linked to nineteenth century national and colonial projects, for the Double appears under two conditions, "when other people begin to be viewed as akin to ourselves; and when the self is projected into a space hitherto defined as other". Thus, according to Coates, far from being limited to a particular mental illness the Double is constitutive of personal, national, and supra-national identity.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century urbanization and industrialization created the necessary conditions for the emergence of "the double" as a coping mechanism, whose function was to preserve the privacy and unconventionality of the self. The current cinematic epidemic of the multiple suggests that we have inherited the Romantics' ambivalence toward the Double. If the Romantics were afraid of the Double since it demonstrated "the feasibility of the self's total reification by science", we fear the multiple because it reflects the sense of *de-realization* characteristic of postmodern experience. In

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5 Coates, pp.3-4.
6 Coates, p.68.
7 Coates, pp.5-6.

this respect, the obsession with the unreliability/multiplicity of memory and with retrieving the past—consider the ubiquity of films involving amnesiac protagonists—is a symptom of the vanishing of immediate experience, for which memory serves as an inadequate surrogate. The inability to remember one's own actions or feelings, or to identify with one's own memories—the sense that they are false or manufactured—epitomizes the experience of living in an increasingly mediated and mediatized culture, which continuously projects upon us images, memories and desires that we do not recognize as "our own" but that we adopt nevertheless. If, on the other hand, the Romantics were also fascinated by the Double, insofar as it stood for the unconscious, we embrace the multiple because it stands for freedom, autonomy, agency, opportunity, and for our belief in second chances. The idea of multiple identities and realities is part of the entrepreneurial rhetoric of multi-tasking and the self-help rhetoric of increasing one's opportunities, reclaiming one's agency, taking control of one's life.

In *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (1987) Karl Miller extends the meaning of "multiplicity" beyond esoteric and psychiatric definitions, for instance beyond the dominant Freudian interpretation of doubling as a symptom of the fear of death (the self invents a double in order to compensate for its own insufficiency or mortality), its interpretation as a form of "primitive and prehistoric narcissism" or, more recently, as the postmodern subject's over-compensation for his powerlessness[8]. As Miller himself puts it, he is concerned with both "the clinical phenomenon of multiple identity and *the cultural phenomenon of a multiple identity*"[9]. The increased visibility of the double in the second half of the nineteenth century, he argues, was a result of the radical change in demographics brought about by urbanization: sheer population growth enhanced the individual's fear of the mob and provoked in him the desire for a secret, private life that would grant him the freedom to circumvent the conventions of public life. Generally speaking, however, doubling is an instance of the genre of Romance, which is itself rooted in duality or equivocation i.e., in a universal, *non-pathological* incongruity between reality and desire: "duality and romance can be stud-

[8] Miller, p.26.

[9] Miller, p.21, my italics.

ied…as one and the same; they are among the strange compounds to which duality itself attends and of which it is constituted. Romance has often been equivocal, and the Romanticism of modern times has drawn on the dualistic outlook established in the ancient world"[10]. By positing duality as "a response to [the often conflicting] demands made by the environment", Miller, like Coates, transcends the pathology or illness model of duality and multiplicity—as far as he is concerned, duality and multiplicity are nothing but "general [instances] of contradiction, hazard, and uncertainty"[11].

According to Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, editors of *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (1996), the current proliferation of illness discourses, the multiple personality discourse in particular, points to the crisis of the collective in American culture: "there are few explicitly bounded forms of social organization beyond the (shrinking) nuclear family and the individual. This loss of the collective may bring new forms of illness. One curious feature of multiple personality is that it resurrects elements of social, political and family life within the sufferer"[12]. In this reading, the epidemic of the multiple disguises processes of disintegration taking place at all social levels, including the family, the nation, and the state. An analogy can thus be drawn between the recognition of autonomous alters within a multiple personality and, on the other side, the political recognition of ethnic groups within nation states. The rise of therapeutic discourse in North America testifies to a general political indifference manifest in the escape from collective guilt through the medicalization of personal experience[13]. On the other hand, however, in Western societies the construction of individuals as forensic subjects tends to enhance the link between memory and accountability: memory becomes problematic; i.e., linked to multiplicity, only when there is a possibility for re-describing past actions under new descriptions not available at the time of the original events. Thus, contrary to Antze and Lambek in *Trauma and Recovery* (2001), Judith Herman reads our preoccupation with memory, particularly with "traumatic memory" (a

10 Miller, p.23.
11 Miller, p.25.
12 Antze and Lambek, p.xxiii.
13 Antze and Lambek, pp.xxiii-xxiv.

term coined by Pierre Janet) politically: "every time we have taken trauma seriously", she argues, "it has been in affiliation with a political movement"[14].

In *Rewriting the Soul* Ian Hacking traces the history of the multiple from a fascinating marvel, through an object of scientific knowledge constructed by the new sciences of memory, to a mere instance of the general phenomenon of indeterminacy. Hacking contends that the first multiple personality "epidemic" was precipitated by the emergence of the new sciences of memory in the latter half of the nineteenth century (the second epidemic "broke out" in the 1970s).[15] The new sciences of memory popularized the idea of memory as an object of knowledge, the idea that there are facts to be known about memory, that there are specific ways in which memory functions and, consequently, that there must be deviations from the normal functioning of memory, a pathology of memory encompassing a whole range of memory dysfunctions. However, as Hacking's history of the social construction of the concept of multiple personality demonstrates, the discourse of multiple personality disorder gradually redeemed it from an illness to a culturally sanctioned way of expressing distress, or a choice of a different "lifestyle".

While early definitions of multiple personality emphasized the multiplication of personalities, regular revisions in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—for instance, the substitution of "*dissociated* identity disorder" for "*multiple* personality disorder"—shifted the emphasis from the *multiplication* of autonomous, integrated personalities to the *fragmentation* of the personality and the attempt to reintegrate it. In turn, *fragmentation* was gradually recuperated as "an expressive idiom", which promised to reveal aspects of self and reality that had remained obscured. Multiple personality came to be construed in terms of a proliferation of opportunities or perspectives, *the opening up of new possible ways of being*—hence Paul Antze's question, "What kind of expressive and reflective possibilities

[14] Quoted in Hacking, p.55.

[15] He attributes the rise of an epidemic to the "looping effect" inherent in every discourse: an epidemic is precipitated by a significant transformation in an object of discourse in response to the evolution of the *discourse* itself.

[does multiple personality] open?".[16] Associating multiple personality with "fantasy", "moral ambiguity" and "a sense of agency", Antze argues that alters open up expressive possibilities that are usually suppressed by recovered memory therapy: "Here…the imaginative, *theatrical* dimension of multiple personality as an expressive idiom offers a way of loosening and compensating for the frozen sense of the past implicit in recovered memory therapy".[17]

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Over the last several decades Hollywood has been specializing in a wide range of delusional disorders, including the Capgras delusion, the Fregoli delusion, the syndrome of intermetamorphosis, the syndrome of subjective doubles, lycanthropy, reduplicative paramnesia, autoscopy, and others. The phenomenon of multiplicity occupies a privileged place in this new cinematic landscape of delusions. Hollywood has become adept at borrowing the symptomatic language of doubling and multiple personality—characterized, among other things, by trauma, memory loss, and blackouts—to create what appears to be a new genre of films structured around multiple—stolen, assumed or mistaken—realities, identities or temporalities. Films in this category—for instance, *Total Recall, Donnie Darko, The Matrix* trilogy, *The 13th Floor*, *The Island, The Astronaut's Wife*, *Identity*, *The Butterfly Effect*, *The Bourne* trilogy, *Vanilla Sky*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Mothman Prophecies*, *Dragonfly*, *The Jacket*, *The Forgotten*, *Suspect Zero*, *The Village*, *Stay, The Machinist*, *The Lake House, Premonition*, *Session 9*, *Memo-r-e*, *Déjà vu*, *The Return*, *The Number 23* and others—are distinguished by a narrative punctuated by memory gaps and various forms of "time-travel", a "pathology" of narrative which is, nevertheless, ultimately empowering and de-mythologizing. The "multiple film" is representative of what I will call the "de-mythologization craze" in Hollywood cinema: the tendency of many Hollywood films to play with logical/chronological confusion (multiple temporalities) or with ontological confusion (multiple reali-

[16] Paul Antze, "Telling Stories, Making Lives" in *Past Tense: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, pp.3-23.

[17] Antze, p.18, my italics.

ties or identities)—claiming to de-mythologize the Cartesian notion of a self-transparent subject and the notion of an ontologically stable, transparent reality—only to *relapse* into a mythology of agency and free will.

The films discussed below as examples of the Hollywood multiple film (1) treat reality/identity/temporality as a confusing multiplicity which has to be reduced, through a process of elimination, to an essential, singular reality underlying the multiplicity of alternate realities; (2) approach multiple realities *therapeutically*, reducing them to strategies for coping with psychological trauma and for investing the protagonist with agency—in this respect, the films freely *borrow the symptomatic language* of multiple personality, extending the medical diagnosis of multiple personality as a mechanism for coping with psychological trauma to scenarios and characters that often have nothing to do with the mental illness in question; (3) borrow the premises of idealistic philosophy, specifically Bergson's theory of memory, for the purpose of reinvesting characters with agency—specifically, by eliminating time and memory as reliable criteria for distinguishing the real from the unreal, the films multiply the options, for action or interpretation, available to characters. In these films multiple realities are not, strictly speaking, "multiple"—they are subordinated to a single *real* reality even if they originally have precedence over it by obscuring it.

Many of these films are structured around essentially negative mental states i.e., states defined by absence or loss (the absence or loss of sleep, sanity, or memory) such as insomnia, amnesia, paramnesia or multiple/dissociative identity disorder. The films work through various processes of restoration, recovery, repetition, recollection, recuperation and reconstruction, all of which imply a certain *corrective* or *de-mythologizing* function i.e., the purpose of such films is to expose, overcome, or correct some sort of deception or self-deception. Hollywood is obsessed with repetition, with events that have already happened, will have happened, might not have happened, events that are relived, forgotten or prefigured, events that feel like déjà vu or like self-fulfilling prophecies—as far as Hollywood is concerned, the present is the least interesting modality of time. This preoccupation with reordering, restructuring, and reediting events, with multiple or alternate pasts and futures, with shifting identities and unreliable narrators,

might appear liberating and optimistic. However, the assumption that thoughts, memories, previsions or intuitions are recordable, that the future can be designed and the past erased, suggest a rather sobering understanding of time as essentially foreclosed: there is no future, because the future is already available (*Minority Report*) or because the future, even if presented as real, nevertheless continues to exist in a suspended state, awaiting confirmation from the past that will make the future "really" possible and real (*Back to the Future, Terminator*), and there is no past precisely because everything past is preserved, stored, recordable and, if need be, erased (*Paycheck, Total Recall*).

In an early scene of *The Bourne Identity* (Doug Liman, 2002) Jason Bourne looks at his reflection in the mirror and demands, in French, German, and English, that "it stop messing around" and tell him who he is. Soon enough he is presented with a number of possible identities—literally a stack of foreign passports—from which he must choose the "right" one by a process of elimination of unlikely, narratively uninteresting or morally reprehensible identities. Identity is assumed to be knowable and singular even if it is, for the time being, obscured by other identities. The film proposes that identity cannot be fully erased since it automatically inscribes itself on the body in the form of kinesthetic memory (hence the subtitle *La mémoire dans la peau*). However, Bourne has to go beyond his kinesthetic memory and find out *why* his body "remembers" certain behaviors in order to discover who he really is. The film presupposes, and reaffirms, the existence of a singular, essential identity, which simply needs to be excavated, remembered, reconstructed and, most importantly, distinguished from other, mistaken or illusory, identities. For example, Bourne is able to recall his first mission (the assassination of the Russian diplomat Nevsky) only via another assassination that is mistakenly attributed to him (the assassination of two CIA agents in Berlin). It is only when he is accused of a murder he did not commit that Bourne recalls the murder he did commit i.e., it is only by exposing a series of identities as mistaken or illusory that he is able to access his "correct", singular identity. *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy* (*La mort dans la peau*) (Paul Greengrass, 2004) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (Paul Greengrass, 2007) emphasize the individual's freedom to assert himself, to choose himself regardless of who he actually is. The mul-

tiple identities and temporalities Bourne's amnesia presupposes are simply a distraction on his way to self-affirmation. Dissociative amnesia is a convenient chance for the protagonist to separate himself from his morally questionable past self. That the film fails to challenge the notion of a singular, stable identity, and instead merely creates the *illusion* of a fragmented, indeterminate identity, becomes clear when we consider that Bourne's "moral awakening" begins, in fact, long *before* he loses his memory. Even before Bourne loses his memory he has already made his moral choice by "failing" to shoot the African political leader he has been instructed to assassinate. He is always already "a good guy" and he knows it; all he has to do is "remember" it in a true neo-Platonic fashion.

In *Unknown* (Simon Brand, 2006) five men wake up in an abandoned building in the middle of the desert with no memory of who they are or how they got there. (The memory loss is explained later as a side effect of gas inhalation.) Gradually they figure out that they are all involved in a kidnapping, but none of them can remember whether he is one of the kidnappers or one of the victims. Predictably, they take turns staring at their reflections in the mirror, demanding, à la Jason Bourne, "Who the f--k are you?" and, at precisely that moment, have an intense but fragmentary flashback, which (purposefully) does not reveal much. As they struggle to recall who they are, victims or aggressors, and form arbitrary alliances based on intuition, they gradually begin to piece together what might have happened. The general consensus seems to be that, in the words of one the characters, "It is not what we eventually remember that's going to determine who we are; what we do from now on will." The implication is that a criminal can reinvent himself as a victim or even a hero—memory loss is simply a pretext to wipe the slate clean and ask "dignifying" moral questions. However, the film's ending falls back on the past as essential to the construction of identity: as it turns out, it does matter who one was and what one did in the past. Memory loss is nothing but a convenient "window of opportunity" the characters use to unburden themselves of their guilt—thus, one of the kidnappers is given a second chance to make "the right choice" i.e., not to kill those he has kidnapped. Once he has chosen himself (through action) as "a good guy", his memory returns and conveniently corroborates his innocence: he suddenly

remembers that he is a police officer working undercover. However we want to read the final twist, which suggests that the character might, in fact, be a criminal posing as a police officer, the point is that the alternation of identities—good guy, bad guy—is premised on the notion of a singular identity, which cannot accommodate any contradiction or multiplicity (one interpretation excludes the other until it is proven wrong and replaced by another interpretation, and so on ad infinitum).

Identity (James Mangold, 2003) begins as a simple story about a group of strangers stranded in a motel during a thunderstorm; the story turns macabre when someone starts killing them off one by one. The strangers are actually mental projections of the different identities "housed" in the mind of a convict (Malcolm) suffering from dissociative identity disorder. Malcolm is undergoing a special treatment which forces all his identities to confront one another, inevitably leading to a reduction in the number of identities as more powerful identities eliminate weaker ones. If he realizes that all these identities—among them an escaped convict and an ex-detective—are parts of his fractured psyche, and if his "good" alter-ego, the ex-detective, manages to kill his "evil" alter-ego, the escaped convict, Malcolm will be sent to a psychiatric hospital instead of being executed. At the end of the film one of the character's alter-egos, Malcolm as a child, whom we have mistakenly assumed to be harmless, kills Malcolm's "good" alter-ego, a female prostitute, because he cannot forgive her—just as the young Malcolm never forgave his own mother—for being a prostitute. Producing a clear narrative reason for the confusion and multiplication of identities (childhood trauma), the film uses the multiple to ultimately re-affirm the *singular* and e*ssentially* criminal identity of the protagonist.

Hollywood films often draw on the discontinuity constitutive of memory to introduce multiplicity in the narrative; ironically, they also rely on memory to reduce this confusing multiplicity to a single reality or truth. *The Forgotten* is a case in point. The film follows a woman's quest to uncover what actually happened to her son who died in a plane crash. Her psychiatrist diagnoses her with paramnesia (a distortion of memory in which fantasy and objective experience are confused). Apparently, Telly lost her son a year ago, in a miscarriage, but the loss was so traumatic that she convinced herself her son was not dead and invented a whole new life for him. While

Telly's paramnesia is central to the dramatic premise—everything depends on whether or not she is suffering from paramnesia, which would make some of her memories real and others invented—the film eventually denies the alternate realities produced by her paramnesia and affirms only one of them as real. Ironically, having used memory as a destabilizing narrative device, the film restores memory as the single most reliable source of knowledge by making Telly's first memory of her son—her memory of him in her womb—the final, uncontestable evidence of her son's existence. The ending sweeps aside the complicated alternate worlds structure constructed thus far, attributing it all to an alien conspiracy: Telly must simply "wake up" or "see through" multiple deceptive realities (the work of aliens) in order to uncover "the real reality" (in which children don't die but are simply hidden away for a while).

Vanilla Sky provides another example of the de-mythologization craze in Hollywood cinema insofar as it celebrates the self-awakening of its protagonist, David. The premise of the film is that David can become a free agent only if he wakes up from his lucid dream. It is implied that the ultimate, informed choice he makes (once he becomes aware of the constructed nature of his world) is the only real choice, the only free choice. However, saying "I am dreaming" does not necessarily mean that I am awake. Moreover, if we follow the logic of the film's narrative structure, we would have to conclude that David never wakes up from his dream because the very process of waking up must be part of the lucid dream. Even if we accept that David does wake up, his awakening is nothing but a *self-fulfilling prophesy*: while the waking dream program does everything possible to conceal from him the fact that he is living a dream, his unconscious is, from the very beginning, trying to become conscious by means of inventing the figure of the psychiatrist (who exists only in David's lucid dream). By inventing the psychiatrist David's unconscious incriminates itself insofar as the presence of such a figure presupposes that the person is hiding something from himself. Thus, by an odd gesture of doubling—the dream points to its own unreality by inventing the typical framework (psychiatrist—patient) within which dreams are analyzed—the unreal manages to reconstruct *imaginatively* the moment of its own appearance, the moment when David was made to forget

that he is dead. Although the film takes the form of a flashback—David recounting his memories to the psychiatrist—it is only an imaginary flashback since in reality David is not in a penitentiary and there is no psychiatrist. (Eventually it becomes clear that David did not kill his girlfriend, who simply died in the car accident; there has been no murder and no trial and there is no reason for him to be in a psychiatric penitentiary.) However, since the contract he signs with Life Extension (LE) offers him the opportunity to write the script for his own life, we must assume that everything that happens in the film *must have been his choice*, including the imaginary flashback he has in the presence of the imaginary psychiatrist. Thus, he is dreaming but at the same time he knows that he is dreaming, and from the very beginning of the film he wants to wake up from the dream, which is why he invents the person most likely to help him wake up, a psychiatrist. Since all events must have been invented by David, it follows that he has unconsciously planned his eventual awakening from the dream—the process of de-mythologization (revealing the constructed nature of reality) is a myth (the subject himself constructs the means to expose the constructed nature of reality). At the end of the film the helpful LE staff informs David of the specific point at which his lucid dream began (the "splice", a term appropriately borrowed from the technical vocabulary of film editing). David is, supposedly, dead, his memory of his death erased, an important piece of information of which he is, once again, supposed to have no recollection. And yet throughout the film he flashes back to real events preceding the "splice" except for remembering the most crucial event, his own death. In other words, the film assumes memory is not co-extensive with consciousness: apparently, you can remember things that happened before your own death. Films like *Vanilla Sky*, *Memory*, and *The Return* cleverly appropriate various aspects of idealistic philosophy (Bergson's, to be more specific) to reaffirm our belief in agency.

Matter and Memory (published in 1896 i.e., during the period Hacking associates with the proliferation of multiples and with the birth of the new sciences of memory), in which Bergson describes memory as essentially impersonal, multiple and infinite, and anticipates the de-pathologization of multiple/dissociated personality along with the reconceptualization of the self as multiple rather than singular and internally unified. Individual mem-

ory, Bergson argues, is merely a narrow selection within a vast and inexhaustible pure, impersonal memory: individual memory (most often identified with voluntary memory) is constituted through a process of "*dissociation*" from Pure Memory (which can be attributed to no one in particular). It is precisely this notion of memory as essentially disembodied and impersonal that informs a great many Hollywood films of the multiple, especially those dealing with some kind of memory dysfunction. The past, Bergson insisted again and again, is not dead: it preserves itself automatically in the present, which it can infiltrate at any moment (hence the connection to Freud's "uncanny"). Since the past is not integrated into one's consciousness, it is not individualized: *it is not my past but an impersonal past that belongs to no one*. Films like *Memory* and *The Return* extend the multiple personality model to an inter-subjective one. As we saw, the multiple personality debate demonstrated the obsolescence of the idea of a transcendental self, refiguring the self as a field populated by multiple selves or alters, each with its own personality and each with varying degrees of awareness of other alters. This model makes it impossible to continue speaking of "personal" experiences or memories insofar as some of the multiple's experiences are registered only by some alters, others by other alters, certain memories are stored while others lost, certain experiences are shared while others are limited to particular alters, and so on. When this model of personality is projected onto the inter-subjective level (recall that Antze and Lambek read the reappearance of the multiple personality model as an attempt to revive the notion of "community") it becomes possible to speak of a common memory from which individual memories are dissociated and whose relationship to that common memory is analogous to that of alters within the mind of a multiple. And just as the memory of a multiple can no longer be called strictly personal, because it is fragmented and indeterminate, so the memories of individual people are not strictly personal either but can "travel" between people and become embodied in this or that person.[18]

The Return (2006)— tagline "the past never dies. It kills."— and *Mem-*

[18] The ongoing process of globalization has clearly contributed to this reconceptualization of self and community: the notion of the Internet as a global memory bank has already become a cliché.

ory (2006)— tagline "sometimes memories can kill."— rely on the Bergsonian idea of memory as essentially inter-subjective and impersonal. Not only can you remember things that happened before your own death (*Vanilla Sky*); you can also remember things that happened long before you were born: at least this is the premise of *Memory*. In *Memory* Taylor Briggs, a medical researcher studying Alzheimer's, stumbles upon a special powder used by an Indian tribe. The powder induces so-called "sacred dreams" allowing the Indians to see the past through the eyes of their dead relatives. When Taylor accidentally spills some of the magic powder on his hands, he begins to be haunted by visions and memories, which are clearly not his own but which he cannot yet attribute to anyone in particular. Like *The Butterfly Effect*, *The Return* and *Memory* borrow the symptomatic language of multiple personality—lost time, black outs, amnesia, childhood trauma—without the illness itself (Taylor is not a multiple), though they also modify it: in both films the person recalling the traumatic experience is *not* the one who actually experienced it. In both films, as well, the abuse is displaced several times. In *The Return* the protagonist, Joanna, remembers someone else's traumatic sexual experience, which happened when Joanna herself was a child i.e., the film follows the prototype of multiple personality (childhood abuse) but *divides it between two characters*—the child Joanna and the woman whose memory of sexual abuse is transferred to Joanna and repressed, as though she herself had been its victim—*rather than having the abuse split a single victim into multiple personalities*. In *Memory* the victim is actually *double*: the original victim was Taylor's mother, who was kidnapped and raped by a man, whom she eventually killed. Upon her release from the psychiatric asylum she assumes the identity of the angel of death, a curious quasi-mythological figure who was, we are told, cast out of heaven and who has taken it upon himself to look over young girls and protect their innocence. This protector turns out to be a serial killer: she kidnaps and kills little girls, locking them up in a little room behind her closet and making casts of their faces. Taylor is able to track down the serial killer, his own mother (who pretends she is not his mother, convincing a female friend of hers to secretly adopt her son, the son of the man who raped her) by reliving her memories.

We could read *Memory* as the latest attempt to reinvest post-secular reality with some form of quasi-religious faith or spirituality by disguising it

as a new science: genetic memory. (This is true even of a blockbuster like *Déjà vu*, which proves that time travel is possible not because the technology for it exists but because of a "leap of faith"…even if it's a leap of faith in technology!) Since any notion of a good-natured, omniscient God who sees and punishes every evil deed would strike modern day skeptics as incorrigibly naïve, belief has to be stripped of its religious connotations. It is not God who sees every injustice; genetic memory does the job just as well, even better, in fact, because it carries the favorable stamp of science. The film pushes an idea of *genetic memory* strongly reminiscent of the Bergsonian idea of Pure Memory. The past is never dead, Bergson tells us—it's alive, flowing like a river beneath the present and capable of erupting in the midst of it at any moment. The past is not dead, *Memory* chimes in, for everything that happens is automatically stored in the giant bank of genetic memory, which we carry within us until the moment of our own birth and which can suddenly re-emerge into our lives at any given moment.

Like *Memory*, *The Return* relies on the Bergsonian idea of intersubjective memory. Joanna's memory is not her own—she keeps recalling/reliving another woman's (a dead woman's) memories. Although she doesn't suffer from multiple personality, Joanna exhibits some of the familiar symptoms (black outs, memory loss). *The Return* and *Memory* are reminiscent of *The Sixth Sense*, but they also depart from it in a significant way. In *The Sixth Sense*, we find out that the protagonist is dead but it is still his memories that we see projected on the screen. Conversely, in the two other films it is not the dead character that does the recalling but a completely different character. In this new version of "invasion of the body snatchers"—here modified as "invasion of the memory snatchers"—Joanna is "taken over", her memory "invaded", by another. She is merely a vehicle for the return of the dead woman's memories: the film drives home this point by letting the dead woman gradually displace Joanna both narratively and visually (in the final sequence).

While *Memory* tries to come up with some quasi-scientific explanation for the transfer of memory, *The Return* expects us to believe in the possibility of a spiritual transference of memory as a result of pure physical proximity (i.e. the proximity of the two cars, one with Joanna and the other with

the dead woman, at the moment of the car crash). The film does not offer any explanation as to how, specifically, the two memories are "compounded", whether the other woman's memory neatly replaces Joanna's memory or is "added" to it. When she goes back to her childhood home, Joanna discovers that everything she thought was hers is in fact an echo or a reproduction of the dead woman's life and memories: her childhood drawings, every object in her childhood room, are modeled on the exact same objects in the dead woman's room. We are to believe that the girl, under the influence of the dead woman's memories, wanted her own room decorated in exactly the same way. There is nothing really to tell us that these objects were not already in her room before the car accident. We are left wondering which of these two rooms echoes which, and why it matters.

Despite the obviously central role of memory in *The Return*, this is not a film about memory and identity. The lack of chronology does not seek to convey the fragmentary work of individual memory but simply to create obstacles to narrative comprehension: when the pieces of the puzzle finally fall together, we understand why Joanna has been acting so strangely but we don't know her any better. The film relies on a series of echoes and repetitions of visual details that cannot be assigned a specific point of view or a specific time. There is no stable point of reference from which Joanna recalls the past. For example, in the opening sequence Joanna, eleven years old, hides under a table in an amusement park and relives the memory of the dead woman right before she is murdered, an event which has not happened yet given the timeline of the film. As we learn later, the memories of the dead woman "invaded" Joanna's memory after the car crash i.e., the girl cannot be reliving the memories of the woman who is still alive. The next scene reveals that the scene we have just seen represents the memory of the now older Joanna who is standing in front of the mirror (the typical set up for any sort of identity search scene). She is in the process of remembering something that hasn't happened yet (the other woman dies after the amusement park scene).

There are various ways in which we can read these films' preoccupation with the impersonality of memory. We could perhaps see it as a kind of "metaphysical altruism"—indeed the story of *The Return* is premised on the idea of solidarity between women as victims of sexual abuse. As I suggested earlier, the multiplicity epidemic has been interpreted as an attempt to resur-

rect the collective within the personal. *The Return*, which treats memory as impersonal and inter-subjective, confirms this interpretation. By imagining memory as traveling between individuals, as a sort of a secret, intangible link between people, the film revives the notion of community, and, more importantly, not the kind of community built upon a shared memory (e.g. the nation) but a community of strangers, of people who have nothing in common, except, as in *The Return*, a shared problem (abuse of women). Since close relationships don't seem to be possible in the real world (consider Joanna's awkward, alienated relationship with her father), the next best thing is a community of the dead or a community of spirits, a community reflected, for instance, in the ability of the dead to communicate through the living.

Unlike *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001), in which time travel cannot change the past, or *The Butterfly Effect 2* (John Leonetti, 2006), which does grant the protagonist this power but only at a great cost (his life), *Déjà vu* (Tony Scott, 2006), a fairy-tale of second chances, is quite optimistic. In *Déjà vu* a ferry filled with crewmen from the USS Nimitz and their families is blown up in New Orleans on Mardi Gras. ATF agent Doug Carlin is brought in to assist in the crime investigation, and gets attached to an experimental FBI surveillance unit, one that uses a time warping technology to look back into the past. It is difficult to think of another film, let alone an action film, that offers such a literal illustration of Bergson's idea of the coexistence of the past and the present. Despite several jargon-laden explanations of how the time-warping program (appropriately called "snow White", with all the connotations of waking up the dead, of second chances) works, the film enthusiastically suggests that "maybe it's not just physics". Even though we recognize that we can't circumvent the laws of physics—e.g. it's physically impossible to change the past, and a man cannot live in two different realities at the same time—maybe there is a spiritual way to beat physics, to let man live in both realities just long enough to find a way to make the reality with the happy ending take precedence over that with the lousy ending. The theory of branching times is used precisely to that end: introduce a significant enough event in the linear flow of time and you create a new branch (the one with the happy ending). The old one (the one that ends with the explosion) can continue parallel to it but most likely it ceases

to exist. Doug dies in the alternative reality created through his time travel but then he is miraculously resurrected in the same reality (the one in which his love interest is saved) thus violating the law of branching universes, according to which the alternate reality runs parallel to the old reality but eventually displaces it completely. Regardless of the logical and ontological implications of time-warping—regardless of the multiple temporalities to which it gives rise—in the end there is only *one reality*, the one in which both Doug and the woman he loves are saved. While *The Butterfly Effect 2* at least acknowledges that time-warping must have *some* real consequences i.e., someone has to die—whether it is Nick or his girlfriend—*Déjà vu* rejects such an ending as a "downer": both "shall live", the film promises, even if that demands sacrificing the basic philosophical premise of the film and making a mockery of the theory of branching universes.

The films discussed so far reinvest their protagonists with a sense of agency by reducing the confusing multiplicity of realities, identities or temporalities to an essential, singular reality. Another group of films exhibiting the Hollywood chronotope approach multiple realities therapeutically, reducing them to strategies for coping with psychological trauma. *The Machinist* (Brad Anderson, 2004) plunges us into the maze of fantasies, hallucinations and suppressed memories of the insomniac Trevor Reznik, a sickly-looking man working in a machine shop. Although the film blurs the distinctions between the real and the imagined, the present and the past, the conscious and the unconscious, eventually it offers a neat explanation for Trevor's paranoia and schizophrenia. The strange man (Ivan) Trevor believes is pursuing him, but whose existence everyone else denies, turns out to be Trevor himself: Trevor "created" his alter-ego "Ivan" in order to attribute to him a murder Trevor himself committed (he killed a little boy in a hit-and-run accident). The multiplication of realities is a result of Trevor's failure to fully repress his guilt and, at the same time, a symptom of atonement.

Stay (Marc Forster, 2005) repeats the same formula. A New York psychiatrist becomes obsessed with one of his patients, Henry, a disturbed student who intends to commit suicide in three days. As the psychiatrist tries to track down his patient and prevent his suicide, he begins to doubt his own sanity and drifts into a surreal, hallucinatory world where the dead and the living cross paths. The ending reveals that this whole story of multiple reali-

ties and confused identities was composed of the partially perceived, partially remembered, and partially fantasized images that happen to cross Henry's mind in the last several minutes before his death, and his parents' death, in a car accident for which he feels guilty. Once again, the multiplication of realities is both a symptom of guilt and a form of self-therapy the dying man practices retrospectively.

The Butterfly Effect (2004) offers yet another take on the same dramatic premise. The story is told from the point of view of a protagonist who, we discover at the end of the film, is actually dead. The whole story world is revealed, retrospectively, as entirely unreal, existing only in the protagonist's mind. The problem of multiple realities is treated as essentially *psychological* and its resolution as *therapeutic*: despite the fact that Evan was never actually born (we discover at the end of the film that he was stillborn), the film goes out of its way to explain the psychological reasons for Evan's mysterious black outs (which produce multiple versions of the past)—he invented them in order to deal with the guilt over accidentally killing a woman and her baby. Nick Larson, the protagonist of *The Butterfly Effect 2*, regularly "loses time" and experiences black outs, which allows him to travel through time as he tries to deal with the consequences of a traumatic experience (his girlfriend's death in a car crash). The film borrows the symptomatic language of multiple personality while remaining indifferent to questions of etiology. Here multiple personality is not a medical condition but a metaphor for the character's difficulty in dealing with a traumatic experience, a defense mechanism he invents in order to deny the reality of what has happened to his girlfriend. His circumstances might change (every time he changes a detail in the past, he provokes a change in the present or rather, what would be the future from the point of view of the past)—he might be a powerless employee in one scenario or the boss in another—but his personality remains the same. There are no multiple personalities here, only multiple scenarios in which Nick, through the power of wishful thinking, inscribes himself. Like David, the protagonist of *Vanilla Sky*, Nick demonstrates a considerable awareness of his existential confusion: he embarks diligently upon internet research on multiple personality and post-traumatic stress disorder; at the same time, like Lenny, the protagonist of *Memento*,

even as he acknowledges the real source of his confusion—post-traumatic stress—Nick refuses to attribute his "time travels" to it. After a while, he simply gets used to traveling through time and waking up in new places with no memory of how, and when, he got there—and he continues to function in remarkably rational ways in all of these forking pasts. When all his attempts to correct the past bring him to naught, he chooses the only version of the past in which his girlfriend does not die, the one in which he dies instead of her. We are expected to believe that the whole film is Nick's flashback right before his death (as in *Stay*) but then we have to wonder why, if he was the one dying (true) he flashes back to an opposite scenario, in which his girlfriend is the one dying (false); conversely, if the flashback is true (she is the one dying) then his death in the end must be false, just another alternate reality with no referent from which we can view it (it belongs to no one). In the final analysis, the film grants Nick the agency and freedom to decide his fate, to deal with the trauma that caused the emergence of alternate realities, but his "self-therapy" demands his own death and thus cancels, retrospectively, the alternating of realities.

The Mothman Prophecies (Mark Pellington, 2002), the story of a man trying to cope with an unexplainable car accident that caused his wife's death, bestows on the protagonist, John Klein, powers of pre-cognition which help him predict disasters and save people. The strange premonitions, prophecies and encounters, which Klein experiences as an increasing fragmentation of his identity and reality, function as a kind of unconscious self-therapy: he eventually realizes that the radically alternate reality the mothman seems to represent is actually his own alter-ego, a manifestation of his guilt for his wife's death which he tries to atone for it by saving others from certain death. *Dragonfly* (Tom Shadyac, 2002) tells the story of a doctor dealing with the death of his wife in a Red Cross bus accident in Venezuela. When several of her former patients communicate to Joe their "meetings" with her during near-death experiences, he begins to believe his wife might not be dead. Although the film suggests the existence of an infinite number of multiple realities—"grades of consciousness" between being fully alert and being dead—these alternate realities are in the end reduced to strategies for coping with the death of a loved one. In all these examples, the multiplication and apparent confusion of realities, identities and temporalities is given a clear (usually subjective) narrative

reason (guilt, love, personal suffering etc.).

In *The Number 23* (Joel Schumacher, 2007) Walter Sparrow, a dog-catcher, becomes obsessed with a novel about obsession (an obsession with the number 23). Walter becomes increasingly aware of the eerie similarities between the life of the novel's protagonist, a detective by the name of Fingerling, and his own life. The fictional character of the detective Fingerling proves to be an appropriate unsconscious/fictional surrogate for Walter. Fingerling's function is similar to that of the fictional psychiatrist in *Vanilla Sky*: just as David invents his psychiatrist to help himself wake up from the lucid dream, so Walter invents Fingerling to help himself investigate/recall the murder he has himself committed thirteen years earlier. Like other films in this vein (*The Bourne* trilogy, *The Machinist*, *Stay*) *The Number 23* suggests that the painful process of recalling the horrible past, or retrieving repressed memories, is a form of atonement. Although this pervasive obsession with remembering might appear as an obsession with bearing witness, doing justice, atoning for one's sins, there is so much stress on the process of recall (which takes up the whole film) that in the end the painful, even traumatic process of recalling replaces, or outweighs in importance, the original trauma. In this film, as in *Premonition*, that which creates the problem also provides the solution, in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophesy: the obsession with the number 23 leads Walter to murder but it is also a coping strategy (only by recalling his own obsession with the number can Walter atone for his sin). Despite the confusion of multiple possible scenarios—events and characters straddle different ontological and narratives frames (reality, dream, fantasy, memory) freely swapping places—in the end this multiplicity of scenarios is reduced to a childhood trauma (Walter's father's suicide and Walter's desperate attempts to comprehend this event in the absence of any rational explanation: his father, an accountant obsessed with numbers, did not leave a suicide note, only the number 23). The sole reason for the multiplication of realities, identities and temporalities is to invest the character with a greater sense of agency, with more choices that would allow him to redeem himself from a murderer to a worthy father and husband and a worthy citizen (he turns himself in). "some choices are easy, some aren't", Walter muses in the film's concluding voiceover. "Those are the

really important ones, the ones that define us as people…Thirteen years ago I made the wrong choice. I had to put it right."

The protagonist of *The Number 23* declares wearily that "time is just numbers, with a meaning attached to them." The screenwriter of *Premonition* (Mennan Yapo, 2007) couldn't agree more. In the special commentary included in the DVD edition of the film, he tells us how he got inspired to write the story. "What if", he asked, "the days of the week were like playing cards, and you threw them up in the air, and wherever they landed that's how the whole thing would play out?" Time-warping or time-travel, and the multiple branches of time it gives rise to (in one branch, Linda reconciles with her husband, in another she doesn't forgive his betrayal and lets him die, etc.) are used as strategies for coping with marital problems. As the film's writer explains, "the strange phenomenon of premonition provides the character with an insight into what's going on in her life at this time that otherwise she wouldn't have had a glimpse of." The film conflates past, present and future, leaving no stable point of reference—in time—from which to follow the story. Any element in the evolving narrative can be, at one and the same time, a foreshadowing and a flashback; every moment of story time can be, at one and the same time, in the past ("Honey, Jim is already dead") and in the future (Jim is about to die, in the future, and his wife can prevent his death). This is a familiar "nesting" or "Russian doll" narrative, except that we cannot identify the biggest doll (i.e. the outer narrative frame within which the other frames are nested).

When Linda senses she is on the verge of madness, she dutifully makes an appointment with a priest who instructs her that "it is never too late to decide what is important in your life and to fight for it." The odd metaphysical phenomenon of which we had assumed she was a victim—premonition—actually grants her the power to interpret events however she wants to, specifically to imagine a reconciliation with her ever more distant husband and to justify, retrospectively (or should we say both retrospectively *and* prospectively—as if to be on the safe side) what seemed to be a failing marriage. The premonition is not an objective fact that happens *to* her but a symptom of her marital problems and, at the same time, a solution to those problems i.e., we see here the familiar narrative pattern of a self-fulfilling prophesy parading as "de-mythologization" or "enlightenment".

In an increasingly mediated culture, narratives involving multiple realities provide an outlet for the anxiety we feel over our passivity and powerlessness. They redeem the negative connotations of multiplicity—instability, groundlessness, and relativism—by treating multiplicity as a reassuring surplus of possibilities. Hollywood cinema of the multiple would have us believe that as long as we manage to arrange events in a chronological order, as long as we learn to distinguish the real from the unreal, all problems will be solved or, put differently, that problems—marital problems, the meaningless of life, unresolved feelings of guilt, loneliness etc.—are caused either by a lack of chronology and/or by an ontological confusion of the real with the unreal, that the problems are metaphysical rather than existential. These films seek to distract us from the banality of our daily existence by securing a modicum of meaning in our experience of *narrative time*, which our experience of *existential time* no longer provides.[19] This is an essentially conservative cinema: the meaning of events, it suggests, lies in whether or not the events are real (multiple realities) and/or in what order they occur (multiple temporalities), and who we are depends on whether we remember everything, regardless of what exactly it is we remember (the act of remembering is more important than what is remembered).

[19] On the other hand, in contemporary European migrant and diasporic cinema, and in hyperlink films, the language of multiplicity and dissociation—the multiplication or forking of identities, realities and temporalities—intersects with the forces of globalization, rather than serving the therapeutic purpose of investing the postmodern subject with a false sense of agency, as it does in the Hollywood multiple film. Reality, time and identity are here envisioned as networks of intersecting smaller realities/times/identities magically, metaphysically, ethically, or politically interrelated. Similarly, hyperlink films—for example, *Traffic*, *Syriana*, and *Babel*—feature multiple characters in multiple intersecting story lines, often set in globe-spanning locations and employing multiple languages.[19] While Hollywood obsesses over questions such as "Are events real or unreal?" and "Is this the past, the present or the future?" and ultimately seeks to resolve multiple realities, identities or temporalities into a reassuring singularity, European migrant/diasporic films and hyperlink films are concerned with the philosophical, ethical or political implications of the fragmentation of the singular (Kieslowski, Tykwer, Haneke).

Heidegger and the Political Turn

Adam Rosen (Bard College)

The one who speaks when he is not to speak,
the one who part-takes in what he has no part in -
that person belongs to the demos.
(Rancière, "Ten Theses on the Political")

In the opening of "On the Essence of Truth", when Heidegger claims that "the question regarding the essence of truth is not concerned with … artistic composition, or even the truth of thoughtful reflection" (136), a peculiar tension seems to emerge with respect to his concluding statements from "The Question Concerning Technology"; for, in this latter work, Heidegger postulates that the essence of truth is precisely to be sought in "reflection upon art"[1] (137). Is there, then, an ineliminable contradiction between the "thoughtful reflection" that is oriented by art, as articulated in "The Question Concerning Technology" and the ostensible rejection of both "thoughtful reflection" and "aesthetic composition" with which "On the Essence of Truth" begins? Perhaps these texts are not irreconcilable. Perhaps the disregard of "thoughtful reflection" and "artistic composition" in "On the Essence of Truth" is not an avoidance of reflective thought or art per se, but rather an acknowledgment of the need for - and a partial performance of - an explicit turning from particular interpretations of thoughtful reflection and art. Perhaps what this avoidance turns away from is "thoughtful reflection" as metaphysical speculation and "artistic composition" as a merely technical or formalist endeavor (136). If so, such a turning away may be a precondition for an inceptive return to a more decisive insight.

[1] As Heidegger proposes, "because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art. But certainly only if *reflection* upon art for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth concerning which we are questioning" (*Question Concerning Technology* 317; emphasis mine).

A similar strategy of turning away in order to return more decisively may also be at play when, again in the opening of "On the Essence of Truth", Heidegger seems to specifically deny the relevance of the political for a questioning concerning the essence of truth. Specifically, Heidegger states that "the question regarding the essence of truth is not concerned with whether truth is a truth of practical experience or of economic calculation, the truth of a technical consideration, or of political sagacity" (OET 136). What Heidegger terms "political sagacity" then may subtly manifest both a demand for and, at least proximally and partially, the beginning of, a turning toward another interpretation of the political: a re-turning to the political in a more decisive manner. Perhaps, despite the apparent sparsity of (pronounced) references to the political throughout Heidegger's corpus (the political as such is mentioned only twice in *Being and Time* and, interestingly enough, is included in lists of disciplines that are presumably to be left behind for the moment, yet is always marked by scare quotes as if to ward off in advance the temptation to read him as repudiating the political *überhaupt*) and in "On the Essence of Truth" in particular, the political, or at least a certain interpretation of the political, may be pivotal for Heidegger's most pressing questions and eminently involved in the questioning concerning the essence of truth. With this possibility as our guide, we may reopen the opening with which "On the Essence of Truth" commences and begin to glean not a denial of the political (or the aesthetic), but a turning away from "everything actual" - understood as the all too obvious regional truths of aesthetic or political disciplinary specialization and the metaphysics of presence that underwrite such supposedly discrete fields - thereby turning, along with Heidegger, toward another, more fundamental experience of the political. This re-volution in political thinking and experience, the trajectory of which this paper seeks to track, may then be better understood as an inevitably partial performance of the questioning concerning the essence of truth that more fully discloses what such a questioning entails.

In a manner strikingly similar to the movement of *aletheia*, the political both juts to the fore and conceals itself within the first few paragraphs of "On the Essence of Truth". While ostensibly asking after the propriety of esoteric questions, that is, while presumably enmeshed in a philosophical quandary per-

taining to the reasonableness of indulging the "extravagant"[2] question of the essence of truth, Heidegger also rehearses, under the cover of "philosophy", a decidedly political problematic; the question of whether thinking through so-called abstract questions in light of the expediencies of the political everyday is extravagant. For while certainly a properly philosophical concern, it is also an eminently political problematic, thus pointing to a certain overlap and moment of indistinction between the political and the philosophical. Not that Heidegger is in any way attempting to collapse the distinctions between the philosophical and the political; rather, as he inquires into the extravagant thinking that does not immediately yield "a measure and a stand", the thinking that is in some sense scandalous and perverse in its refusal to formulate a program that would alleviate the ever-present suffering of those ravaged by war, famine, or the less spectacular manifestations of oppression, Heidegger discloses the political conundrums and possibilities at the heart of philosophy, or at least a certain confluence between the domains of politics and philosophy (OET 136).

In a certain (redoubled) double speak, Heidegger at once articulates political concerns in the guise of a philosophical pondering (double speech as speaking politically in the name of philosophy) and just under the surface speaks against the division of thought into properly philosophical and political modes by revealing their overlapping concerns (double speech as a self-destructive speech, a speaking that turns the very categories that one deploys against themselves). Moreover, these doublings may themselves partake in yet another, and for our purposes more decisive enfolding, a folding of the political within the questioning concerning the essence of truth. Remarkably, the way in which the political emerges is through wresting itself from the concealment that is occasioned by the explicit disclosure of a philosophical foreground. In other words, the political emerges in a manner strikingly similar to the movement of *aletheia*, i.e., truthing, disclosing, or unconcealing. Thus caught up in the very movement of truthing into whose essence Heidegger seeks to inquire, the political, through a fleeting self-disclosure from out of the concealedness effected by the philosophical fore-

[2] As Heidegger wonders, "yet with this question concerning essence do we not soar too high into the void of generality that deprives all thinking of breath? Does not the extravagance of such questioning bring to light the groundlessness of all philosophy"? (OET 136)

ground, on the way to concealment as that philosophical comes to dominate the scene and condense as the surface of this text - which is to say, liminally - the political partakes in the movement of *aletheia*, thereby suggesting a possible enfolding of the political within the very movement of truthing. Crucially, such an enfolding would render conspicuously indeterminate the division between *aletheia* and the political, at least at certain moments that will be decisive for this reading.

Thus, we are left to wonder: what is the connection between the political and the movement of truthing or the essence of truth? Can the strife of *aletheia*, the wresting from concealment on the way to concealment, manifest politically? To what extent is disclosedness (*aletheia*) an issue of politics or politics an issue of disclosedness? Is the essence of truth a political matter or does it materialize politically? Such questions will guide this inquiry since all that we can say for now is that Heidegger decisively discloses a certain confluence of the philosophical, the political, and the question concerning the essence of truth as they pertain to the question of extravagance. Such a confluence remains to be thought.

To more fully explore that liminal region between the political and the philosophical wherein both philosophy and politics become matters of truthing and truthing comes to the fore in a new light; which is to say, in order to comport ourselves to that realm beholden to concealedness that calls for the utmost rigor of thought, we may now return to Heidegger's question concerning extravagance, and along with him ask: can the calls of the oppressed and the ever-emergent demands for immediate action be turned from, backgrounded, or in some sense muted, if only for a moment, such that an extravagant thinking can commence? And justifiably so? Derrida formulates this problematic as follows: "the political and historical urgency of what is befalling us should, one will say, tolerate less patience, fewer detours and less bibliophilic discretion. Less esoteric rarity. This is no longer the time to take one's time … as if we had ever been allowed to take our time in history, and as if absolute urgency were not the law of decision" (*Politics of Friendship*, 79). For Heidegger an answer begins to take form which is neither wholly political nor wholly philosophical (or perhaps all the more political *and* philosophical for being neither, simply), but rather allows the political and the philosophical to contaminate each other in its very saying: we cannot "neglect

[the] compelling seriousness" of such demands, but then again, we cannot fail to attune ourselves to "what speaks in these considerations" (OET 136). With this response, Heidegger justifies[3] his extravagant trajectory by appealing to a certain excess lodged in the heart of our everyday considerations, a haunting element or ineliminable opacity that renders such questions more complex and difficult then they first appear and guarantees that such questions signify beyond themselves in such a way as to require, not an immediate response (although perhaps that too)[4], not a formulaic solution that would presume to (dis)solve the problem, but, if only for a moment, a more contemplative repose, a repose that allows a returning to the fundamental experiences that motivate these demands for immediate solutions.

Whereas Heidegger is fully aware that "sound common sense … harps on the demand for palpable utility and inveighs against knowledge of the essence of beings", perhaps his turning from these demands is itself a performance of another political responsibility, a turning away that allows for a more robust responsiveness to certain fundamental questions (OET 136). Perhaps it is only when we muster the courage to turn from the demands of the everyday that, following Heidegger, it becomes possible to situate these very demands for palpable utility as signifying beyond themselves, testifying to the an-arche of a world that is experienced as fundamentally disordered (in the sense of never arriving at a final ordering, that is, always in the midst of the coming and passing away of various processes of ordering and disordering), thereby suggesting the ultimate impotence - which is not to say utter uselessness - of any political endeavor that would seek fully and finally to organize such a world. Perhaps, at least in part, the intensity of demands for palpable utility are energized by the tension-ridden repulsion from a profound experience of ultimate groundlessness. "Sound, common sense", then, may not be without a moment of excess that, through the regard enabled by a certain composure in the face of the demands of the political

[3] This "justification" is surely less of a rationalization and more of a resolute stance in the face of an impossible decision.

[4] For instance, by a) re-cognizing itself as hegemonizing an interpretation of its basic horizon of values in such a way as to foreclose certain interpretations of those values that would allow various peoples to legitimately participate in the political community or b) acknowledging what counts as politically intelligible performances/speech is not a natural given but a always already a political decision.

everyday, that is, a composure such as that enacted by Heidegger's "philosophical" disregard of "everything actual" - including "political sagacity" - discloses compulsive demands for utility and emphatic insistences on the totalizability of knowledge (we know what the problem is and what the solution must be) that often underwrite such demands as manic responses to an experience of fundamental disorientation and unsurpassable concealment (OET 136). To put it a touch too dramatically, although *phusis* loves to hide itself, we may detest the self-pleasuring of this most enigmatic Other. What darkness is brought into the world by the demand for total clarity? What Heidegger's "philosophical" posture allows to come into the open, then, is that haunting the political - understood in a conventional sense, for instance, as the administrative actions undertaken within the polis or in other such authorized political spaces that provide order to collective existence - may be the experience of fundamental disorientation and overwhelming concealedness that "common sense" compulsively denies and to which it can thus never adequately respond, thereby suggesting the need for another sort of politics.

This return to another politicality by way of a hesitant and thoughtful reserve - in a sense, by way of "philosophy" (that is, by not brutishly barging ahead and incurring laughter or simply allowing oneself to be ignored as a result of one's paradoxic political stance), but rather by subtly, and for the most part imperceptibly speaking politically in the name of "philosophy" or engaging in that sort of philosophy that is "intrinsically discordant" (OET 152) - may seem profoundly apolitical in that it is at least compatible with academic insularity, and all of the terrors which such insularity evokes in Heidegger's "case" in particular. However, it is also possible that attending to "that which speaks in these [political, everyday] considerations" is better understood as a political movement against "politics" (OET 136). This returning to another politicality, then, may be at once a call for and a performance of reservation in the face of the urgencies of the everyday, such that - and this is why Heidegger's performance is not merely decadent - these urgencies can be met with a more adequate, more robust response, a political response that evades the pitfalls of a fully instrumentalized interpretation of politics. Exactly what may be more adequate about this response is a topic that must be held in abeyance for the moment. For now, it is more important to situate Heidegger's disregard for "palpable utility" and "po-

litical sagacity", that is, his "extravagant" asking after the essence of truth itself, as symmetrical with, if not directly, a politicizing performance insofar as it arrogates political questions to itself, thereby performatively displacing the political by opening a space for itself that is neither wholly political nor wholly philosophical, but partakes in and rearticulates both. Call this Heidegger's political insurgency. This is a politicization, then, precisely insofar as it challenges the horizon of intelligibility in which politics is reduced to that which is enacted only in certain authorized spaces, by given "people" or its representatives, and is beholden to a techno-rationalist reduction of political questions to calls for immediate policy-making. Simply put, the very ethos of reservation and repose that is said to have no place in the domain of politics may be politicized through its insubordinate - if covert - intrusion into that domain that specifically denies it a legitimate place and an authorized hearing.

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What then, is so invidious about the interpretation of the political that Heidegger dis-regards as he turns toward another political horizon? Turning toward the next section of "On the Essence of Truth", namely, "The Usual Concept of Truth", we may come upon something of an answer, provided that we are willing to hold open the possibility that there are certain political undercurrents and correspondences working within this manifestly philosophical text. When Heidegger claims that "genuine gold is that actual gold the actuality of which is in accordance with what, always and in advance, we 'properly' mean by 'gold'," he seems to gesture toward an understanding of actuality as that which is decided prior to the very investigation that seeks to establish it, and is lost thereby (OET 137). Situating Heidegger's initial turning from "actual" politics in this light, the domain of politics that Heidegger's disregards may be that which, "secured by its obviousness" and decided in advance as to its authorized contents and contours, is a sedimented interpretation of the political that loses the political thereby (OET 140). Precisely by revealing the contours of the political community and concentrating on the legitimate and illegitimate ongoings therein (otherwise known as political philosophy), the political is lost.

Just as the matter with respect to which the correspondence theory of truth

seeks an accordance is lost precisely because such a theory of truth presupposes a turning away from phenomena(lization) and towards its own activities ("above all we call true or false our statements about beings"), the matter (or more precisely, the materializations) of politics is effaced by an interpretation of the political as a totalizable order of the activities of beings in the polis, that is, an interpretation of the activities found in the spaces defined in advance as political (OET 138). Similar to the correspondence theory of truth that turns us (whereby we turn) away from phenomena and exclusively attend to our own practices ("a statement is true if what it means and says is in accordance with the matter about which the statement is made … though, it is not the matter that is in accord but rather the proposition") this interpretation of the political may be caught up in a metaphysics of presence that loses the truth(ing) of political being(s) by focusing merely on their conspicuously "political" presence rather than on their diverse modes of (self-) presentation (OET 138).

Just as "propositional truth is possible [only] on the basis of material truth", politics, as commonly understood, is possible only as an interpretation of the materialization of those scandalous re-articulations that contest and seek to recast the domain of the political by politicizing spaces, beings, and/or issues that are specifically denied a properly political status (OET 138). Again, the experience of the political here is to be understood as an experience of, an exposure to insurgency. The political, understood as a discretely determinable arrangement or on the basis of an established agreement of a determinate people, then, may efface the ways in which *a policing of the intelligible passes itself off as politics*. (Though, ineluctably, politics may be that too, and in no way are we to simply dismiss such police activity as intrinsically illegitimate.) Dis-attending to the politicizing performances (speeches, actions, silences, gestures, and other such performances) of those who are accounted for as not counting politically, that is, ignoring the wresting forth of certain claims or performances from the domain of politically enforced concealedness (that is, the political relegation of such claims or performances to the "private sphere" or the wasteland of "unintelligibility", "babble"), is then a forgetting of the concealedness that is effected by this very interpretation of politics. In other words, presuming the objective presence of its subject matter - thinking the political rather than politicization - may allow decisions (such as the decisions pertaining to the legitimacy of vari-

ous political exclusions, the production and ac-counting of those who are not to count politically, and so forth) harbored in this metaphysical interpretation of the political to proceed undaunted. This is perhaps what is so invidious about the interpretation of the political from which Heidegger turns.

If the common conception of the political effaces that of which it is an interpretation, namely the materialization of beliefs, demands, desires, and so on having a claim on "us", Heidegger's dis-attending to such a conception of the political may be a mode of or enact an openness to the movement of politicization precisely insofar as it turns away from the spaces/issues/beings/etc. decided in advance as "political", enacting a fragile repose in the face of demands for a totalized knowledge of the political from which the ordering of such a space of politics can proceed. The refusal of spontaneous consent to this sedimented interpretation of the political, then, conserves the political as, at least in part, that which speaks politically precisely in virtue of its lack of delegated authority to do so or in domains or manners that are predominantly regarded as unintelligible *qua* political.

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Turning toward the third section of "On the Essence of Truth", namely, "The Inner Possibility of Accordance", we can now more fully discern the contours of the political horizon towards which Heidegger turns, thereby readying ourselves to think through whether or not Heidegger's mode of posing the question concerning the essence of truth is a politicizing performance. When, again in the voice of the philosopher, Heidegger proclaims that "what is stated in the presentative statement is said of the presented thing in just such a manner as that thing, as presented, is", in a characteristic double speak he intimates a profoundly political point (OET 141). What is stated in the presentative statement is not merely what the thing is, that is, not a merely metaphysical determination of its being, but what the thing is as it is presented, as it is wrested forth from the concealment that continually traverses it and keeps it in fundamental obscurity. This entails two crucial determinations of the political horizon toward which Heidegger is turning:

(1) Within such a horizon, the presentative statements that voice demands upon a political order are not identical with their reception (let alone with the

needs and desires which they seek to articulate). Instead, it must be acknowledged that a fundamental incommensurability remains between the particularity of the political demand as it is articulated in a specific time and place and what comes of it as it is taken into the domain of the recognizably political. In other words, the policy formulations and/or re-organizations of the political community that arise out of or in response to the politicizations of various spaces/issues are never quite adequate responses; thus, the task of politicization is never finished. So, to return to the question posed above concerning what would be more adequate about a habit of repose in the face of the political everyday, perhaps this enhanced adequacy consists in its performative, if not explicated, acknowledgment of constitutive inadequacy as a condition for the possibility of the political: call this thinking towards a finite politics. If politics is an essentially contestable and constitutively inadequate terrain, then the adequacy of a resolute repose consists in its alignment with the inability of any political action to adequately (fully and finally) respond to the situations from which it arises. Such a re(s)po(n)se is more adequate, then, in that it allows for the question as to how to respond to various politicizations to remain, to whatever extent possible, an open question, thereby conserving the continued possibility of politics. A crucial question then becomes how to foster an openness to the nonidentity of the politicizing articulation and the incorporation of this articulation in the political order?

(2) Within such a horizon, the various presentative statements that figure forth identities for the purposes of some sort of political recognition are unable to render such identities fully present, but rather inevitably present them out of the domain of concealedness, on the way to concealedness, and continually traversed by concealedness. Political subjectivity, then, is neither a matter of being in the polis (one of "us"), nor of being an object of policy formulation or a rights-bearing being, nor of engaging in recognizably political actions. Politicization brings into relief politicized subjectivity as irreducible to any political accounting that would assign the politicizing subject a proper place in the polis. There is thus an inexorable residue contaminating any political accounting. Accordingly, all subjects, spaces, and issues, as presented through the various presentative statements of politicizing performativity, are necessarily excessive of the schematization that would account for them. What is at stake here is the refusal of politics at

surreptitious metaphysics. The political subject, then, in the horizon to which Heidegger is turning, is the subject under erasure. To risk a bold question, the response to which would take us far beyond the limits of this paper: What limit to totalitarianism would be set thereby?

Further elaborating (or allowing for an elaboration of) the political horizon toward which he is turning and explicating the confluence of the politicizing, philosophizing, and truthing that occur within such a horizon, once again under the cover of "philosophy", Heidegger maintains that the aforementioned presentative statement must come to pass within the open and take its place therein; it must traverse the realm of concealedness, allow itself to be traversed by such concealedness, and yet withstand this concealedness in such a way as to figure itself forth, if only provisionally and partially: "as thus placed, what stands opposed must traverse a field of opposedness and nevertheless must maintain its stand as a thing and show itself as something withstanding" (OET 141). To pick up on the political undercurrent, the movement of politicization must consist in a certain withstanding of forgottenness and exclusion, a resistance to its assigned place (often the space of "domesticity", "privacy", "the social", or "economics"), an insubordinate self-placing in the political thereby showing the authority that denies it a place in the political is never quite authoritative enough to altogether prevent its self-showing *as* political or at least convergent with a certain politicality. Perhaps, then, the movement of politicization involves a standing within the openness in such a way that, while intimately inhabited by concealedness (to oneself as much as to others), such a standing remains powerful enough to subtly discompose (which is at once to rearticulate) those who understand themselves as the political community. To take a stand against the sedimented self-interpretation of the political community: this is perhaps the stuff of politics. As a movement of de-centering, politicization, much like *Existenz* (which Heidegger soon claims is the essence of truth), allows a certain self-outstanding or self-transcending to come to pass … however fleetingly. Only in light of politicizing performances can the political community come to stand outside itself, see itself as a sedimented interpretation of the political "we", understand its forms of organization as historically contingent endeavors that are hegemonicly effective rather than matters of necessity or established legitimacy, and thereby allow concealedness to be acknowledged within, and thus in a sense, to return to, the polis. Politicization, then, is a self-placing from out of concealedness into the place that

is denied to it. It is a matter of truthing, of *aletheia*, and thus a materialization of Heidegger's "object" of inquiry: the essence of truth. It may even be said that politics is understood as a poietic engagement, that is, a matter of bringing and showing forth, an intervention into the realm of appearances. Crucially, in this characterization the movement of politicization and that of *aletheia*, the essence of truth(ing) and the truth(ing) of politicization, come to show themselves as remarkably confluent.

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Letting the political undertones rise to the surface and more decisively determining the contours of the political horizon toward which he is turning, Heidegger proceeds, in the fourth section ("The Essence of Freedom") to inquire into a topic more readily understood as political: freedom. As Heidegger explains, freedom is not unconstrained acting but rather acting within the radical conditioning of thrownness in such as way as to be open to that which seeks to appear from concealedness. (OET 142) Freedom, then, is not a full-on instrumentalization of the world or a total reduction of worldly forces to standing reserve, it is "not to be understood only as the mere management, preservation, tending, and planning of the beings in each case encountered or sought out", nor is it reducible to the ability to achieve certain pre-given ends: "letting-be, i.e., freedom, is intrinsically exposing, ek-sistent" (144). Rather, freedom consists in the ability to become something proper to oneself as *Dasein*, namely, ek-static. (OET 144) The essence of freedom "manifests itself as *the exposure* to the disclosedness of beings", that is, as an openness to the operation of emerging from a closure/concealedness that is never broken from, an emerging from within a darkened background that guarantees an essential opacity, that figures forth the provisionality of any presencing and the ineradicable partiality of any disclosedness (OET 145; emphasis mine). Freedom *qua Existenz* is not a volitional stepping outside of oneself, but rather is a matter of allowing oneself to be displaced and reoriented, a susceptibility to the divergent unfoldings of a world that seems so certain in its contours and contents. Freedom is exposure to the Other. Freedom, in this respect, is crucially related to an openness to being taken outside of oneself, to a certain ex-propriating exposure. Allowing oneself to be reoriented by the advent of the unexpected as it emerges from out of, on the way to, and con-

tinually traversed by, concealedness - this is freedom. And this is why the political will never be simply reducible to the calculable.

Freedom, in this sense, also strikes a remarkable accord with an openness to politicizing performances. Only insofar as those counted as "really counting" (as opposed to those who are counted as not counting) are exposed to politicizing performances that contest the very constitution of the political body and the legitimacy of the ongoings therein is politics sustained. In other words, freedom is the capacity of a political community (those who "really count") to experience their integrity as predicated upon ultimately unjustifiable and eminently contestable exclusions. As Heidegger declares, presumably in the voice of the philosopher, "non-essence (i.e., the part that has no part) remains always in its own way essential to the essence and never becomes unessential in the sense of irrelevant" (OET 148). Freedom thus lies within the political community's ability to experience itself as other than itself, in its amenability to the anxiety-infused self-othering or self-outstanding that various politicizing performances seek to effect. Recognizing that there are no preordained qualifications or criteria for political leadership or membership, for intelligibly political speech/performances, for properly political agency, or for delimiting properly political spaces - this is freedom. *The freedom of the political community, then, is not merely its ability to bind the whim of governmental power or foreign impingement, but its capacity to be open to the politicizations of various spheres (private, domestic, extraterritorial, inter/trans/non-national, or other such presumably "inappropriate" spheres) that contest the very contours of the political and its principles of legitimacy*.[5] To make sure the point is clear: overcoming

[5] This is not to confine freedom to those already accepted as properly political; for, such an openness to self-outstanding is also a proper possibility for those accounted for as having no part in politics, that is, those whose task is politicization. Those peoples, issues, spaces, and so on that are excluded are only excluded by a specific political movement; thus their exclusion is itself a mode of political inclusion. Such issues, spaces, and so forth, as defined by the political community as inadmissibly political, are precisely thereby given a place in the political accounting. So, for example, the privatization or domestication of various spaces or issues is a political activity that includes such issues and spaces through their exclusion. Accepting such an exclusion as inevitable, that is, complying with the ban on politicizing such spaces or issues as a matter of necessity, then, is that condition where there is a lack of free-

metaphysics will require another guiding experience of the political; there will be metaphysics unless and until the political comes to be determined fundamentally otherwise; there is a political limit to the efficacy of overcoming metaphysics that requires the Heidegger's project to turn toward, among other "merely regional" concerns, the political.

We are now in a more adequate position to think the relation between the essence of truth and politicization. The essence of truth as this radical suffering of *Existenz*, may transpire along with politicization; or to put the point another way, politicization is a mode of ek-stasis. Ek-stasis, as a disorienting displacement that resituates the self in the excess that imperceptibly traverses her/him, is enabled and enacted by politicization (among other modes of comportment to the openness of the open). Through upsurges of politicization, ek-stasis achieves a suitable form. In other words, in politicization, truthing and ek-stasis are at home.[6] This is not to say that any ek-static movement or wresting forth of phenomena from concealment is necessarily a politicization; but rather that politicization is one mode of ek-static truthing. Ultimately, with respect to both the essence of truth(ing) and politics, freedom connotes the ability to undergo that which exposes itself from out of the void, or, in other words, the capacity to comport to that which is most fleeting and yet may be most profoundly reorienting (though one cannot emphasize enough the "may be"). Freedom, then, involves attention to that which is always only proximally and partially available, that which is ineliminably shrouded in concealedness, that is, attention to beings whose very self-disclosures are enabled by their concealing other ways in which they may unfold. Freedom, at least in a certain respect, is a matter of "letting beings be" (OET 144).

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dom. Thus, disrupting this situation by contesting the inevitability of such exclusions would be, in part, the mode of freedom proper to those whose part is to have no part: the agents of various politicizations.

6 Although politicization is in a way a home for *aletheia* and ek-stasis, politicization is not their domicile or permanent residence. Just as there is no proper place for politicization, that is, insofar as the proper places of politicization are those domains counted as not counting in the register of legitimately political spaces, *aletheia* and ek-stasis are also fundamentally without a proper place. This, as we will see, may be just another way of saying that their place is everywhere and nowhere.

However, and this is perhaps where attending to Heidegger's political contribution is most decisive, freedom requires an active posture of engagement, not an ethos of mere re-cognition: "to let be is to engage oneself with beings" (OET 144). Freedom, as the ability to seriously attend to that which is fundamentally opaque and yet may be profoundly re-orienting only because dis-orienting, that is, freedom as a resolute comportment to that which is precisely not graspable but rather always and in its ownmost being out of our reach,[7] is a clearly a proper possibility for *Dasein*. And yet, such an ethos is eminently, even notoriously unsustainable. As Heidegger insists, "letting beings as such be as a whole occurs in a way befitting its essence only when from time to time it gets taken up in its originary essence" (OET 151). Freedom, ek-stasis, and truthing are always immersed in a hermeneutic of facticity in which the "fall" into the factical/everyday is always already commencing: "if the human beings sets out to extend, change, newly assimilate, or secure the openedness of the beings pertaining to the most various domains of his [sic] activity and interest, then he still takes his directives from the sphere of readily available intentions and needs"[8] (OET 149). What is needed then, in order to cultivate an open stance - and here it becomes increasingly clear why Heidegger speaks in that liminal realm between philosophy and politics rather than explicitly taking up the categories available for a more overtly political speech - are not, or at least not exclusively, the various "freedoms" concurrent with the extension of rights or other such legal measures, not - again: or at least not exclusively - new institutions or programs for action, but, as odd as it may seem, what opens the possibility for such an open stance is this open stance itself: the very open stance Heidegger enacts and exemplifies as and through this very text. Though of course certain traditionally political arrangements may foster or impede the efficacy of such a stance.

What is required to cultivate an openness to concealment, or what

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7 "As letting beings be, freedom is intrinsically the resolutely open bearing that does not close up in itself" (OET 149).

8 And this should not be surprising. The factical world is a world which is, at least in certain respects and for many people, a map of possible pleasures; thus, the passionate attachment to the world or, what amounts to the same thing, the vehement repulsion from disruptive or displacing forces, is quite understandable as a mode of conserving fairly well known possibilities for pleasure and enabling a general organization of life.

amounts to more or less the same thing, what is required to cultivate an openness to politicization, is a certain style of living that habituates us to such a comportment. What is needed is a certain form of education, one often best executed through exemplary models. At least an amenability to the negativity of displacing engagements, if not a explicit desire for them, is an essential precondition for an open stance. One must engage the limit and learn to live (in) the open. Openness to concealedness and that which emerges therein is not something that can be merely taught or in any way forced, which is to say, a friendship must be cultivated with concealedness, or at least with exemplary figures who are themselves very much attuned to concealedness. In this light, the confluence of philosophy and politics comes to profound new heights: the political, understood as traditional policy-making activities, would be exactly the wrong way to cultivate freedom; rather, what is needed are not so much formulas for action (although, in their own right, these too are surely needed) as more domains of life that tend toward the cultivation of a certain allegiance to or befriending of concealedness. Just as the allegiance to democratic institutions may not be exclusively or exhaustively a matter of rationalizing or moralizing these institutions but rather one of cultivating a passionate attachment to them by democratizing various other forms or domains of life such that a habit of (a having of) democracy/democratization is engendered, allegiance to concealment is not to be relegated to philosophical or "aesthetic contemplation", "political sagacity", or any other disciplinary specialty, but rather must contest its relegation to any particular domain. Would this be a plea, paradoxical as it may sound, for a total anti-totalitarianism? Such a cultivating is at odds with any discourse of propriety that would seek to fix its place within a given sector of the social or political body. Since "to let be . . . means to engage oneself with the open region and its openness", and since this open region is the region in which all life takes place, it is the openness and self-showing of physis itself, there is never a moment that is not amenable to cultivating a friendship with concealedness or what I am now willing to call singularity (OET 144). And of course, in order that this friendship does not deteriorate into a fetishization of opacity, one's friendship with concealedness must involve the wresting of what is out of concealedness,

i.e. "*engaging* oneself with the open region and its openness" in the sense of eliciting that which the open withholds to show itself forth (OET 144; emphasis added). The horizon to which Heidegger is turning, then, is one in which life itself becomes a figure for and the domain of an ever present possibility for cultivating an openness to concealedness and that which emerges in and remains traversed by concealment, i.e., singularities. This is perhaps the saving power at the heart of an undeniably destructive bio-power that takes (biological) life itself as its object.[9]

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In this light, (and turning toward the fifth section, "The Essence of Truth") the movement of de-familiarization as a politicizing movement comes into more fine relief. As Heidegger expounds,

> "…where beings are not very familiar to humans and are scarcely and only roughly known … the openedness of beings as a whole can prevail more essentially than it can where the familiar and well known has become boundless, and nothing is any longer able to withstand the business of knowing since technical mastery over things bears itself out without limit." (OET 147)

Heidegger, then, is turning from the biopower of the totalitarian or the welfare state that would take life itself as the object of political management and decision - that is, as the object of programmatic endeavors that presume a total knowledge of their objects of concern, thereby reducing the various domains of life to a standing reserve that is amenable to an ordering by the political community - to a reclaimed biopower that would contest the concentration of power in the figures of State authority. For, the aim of politicization is a retrieval of concealedness from its violent backgrounding, that is, from the "bearing toward concealing [that] conceals itself in letting a forgottenness of the mystery take precedence and disappearing in such forgottenness" (OET 149). As Heidegger later stresses, "to reside in what is readily

[9] It is perhaps not accidental, however, that Heidegger explicitly and consistently avoids this development.

available is intrinsically not to let the concealing of what is concealed hold sway" (OET 149). In other words, it is precisely a totalizing stance that is cultivated by technologization, metaphysics, and a certain interpretation of the political that precludes the intrusion of concealedness, and therefore politicization, within the bounds of the polis. Might it be this very stance that Heidegger is turning from as he attempts to offer up and exemplify another mode of being? As Heidegger proclaims, "precisely in the leveling and planing of this omniscience, this mere knowing, the openedness of beings gets flattened out into the apparent nothingness of what is no longer even a matter of indifference, but rather is simply forgotten" (OET 147). So what is at stake is clearly memory; however, it is not that a simple remembrance is in order, for, the prescription of remembrance as a task, much like the erection of a memorial, testifies to its inevitable inadequacy in the face of the ever-present draw of forgetfulness. The impotence of memory is disclosed by precisely those strategies that seek to enact a resolute stance against forgetfulness. Thus, what is required is not a specific task of remembrance, a dictum to "remember concealment", but something else entirely, something profoundly less cerebral and profoundly more thoughtful . . . the cultivation of a certain habit of openness that "conserves letting-be in this relatedness to concealing" (OET 148). Since, as Heidegger maintains, "wherever the concealment of beings as a whole is conceded only as a limit that occasionally announces itself, concealment as a fundamental occurrence has sunk into forgottenness", in order to more fully withstand such forgottenness, retrieving the abyssal fundamentality of concealment cannot be a localized endeavor, confined to a specific place in the polis, but must become an ever-present possibility in the domain of life itself (OET 149).

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In the final section which we will consider, "Untruth As Concealing", at last we find a plausible answer for why Heidegger fails to foreground the political dimensions of this text. Heidegger is well aware of the dismissal that accompanies certain styles of speaking; for, as he warns, speaking of nonessence and nontruth "goes very much against the grain of ordinary opinion and looks like a dragging up of forcibly contrived 'paradoxa'" and

as such, "is to be renounced" (OET 149). Analogously, those whose doxa consists in a certain sedimented, metaphysical interpretation of the political may be vehemently resistant to a rearticulation of politicality, especially from such an ostensibly esoteric and even obscurantist philosopher. To explicate the political currents of this text would perhaps risk a hasty dismissal. However, leaving the movement of politicization as an undertone to be gleaned by a less resistant audience, turning his text into an exemplary performance of friendship with concealedness rather than a treatise on politics (particularly in its time of publication) may lessen the resistance to both the "philosophical" and "political" points elaborated throughout. Renouncing the political from the very beginning, turning away from "political sagacity", then, may work well as a disavowal in that it allows the desired outcome to occur not despite but in virtue of such a renunciation.

Moreover, this casts Heidegger's pedagogical performance in a wholly new light. It is not that Heidegger is in any way retreating into the insularity of academia, but rather that by posing extravagant questions within academic settings, questions that allow for an opening to concealedness, Heidegger's performance/text becomes a site of habituation to ek-stasis, to freedom, to politicization … and as such would be fully self-conscious of its limits. Heidegger cannot but ask extravagant questions, for it is only such questions that turn those who proceed along with him toward concealedness. In opening his inheritors to an open stance, in offering himself and the workings of this text as a paragon of such openness, Heidegger thereby offers an opening/openness to those who follow to the movements of politicization that would be significantly less effective if they were not met with a certain hospitality effected by a habit of friendship. As in his recapitulation of the story of Heraclitus, when the great philosopher must explicitly declare that "*einai gar kai entautha theous*, here too the gods are present", Heidegger may be performatively disclosing that here too (academia in particular, but the point is that here is anywhere, it is there, *da*, the place where *Da-sein* cannot but find her/him/it-self) there is the possibility for politicization, for ek-stasis, for freedom - but that politicization is an ever-present possibility does not entail that all modes of figuring forth that part which has no part, that excluded element that is inexorably traversed by concealment, and so forth, are modes of politicization (*Letter on Humanism* 234). Although the

space of "proper" politicization, the space of freedom, of truth(ing), of eksistence is disclosed by this text as here/there, where *Da-sein* inevitably is, exactly what constitutes a politicization is itself subject to contestation.

So is Heidegger's performance a politicization? If by politicization we understand an opening to that part which is specifically understood as having no part in politics and through the movement of politicization can presented as political, then at best we can say - perhaps. What is clear is only that Heidegger's text opens itself towards essential concealedness and attempts to think that concealedness rigorously, thereby offering itself as a paradigmatic opening to that which is fundamentally opaque yet profoundly disquieting. To fully and finally pronounce Heidegger as engaging in a politicization or not would be to hegemonize an interpretation of politicization and ignore the indefinitely many modes of figuring forth concealment that may be understood as, that will come to show themselves as, politicizing. So, for the moment, we must take what solace we may in such indecidability and perhaps re-attune to Heidegger's claim that "the answer to the question of the essence of truth is the saying of a turning within the history of Being" (OET 154).

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Fyodorov's Meontology

Myroslav Feodosijevič Hryschko (University of Ljubljana)

Abstract

The text treats the philosophy of Nikolai Fyodorovich Fyodorov as a meontology; that is, as a metaphysics irreducible to ontology. This treatment starts from a certain non-ontological symptom within Fyodorov's texts and develops two philosophemes found in *The Philosophy of the Common Task*: The Task *qua* immortality and resurrection, and Fyodorov's shift of ontology from the question "Why does the existing exist?" to "Why do the living die?" Resurrection and immortality are not developed as some ethical rejoinder to the latter question but rather, both philosophemes are posited together as constitutive of a prospective Fyodorovian meontology. Using the contemporary speculative anti-humanism of Badiou, Brassier, Grant, Meillassoux, etc., and the anthropic-transcendental lineage of Kant and Heidegger as points of both accession and tension, the possibility of resurrection and immortality coupled with the death of being suggests the excision of any constancy or necessity to ontology, to both Being or beings, thus entailing the rudiments of such a meontology.

1. Introduction

The *metabasis eis allo genos* that is Fyodorov's transposition of the ontological question "Why does the existing exist?" to "Why do the living die?"[1] is not a vitalism; it is not an appropriation of ontology in terms of a theoretical concern accorded to what may be provisionally formulated as a problem of the organic. This misprision is coextensive to the misprision concerning the decisive status of resurrection and immortality in *The Philosophy of the Common Task*. The former interpretations belie the acuity of this status, as immortality necessarily entails the resurrection of all those

[1] Nikolai F. Fyodorov *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task: Selected Works*. Ed. E. Koutiassov and M. Minto (Lausanne, Switzerland: Honeyglen/L'Age d'Homme, 1990), Part I, § 11

who have ever died.

"Our task is to make nature, the forces of nature, into an instrument of universal resuscitation and to become a union of immortal beings."[2]

"Only hard and prolonged labour will purify us in the fulfillment of our duty, bring us to resurrection and the communion with the Triune Being, while we remain, like Him, independent, immortal persons, capable of feeling and conscious of our oneness."[3]

The necessity of immortality with resurrection effectuates an asymmetry with any reduction towards the vitalist or the organic, as, in congruency with a certain degree of dialectical formalism, the strict difference that subtends these notions is displaced, if not entirely excised. Immortality effaces the vitalist and the organic of their qualitative distinction, insofar as any presumed anagogic of life is rendered mundane; resurrection further precludes the trace of - or lapse into - the vitalist or organic, as what becomes necessary is the elision of the difference between those who are immortal and those who have died.

Resurrection and immortality will denote the practice of the Task itself; moreover, resurrection and immortality are to be considered as rigorously theoretical concepts. This practico-theoretical identity, made licit in Fyodorov's imperatives against their separation, ascribes the consonance of resurrection and immortality with the most basic theoretical logic of Fyodorov's programme: since the syntagm resurrection and immortality is an analogue for the Task itself, from the former may be drawn out a theoretical concept, an entire metaphysics, as opposed to the appearance of mere anthropic teleology. This is not to omit that in Fyodorov there is certainly a "labour" for man, largely determined by the synthesis of a certain hesychastic Orthodoxy and a technological scientism; yet there is concomitantly the material within Fyodorov for a disparate type of metaphysics, as educed from the series of oppositions Fyodorov had posited in regards to the matrix of a classical philosophical tradition and its series of proper names, alongside the irregularity of the Task itself. This is a material that nevertheless remains cursory and requires its own form of anagogic, although one lacking any mysticism: this anagogic is rather the ligature of two motifs in Fyodorov - the necessity of resurrection with immortality and the in-

[2] Ibid., Part I, § 4.
[3] Ibid., Part II, § 24.

tercalation of death - with the intent to preclude any metaphysical primacy of existence. In this non-ontological anagogic, resurrection and immortality is not a "moral positivistic" (Fyodorov) response to the question of "Why do the living die?", but rather it is the equiprimordiality of both motifs to Fyodorov's project that engender the rudiments of *a metaphysics irreducible to ontology*, the latter elided in a consonant elision to that which exposits vitalism and the organic as insufficient syntagms to nominate the Task.

2. Meontological eliminativism

There is a heteroclite sequence endemic to any prospective non-ontological Fyodorovian metaphysics. Resurrection and immortality will delineate the terms of this break with ontology according to what may be provisionally termed the materialism of Fyodorov's metaphysics, although a materialism that nevertheless contains the irregularity that is the petitioning of death to avert ontology. (A) Immediate in the necessity of resurrection to immortality is the lack of a non-materialist transcendence, a distancing therefore from both finitude and idealism (i.e., immortality and resurrection are precisely necessary because of the absence of a "soul"); that the dead can be made living infers that there is no concession to what the phenomenologically influenced ontology would be apt to denote, in its variations of the germ that is Husserl's gap of the adumbration (and which Meillassoux has already compellingly identified as coinciding with fideism[4]), an obtuse "gift of being."[5] What appears as a *prima facie* ethical imperative - resurrection as the conjoining of "the fathers and the sons" - is the as-

[4] Cf. . Quentin Meillassoux *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

[5] As S.N. Bulgakov summarizes this "materialism" in Fyodorov, the project of immortality and resurrection entails that "integral humankind is replaced by a nightmarish collection of robots" (S.N. Bulgakov *The Bride of the Lamb* p.354) and thus the "tendency of de-godded Fyodorivism (humanistic resurrection) is to eliminate eschatology, to make superfluous and unnecessary the second coming of Christ and the final transfiguration of the world." (S.N. Bulgakov *The Bride of the Lamb* p.345). Materialism is certainly present in Fyodorov's account, however our argument is that there is an also an eschatology extant, insofar as the "transfiguration of the world" in Fyodorov is that of the death of the world - the traditional reading of Fyodorov is thus, as noted, to read immortality and resurrection as rejoinder to death, rather than reading immortality and resurrection alongside each other as the fundamental ordination of Fyodorov's thought as re-capitulated in a non-ontological light.

cription of a non-ontologicality to resurrection and immortality, a certain abandonment, in phenomenological terms, of the "world" as first concept. (B) Yet resurrection and immortality must maintain, paradoxically, the status of a conceptual analogue to the notion of death that obviates ontology. The transition from "why does the existing exist?" to "Why do the living die?" intimates a transience to being that diminishes the latter's significance within a Fyodorovian metaphysics according to a primacy ascribed to death. In a transformation of the Leibnizian formula, to be a *being* is to be *a* being, it can be stated that for Fyodorov, to be a being is to be, in the last instance, nothing; however, in contradistinction to, e.g., Hegel's the *Science of Logic*, insofar as being cedes to death, what inflects Fyodorov's thought is a certain thanatology, or in consistency with Fyodorov's Orthodoxy, an eschatology, which intervenes into any ontology, as accomplished by the minimum of his thought as death. The particular opposition the thanatology and eschatology entail (immediately anticipatory of Heidegger's critique of the onto-theological) is that if the ontological status of a given being cedes to nothing, it is a mis-designation to consider the most radical sense of this "nothing" in terms of an ontological, relational or dialectical status. Ontological statuses will only concede the symptom of the putative invariants from which Fyodorov sought to abjure in the very identification of the priority of death. It is rather the petitioning of the minimum of such an "anterior posterity"[6] (Brassier) that suggests Fyodorov's attempt to rigorously think the necessity of this death

[6] It is this treatment of death that suggests for Fyodorov the patina of being – certainly, a Christian motif – an inflection that actuates a recapitulation of philosophy, in the terms of Ray Brassier, as "an organon of extinction"; this "extinction" despite its temporal ulteriority to thought, is suggestive of thought's radical genetic: "Both life and mind will have to reckon with the disintegration of the ultimate horizon, when roughly one trillion, trillion, trillion (10 1728) years from now, the accelerating expansion of the universe will have disintegrated the fabric of matter itself....All free matter, whether on planetary surface or in interstellar space, will have decayed, eradicating any remnants of life based...Finally, in a state cosmologists call 'asymptopia', the stellar corpses littering the empty universe will evaporate into a brief hailstorm of elementary particles. Atoms themselves will cease to exist." (Ray Brassier *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.288) It is the thinking from asymptopia that would provoke a certain intervention into ontology, according to asymptopia's essential positing of what is the locality of being.

pace a transience of being: This "Apollonian nothing" opposes the hiatus petitioned vis-à-vis death, as the classical ontological horizon is constituted by this very hiatus, the expulsion of this death, and thus is suggestive of ontology's insufficiency to think the latter.

The intent of this certain apostasy of Fyodorov's is a displacement of ontology *qua* first philosophy. It is a metaphysics that is a-ontological, or following the classical notation of the *me on*, a meontology. This is the decisive thesis that separates Fyodorov from resolutely dialectical formal symmetry. Fyodorov does not posit the identity of being and nothing, but rather situates the Task as extrinsic to ontology. As Desanti notes, in Aristotle's classical definition of ontology as the science of being *qua* being, the "e" in the original Greek suggests that ontological commitments are maintained insofar as the "intrinsic theoretical requirements indicated by the word 'e' … will have to be rigorously respected"[7]: in this regard, Fyodorov satisfies the non-ontological, meontological criterion immediately by displacing the project as extrinsic, or non-relational to the "e".

This derogation is of course not without its analogues. If a meontological series could be cursorily, and of course incompletely, collated - including as its points of germination, Plato's *Parmenides*, Plotinus, the Stoics, the neo-Platonists and more contemporarily, Heidegger (the aforementioned abasement of presence), Badiou (the consignment of ontology to set theory), Levinas (the priority of ethics) - the comparative value of this series lies (regardless of anachronisms) in its respective displacements of the "e", i.e., the re-evaluation of the relation of the philosopheme to ontology. It is Fyodorov's extrinsic genetic applied to ontology that immediately recalls Badiou's thesis concerning the insufficiency of philosophy to address ontology: the latter is reversed in Fyodorov, as there is an insufficiency of being to address the concerns of philosophy, which are, following the thanatology and eschatology, those actuated by the *me on*.

Yet to avoid the lapse into ontology, the privation of the *me on* must not be taken as derivative or conditioned by being. Rather, the intent is to

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[7] Jean-Toussaint Desanti "Some Remarks on the Intrinsic Ontology of Alain Badiou," in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (New York: Continuum, 2004), p.59

radicalize the privation of the *me on* to the extent that it does not intimate a form of apophatism, thus entailing a re-inscription of being into the Task. In this regard, the example of Eriugena's ontology/meontology is particularly instructive. In Moran's study of Eriugena, the author notes Eriugena's me-ontological displacement of being's over-determination of thought: "For Eriugena, ontology is not the most fundamental or universal discipline; in fact, he develops a negative dialectic which counterbalances ontological affirmations and constructions with a radical meontology."[8] Yet non-being is not for Fyodorov, as for Eriugena *in secretissimis naturae sinibus*, i.e., the rigour of the meontological compromised by its function within a dialectical formalism, *but rather privation in its most radical sense, as non-relational to what the privation indicates.* Appropriating a strain of philological conjecture in Moran's account of Eriugena, that "the Latin tradition generally emphasized the privative interpretation of non-being, stressing that non-being implies absence and a lack of being, but the Greeks in general were more affirmative in their concept of non-being and preferred to think of it in super–essential terms, that is, a transcendence of being and knowing", [9] Fyodorov effectively mobilizes both the Latin and Greek notations to avert Eriugena's negative dialectic of being-and non-being, as *the privative of the* me on *that denotes the lack of being is a conceptual nomination for such a transcendence; thinking from this transcendence suffuses the immanent world with the former, according to immanence's in the last instance lack of being, its death.*

This thesis, provisional at the moment, entails that the purely meontological acumination of the privative is the commitment to a priority of the *me on*, however not in the sense of a classical privation which would evince a dialectical logic. Rather, such an approach could be formally and methodologically abstracted as a primitive variant of eliminativism, as described in e.g., Ladyman and Ross's metaphysics: "This is the sense in which our view is eliminative; there are objects in our metaphysics but they have been purged of their intrinsic natures, identity and individuality and they are not

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[8] Dermot Moran *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge Universty Press, 2004), pp. xiii-xiv.

[9] Ibid., p. 217.

metaphysically fundamental."[10] The decisive equation in an eliminativist account of Fyodorov's metaphysics is that of being as being and natures, identity and individuality (hereinafter N.I.I.), an equation affirmed in their opposition or contradistinction to the primacy of death at stake in Fyodorov's thanatology and eschatology. The latter designate the limit of being as being and N.I.I., such that this eliminativism re-inscribes such vocables as meontological: transcendence in its non-being (in the classical sense of the atopic, the non-worldliness) will posit immanence in terms of non-being, therein vitiating any classical ontological ordination.

It is the very *prima facie* temerity of the Task that asseverates a thought obviated of an acute species of ontological constraint; in the same gesture, the contextual radicality of the Task is secured insofar as it claims this "nothing" as its genetic: The Task's speculative heterogeneity, perhaps alien to Western European philosophy in the irregular series of problematics it addresses, is rendered licit by this meontological decision. The reduction towards the archaic or esoteric aspects of Fyodorov's account (e.g., Resurrection is accomplished through the recovery of the "atoms of ancestors in the grave") will only diminish the seriousness of this decision; the appropriation of Fyodorov as an eliminativist thus obviously disregards the qualitative antiquity that inevitably surfaces in comparison with the scientific support employed by contemporary eliminativism. Rather, perhaps Fyodorov's eliminativism can be thought as precisely the substitution of the contemporary eliminativist's theoretical and scientific support with the support of the meontological: a *meontological eliminativism*, a materialism with a meontological, thanatological and eschatological support.

3. The non-necessity of Being(s)

Whereas, for Fyodorov the ascription of ontological statuses as foregrounded by presence is insufficient in its preclusion of death (in anticipation of Heidegger), it can be said that being *is* to be forgotten, following a thanatology and eschatology that stresses the thinking according to death

[10] James Ladyman and Don Ross, "Ontic Structural Realism and the Philosophy of Physics," in *Everything Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized*, ed. Don Ross, David Spurrett and John Gordon Collier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.131.

(unlike Heidegger). Fyodorov will thus, *avant la lettre*, concede to Heidegger the theoretical inadequacy of Being reduced to *Vorhandenheit*, but does not thereinafter establish finitude as some fundamental matrix for thought, insofar as he commits to the acutely contradistinctive syntagm of resurrection and immortality. That is, there is a disparity in the respective appropriations of death: If Fyodorov's thought is rigorously meontological, in terms of the Heideggerian distinction between fundamental ontology and regional ontology, Fyodorov collapses this distinction with a fealty to the thanatological and the eschatological that forces *fundamental ontology's re-inscription as a regional meontology.* In this sense, Badiou's claim that all ontology is merely denotative of a situation is taken in its strongest sense: Being itself recalls a situation, a locality, and does not function as the grounding substrate of philosophy. Fyodorov, however, may be said to go yet further, as to the extent that The Task begins from death, he radicalizes the Badiouian injunction that "every ontology requires a theory of the void": any ontology would not only require a theory of the void, but ontology itself becomes an unnecessary supplement to the theory of the void itself. This is to be read in its strongest sense: i.e., *there is no metaphysically necessary being*. This is not a repeated conflation of the ontological difference or any repetition of what Heidegger would critique as the forgetfulness of Being: insofar as the critique of *Vorhandenheit* may be said to leave the remainder of Being, meontological eliminativism eliminates Being, thereby effectuating the alleviation of the ontological difference and provoking the latter's ultimate coinciding, as the problematic for ontology remains resolutely ligated to the thinking of the remainder of being in either of its formulations or in their relation, in opposition to the meontological decision for the death of both Being and beings, this dogmatically metaphysically phrased notion of the non-necessity of being(s).

In this way, the apparent paradox of the Task's imperative for resurrection and immortality conceived as meontological commitment - the former immediate in its suggestion of a consecration of being (that obviating death is not re-inscribing ontology into meontology) - is provisionally clarified. In consistency with the meontological eliminativist reading of Fyodorov, resurrection and immortality can only be understood in the petition-

ing of "man" as its material, the elimination of the putative necessity ascribed to man, its essentialism, or even the assumed terms of its existence, viz., finitude. The minimal ontological consistency engendered by the existential analytic of *Dasein* or any possible form of N.I.I. is annulled by the notion of man as no longer man, insofar as resurrection and immortality seizes the ambiguity of the point where, as Steigler would note in an entirely different context, man is still able to be called man.[11] That for Heidegger, man as positing the question of Being secures the former's ontological priority, for Fyodorov, this would be merely symptomatic of the over-determination of philosophy's possibilities by an ontologically necessary being; that in *Being and Time* the existential analytic of *Dasein* would then go on to co-constitute ontology appears to justify this reproach. In formal symmetry to the interpretation of Fyodorov's resurrection and immortality as a non-vitalism, resurrection and immortality do not conflate its practice or its concept with an over-determination by the material of resurrection and immortality, viz., an ontologization of man.

Accordingly, there is no more lucid an opponent than Heidegger, and on a vaster scale, the entire continuous or discontinuous tradition of transcendental philosophy, insofar as one assumes the reading that it is acutely finitude that delimits the possibility of the transcendental.[12] If finitude is essentially analogous to the transcendental, resurrection and immortality unequivocally evince an antagonism to their putative affinity. It is the minimal ontological consistency conferred to finitude that resurrection and immortality explicitly contrast; which a meontology excises in any such minimal ontological consistency's very secession to death. The Task is to be construed as an explicit commentary on the Kantian system, the germination of transcendental philosophy and various idealisms and anthropomorphizations.

In this regard, resurrection and immortality as analogous to meontology indicates two theses:

1. Resurrection-immortality is not a thesis for man, but rather an anti-

[11] Cf. Bernard Stielger *Technics and Time: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[12] As example, cf. Quentin Meillassoux *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

humanist thesis.

2. Resurrection immortality is not a thesis for temporality, but rather an anti-temporal thesis.

The first thesis is meontologically consistent according to the non-necessity of any being: it posits the abjuration of remits constituted by an analysis of what is nothing more than a series of anatomies and taxonomies. If Kant will ascribe "all knowledge *transcendental* if it is occupied, not with objects, but with the way that we can possibly know objects even before we experience them"[13], *pace* the delimiting of conditions, Fyodorov posits a re-appropriation of the transcendental through the elision of its vulgar grounds. This will entail the separation of the transcendental from its isomorphy to the anthropic, in terms of an adduction for the latter's *contingency against its necessity*.

In Grant's study of Schelling, what is decisive for Schelling is not the forsaking of the transcendental, but rather that, in the desired distancing from Kant, "Schelling cannot simply abandon the transcendental. Kant and Fichte at the very least invented a new terrain for philosophical activity, but did not exploit it sufficiently…Such powers, they are demonstrably actuable, require therefore a physical grounding to remove them from the 'unnature' which the transcendentalists have established as taking place."[14] In symmetry, Fyodorov will naturalize the transcendental, through the positing of the transcendental as analogous to an anthropological description. Yet for Fyodorov, even if the notion of the transcendental may be conceded, the transcendental is not singular: there are possible transcendentals, against the absolute metaphysical necessity of the singular transcendental (roughly recalling Deleuze's notion of a transcendental field)[15]. Fyodorov will already begin from a naturalist ascription of the transcendental, unlike Schelling who sought to develop this naturalization, a trajectory forced by the decision for and certain compromise with Kantianism. In the acceptance of the tran-

[13] Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Macmillan, 1929),.A12.

[14] Iain Hamilton Grant *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling* (New York: Continuum, 2006), p.158.

[15] Also see Meillassoux's point concerning the "material support" of any transcendental, cf. Quentin Meillassoux *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

scendental as already "natural", the entire Kantian philosophy is thereby contested in its reduction towards the particular terms constitutive of a Kantian *Naturphilosophie*. The texts that confront Kant are pronounced in their internecine treatment of Kantian philosophy (referred to by Fyodorov as "Kant's yoke") according to what Fyodorov himself stated is a remarkably simple argument - it is this putative ontological consistency of man that subtends Kant's *Naturphilosophie*: "Kant does not see the most obvious abnormality of this position: he takes people not in that state, in which they must be, but in that, in which they are, "[16] such that Kant "can be said to deal with science or philosophy only within the narrow limits of an artificial, particularized experience."[17] If the entire Kantian philosophy remains grounded in the notion of the putative "as-they-are", the obviation of this Kantian taxonomy collapses the effectivity of the entire system; what Kant posits as necessary, the very limit of the as-they-are, is adduced by Fyodorov as artificial, particular and contingent, in opposition to the "as-they-must-be" of death. The transcendental is the corollary of an antecedental minimal ontological consistency ascribed to the as-they-are. In consequence, what Fyodorov conceives as a Kantian anatomy, with certain clinical surgeries, literally, is rendered archaic. There is nothing in the anthropic form to be preserved, against the ontological and transcendental commitment to a mundane form; Fyodorov will espouse the aforementioned resurrection and immortality, in addition to bodily modification, the colonialization of the ocean and the exploration of the cosmos - these are instances of dis-embodiment, dis-dwelling, dis-historicization, etc.[18] - practical motifs that entail the meontological concept petitioned against the as-they-are. As opposed to the preservation of man, resurrection and immortality intends the abasement of any notion of man as man: any anthropic necessity is excised, substituted by the minimum of the vitiated image of man, man *qua* nothing - the as-they-must-

[16] Nikolai Fyodorovich Fyodorov, Иго Канта in *Федоров Ф.Н.* Сочинения. М., 1982, accessed at: <http://www.magister.msk.ru/library/philos/fedorov/fedor022.htm

[17] Nikolai Feodorovich Fyodorov, *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task: Selected Works*. Ed. E. Koutiassov and M. Minto (Lausanne, Switzerland: Honeyglen/L'Age d'Homme, 1990), Part I, §13.

[18] Precisely the motifs that Heidegger prohibits as being omitted from any ontology, as evidenced in Heidegger's first 1919 seminar onwards.

be of death.

Certainly Kant will concede that an ontological consistency of the as-they-are is necessary to his system insofar as the invariant status of the "reproductive faculty" yields the *sine qua non* ontological foregrounding for the transcendental: "If some magical power were capable of modifying the reproductive faculty itself, of transforming Nature's original model or of making additions to it, we should no longer know from what original Nature had begun, nor how far the alteration of that original may proceed, nor into what grotesqueries of form species might eventually be transmogrified."[19] It is Kant's explicit concern that is Fyodorov's contention. The philosophical disorientation that would be produced by the notion of a contingent and heterogeneous nature is not an impasse for Fyodorov's metaphysics, but rather, its very condition. The possibility of resurrection and immortality itself is indicative of the contingency of being, whilst the only necessity of the latter is death: there is an ontological contingency and particularity, and a meontological necessity and absolute. Whereas to carry out his project Kant thus required the invariant of the "reproductive faculty" for the reproduction of both nature and the transcendental in radically identical form, Fyodorov in explicit contrast exercised death, resurrection and immortality against Kantian reproductivity, rendering the invariant status of the reproductivity as variant, thus severing his philosopheme from any obligations to the contingent minimal ontological consistency ascribed to man in favour of a meontological absolute. [20] It is therefore entirely consistent that Kant would accept immortality, but a "noumenal" immortality, the immortality of the soul, which precludes the necessity of immortality and resurrection - this is the partitioning of man from immortality, insofar as immortality is noumenal and remains an instance of the aforementioned fideism noted by Meillassoux. The Kantian derision of *Schwarmerei* is essentially reversed by Fyodorov: the proper instance of mania is one of the fanaticism to the unknowable noumenon and the ontological necessity ascribed to the anthropomor-

[19] Immanuel Kant, "Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace", (1785), A.A. 8:97 tr. in Lovejoy "Kant and Evolution", p.555.

[20] And the consistency of nature is obviously contested by evolution, and in explicit reference to Fyodorov's resurrection and immortality, the notion of Horizontal Gene Transfer.

phic form.

If the Kantian yoke thus above all entails an ontological consistency of anthropomorphization, or more fantastically, to employ the aforecited Kant, the invariant is the consistency of the reproductive faculty (!); Fyodorov's meontology simultaneously engages Kantian philosophy in terms of such partitions that are corollaries of this gesture. The elimination of any variants of the as-they-are is concomitantly the elimination of the noumenal partition that precludes the materialist thesis of immortality as evinced in the necessity of resurrection; meontological eliminativism "transmogrifies" Kant's partition, contorting the aforementioned transcendental and the Kantian topology of immanence and transcendence: "We shall entitle the principles whose application is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience, *immanent*; and those, on the other hand, which profess to pass beyond these limits, *transcendent*."[21] As the Kantian delimitation of transcendence and immanence are grounded in the *eikos* of the as-they-are, the as-they-must be of death vitiates the ontological derivation of immanence; moreover, transcendence thus suffuses immanence, as the very limit that encloses immanence is alleviated. That is to say, insofar as the decisive relationality of immanence and transcendence is proscribed through the as-they-are, the contingency of the as-they-are separates thought's obligation to an anthropic type, and thus the unwanted concession of the entire project of philosophical thought to the latter. It is acutely Kant's relativization of transcendence to the vulgar, empiricist limit, whereby transcendence is covertly determined, in its (non)limit by the invariants of immanence. For Fyodorov, Kant is therefore a thinker of immanence, more specifically, a thinker of restricted immanence, in two senses of restricted: that his analysis is restricted to immanence and its correlate of the transcendental, and that the noumenal, immortality for example, is concomitantly restricted. It is thus that transcendence remains, as it is for Kant, non-anthropology; yet the Kantian as-we-are is suspended by the meontological eliminativist decision that stipulates the absence of any as-they-are and its ontological corollaries, whereas the as-they-must-be is a thought that is isomorphic to this very transcendence,

[21] Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*, New York: Macmillan, 1929, pp.298–9, A295–6/B352.

i.e., everything that is not of the world. In a radically novel type of philosopheme that attempts to think isomorphically to death, Fyodorov assumes a thought according to transcendence, from which "beyond the limits of possible experience" is relieved of its status as limit through a meontology that is the absence and death of being: Non-locality as opposed to Kantian locality (i.e., consciousness in the form of embodiment, or locality through self-reflexivity) surpasses thought's commitment to self-reflexivity through the positing of the self as meontological; that is, according to its death. Insofar as transcendence suffuses immanence, in essence, everything is beyond this world, as this world is consecrated in the assumption of the ontological minimum of the something; in contradistinction, with an ascetic hesitation towards any instances of an ontologization of the as-they-are, the meontological thesis postulates that there is no world.

4. Eternity of holy matter

Resurrection and immortality will aver a practico-theoretical concept of eternity, consistent with the meontological decision that separates thought from its obligations to finitude, being as being and N.I.I.; however, with an isomorphy to both the aforementioned second thesis and resurrection and immortality's overt anti-finitude, Fyodorov's premise is that "eternity is not measured by time."[22] This eternity as specifically Orthodox death posits a transcendence within the "world", thus obviating the latter, yet nonetheless it possesses its own explicit prohibition in terms of a radical non-temporality. It is this non-temporality that acuminates the prospective metaphysics engendered by meontological eliminativism's initial preclusion of the status of ontology as first philosophy, in two decisive moments: (1) It proposes a critique of time in the latter's anthropomorphization, one that is consistent with aspects of transcendental philosophy. (2) The excision of time clears the way for Fyodorov's meontological account of matter, upon which is founded the entire concept and practice of the Task.

This separation of time and eternity in Fyodorov may be understood as a radicalization of Heidegger's critique of the "vulgar understanding of

[22] Nikolai Fyodorovich Fyodorov, Иго Канта in *Федоров Ф.Н.* Сочинения. М., 1982, accessed at: <http://www.magister.msk.ru/library/philos/fedorov/fedor022.htm

time" in terms of *time itself posited as vulgar*. Heidegger's attempt to overcome (non)ontology's vulgar understanding of time with the notion of ecstatic temporality is not sufficiently meontological, despite the obviation of the vulgar account as premised by what may be acceded as a meontological concept of death. Death equated with eternity can be recapitulated in fealty to Heidegger's thought as a condition; however it is precisely the abstruse separation of such a meontological condition itself that engenders his entire ontology. For the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, death denotes the non-relational that conditions finitude and ontological possibility through being-towards-death, the inexorable meontological point described as "*Dasein*'s ownmost possibility - non-relational, certain, and as such indefinite, insurmountable, not to be outstripped."[23] Insofar as death as death forces the reconciliation with the finitude of Dasein, Being-towards-death fixes the proper horizon of the ontological as a relation to death, thus actuating a difference between ontology and meontology in the conception of *a relation to the non-relational*. This non-relationality is prohibited to the same extent as death itself, as opposed to death as death, which delineates the remit of the relation, yet death does not concomitantly disrupt the possibility of the relation beyond its indication of the latter's terminality: the privative of the privative is somehow consecrated. Insofar as the non-relation determines thought (being- towards), thought itself is posited as relational; the condition of the non-relation does not engender non-relationality, but rather a relation, i.e., the occlusion of the coinciding of thought and death that would be formulated in Heideggerian terms as a *Being-as-death*. The centrality of a *prima facie* meontological concept in the significance conferred to death thus only invokes a scission that hypostatizes transcendental finitude.

In contrast, what is at stake in Fyodorov's thought is a carrying over of thought into death, as opposed to the latter hypostatized as limit. The terms of such a gesture may be recapitulated as the elimination of the separation between Heidegger's variants of the condition and the conditioned. It is acutely the project of resurrection and immortality that abases time's hypostatization as limit of thought, through a transposition of thought into the eternity of death, wherein death is isolated from its temporal subordination:

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[23] Martin Heidegger *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1962), p.195.

this very notion of being-as-death, or with a meontological consistency, non-being as death. Fyodorov does not maintain the separation of death, which would only repeat the strict division between ontology and meontology in the latter's prohibition, and as consequence, re-introduce the topological ordination of vulgarized transcendental finitude, but rather (non)situates his thought "within" death, according to the priority of the as-they-must-be. If the notion of time itself is engendered through the specificity of a relation towards death (viz., that is the end of time) by eliding finitude, (viz., the relation towards death) resurrection and immortality is the positing of the absence of time and thus legates resurrection and immortality to death. The remainder of the relation as opposed to the non-relation is what vulgarizes the transcendental, viz., the consistency of the acute "as-they-are", in this case, Dasein. The separation of being-towards-death and being-as-death, of the condition and the conditioned, avers a strong and necessary transcendental of the as-we-are that precludes multiplicities of possible transcendentals, therein privileging (ontologizing) a singular form of transcendental, since the as-they-must-be of death is, in the terminology of the literature on the concept, continuously "deferred" or "delayed". The condition of non-relationality is therefore not rigorously distended, but is posited as a break, that is, in these terms of a relation to the non-relation. Insofar as Dasein is essentially a relation, despite its condition of non-relation, this can only be indicative of an anthropomorphic intervention that is symptomatic of ontology's putative positioning as over meontology: the mysterious, gift-like notion of such relationality. Fyodorov will thus evoke this death as unlimiting, however without the concession of a putative metaphysical necessity to the separation from this unlimit, the prohibition against non-relational thought, and the separation of the condition from the conditioned.[24] Beyond Heidegger, it is not merely presence, but the rigorous

[24] In this non-relational regard, it can be stated then, following Meillassoux's arguments against correlation, that Fyodorov's philosophy is one that abjures from the threshold limit of thought as always a "for us", in the sense that for us obscures the meontological, the latter prohibiting any us; moreover, in the debate of realism and anti-realism, Fyodorov would here contest the anti-realist position, according to its assumption of the very consistency of the for-us, the interiority that is apodeitic to an exteriority, the former's putatively assigned apodeitic status.

commitment to this absence, death, that coincides thought with its condition, the latter effective in the conditioned, thus permitting a meontological thought. Death is not appropriated as the finitude of beings, but rather as a thesis concerning the eternal and the imperative for thinking according to this eternal: to petition the meontological against any ontological consistency of the anthropic.

Yet the terms of this death; that is, this eternal in Fyodorov's thought as the necessity of resurrection and immortality conceived as practical tasks is precisely an eternity of a materialist sort, in contradistinction to noumenal eternities and souls, the separation of death, etc. Fyodorov's position against the onto-theological, *pace* Heidegger, is hence to elide temporality and preserve matter, however according to an account of the latter that is posited in terms of the thanatological and the eschatological. Resurrection and immortality, *prima facie* understood as the consecration of presence thereby maintains its meontological commitment by both obviating time and opposing *a vulgar understanding of matter*. Matter's vulgar understanding is upheld insofar as matter is misconstrued as a repetition of the as-they-are in the same sense that the necessity of resurrection and immortality obviously prohibits the aforementioned soul; and as adjunct, immanence and transcendence, understood in the Kantian sense, prohibit non-material transcendence. This non-vulgar account of matter, in accordance with its connection to resurrection and immortality may be abstracted, following the "holiness" of the Task itself, as *the meontological status of (holy) matter*.

The linking of "holy" matter with resurrection and immortality intercalates any such account of matter as an explicit reference to Fyodorov's Orthodoxy and Christology. Fyodorov's Christological treatment of resurrection is not theorized as the possibility of this resurrection in the singularity of the hypostatized Christ, but rather takes this resurrection as its genetic and minimum, its radically immanent theoretico-practical support. The resurrection of Christ recapitulates both the meontological impossibility of time and provides the analogue for holy matter. Clearly, the Resurrection's series of presence-absence-presence precludes "vulgar" understandings of time. Resurrection circumscribes the relationality posited to it in terms of time as merely the ontologization of the contingencies of a particular organic life: e.g., *Dasein* as the being to which its being is a concern, or which

is determined by the understanding of finitude. Resurrection is therefore not against death as it is understood in terms of the terminus of organic life, but rather against the logic of finitude as derived from death; that is, resurrection is against the notion of the hypostatization of a relation to death that separates the ontological from the meontological, viz., from death, thereby rendering the latter, as in Heidegger, extrinsic to any thought beyond that of a relation. In contrast, resurrection adduces the pure non-relationality of Christ, God.[25] It is the precariousness of a relation to death that is evinced in the resurrection: Christ is the excision of the metaphysical necessity of man's relation to death through the immanence of transcendence; that is, the Resurrection invokes death itself, the latter not as corpse, decay, or absence in dialectical antagonism with presence etc., but as hypostatized. Christ is meontological insofar as he excises both the partition and thus the relation between death and ontology, provoking the meontological death as immanent to ontology, thereby enervating the latter's consistency in the immanence of this transcendence, i.e., that the condition is not separate from the conditioned.[26]

In this regard, it is once again the tension with Kant that contains the synopsis of Fyodorov's Christological elimination of ontology. This classical theological problematic is that of the coeval (without time) transcendence and immanence of God:

1. Christ as the analogue for the Task's resurrection and immortality (that resurrection and immortality is to be applied extrinsic to Christ) supplies the notion of the Kantian transcendental, yet one that is necessarily ontologically heteroclite. Following the inconsistency of this transcendental, the latter is radicalized beyond the rigidity of its denotation in its affinity to transcendence (non-world) as opposed to a transcendental legated to immanence (the ontologization of man, the development of man's pre-empirical ontological status).

2.Christ is the immanent manifestation of transcendence, and therefore

[25] And precisely in theological terms, it is the relation to God that compromises the absoluteness of God.

[26] In other words, the theological problem of the separation of God and the creation of the world.

radicalizes immanence's conflation with normativity, through radicalizing the possibilities of immanence.

3. As immanence is no longer conflated with normative experience and a putative minimal ontological consistency, that is, with the as-they-are of the world, transcendence occurs in the world: transcendence suffuses the world and the latter loses its putative homogeneity, such that the transcendence of the (non)world is now to be posited.

The Christological "antinomy"[27] forces a meontological thesis, in its excess for ontology. This excess will demarcate the ontological as functioning according to a regionality of thought, viz., as separated from death and legated to the internal co-ordinates for its development, whilst Christ is indicative of the ontological's very regionality, in a heterogeneity that would identify the inadequacy of the latter's topology to think Christ: in the distention of the condition, the non-relational, the non-world, transcendence appears in the topos of immanence. Yet this "appears" is insufficient in its allusion to a relationality that is the suggestion of Christ as datum; moreover, Fyodorov's decisive gesture is to not take this Christ narrative as merely an exception, thus vitiating its status as a conceptual analogue capable of averting ontology and petitioning meontology. The distention of resurrection and immortality outside of Christ posits the significance of Christ in its non-particularity or non-locality. The "holy" matter is lucidly the cognate of matter with the status of the Christology, as, in consistency with Christ, holy matter denotes the coeval transcendence and immanence as applied to all of matter: That resurrection and immortality is the theoretico-practical concept distended from Christ to be applied theoretico-practically outside of Christ, the Christology's seemingly meontological anomaly inflects a general meontology. The "holiness" of the Task is precisely the theoretical revision of Christ's resurrection to meontologically eliminate ontology, through the positing of *all matter as the hypostatization of death*. The consistency of a relation affirmed by an ontology oblivious in its strongest sense to meontology is precluded, as matter undergoes, in consistency with the Kantian fear,

[27] For Bulgakov, this antinomy is the condition for religious consciousness itself, for the theologeme - in Bulgakov's project this denotes the non-immanence of the theologeme as opposed to the resolute immanence of philosopheme.

a transmogrification that is consistent with the as-they-must-be of death.

Christ is the eliminativist support (the meontological X) that acuminates the elimination against everything that is not-Christ. Resurrection and immortality, as evinced in the Christ type, entails this hypostatization of death as the thinking of the "eternity of matter" wherein here hypostatization of death is the hypostatization of eternity. All matter, insofar as it is "holy", are the rudiments of a meontological eliminativism that distends transcendence into immanence, such that meontologically the status of the "world" is that eternity, death, transcendence in the sense of non-world is hypostatizing itself.[28]

That everything is eliminated, such that meontologically one can state that there is only a hypostatization of death - that all matter is such a hypostatization of death - this is *prima facie* an ontologically useless or inadequate thesis; however precisely insofar as *it is a thesis devoid of any ontological "value", this account evinces the very limit of ontology and thus marks the tangible derogation from being*. If all matter and being is a hypostatization of "non-being" this concedes nothing to ontology, whilst concomitantly petitioning an eliminativism that leaves the minimum of the meontological and the hypostases of the meontological.

This metaphysics is constituted by a simultaneous reduction and non-reduction. There is a reduction of ontology to meontology acceded through death, eternity, the *me on* in its non-dialectical sense; yet because of the nothing that is the minimum of the meontological reduction, this is a metaphysics which allows for the positing of matter in its non-reduced states, as themselves, as localities or particularities. The account of matter as the hypostatization of death is a simultaneous macro-level transfiguration of ontology into meontology, which nevertheless permits the aperture for a micro-account, the localities of such hypostatizations of death. Whereas the theoretical accordance to these hypostatizations of death in their locality (a particular hypostatization, a particular "being") is symptomatic of ontology, the meontological thinking of holy matter will both eliminate and delineate this very ontological locality, effectuating a thought that

[28] This may be considered as a form of strong emergence, a strong emergence that in complex systems theory is a certain variant of *creatio ex nihilo*, which death hypostatizing itself *prima facie* seems to evoke.

is immanent to this locality, however concomitantly evoking a transcendence: a minimum of death, which may be employed to pivot back towards, in retroactive positing[29], the various localities of ontology, whilst nevertheless beginning from a transcendence, the non-worldliness of the world itself. Yet it is precisely because the minimum of any such account is meontological, that is, that any such minimum of matter remains in conflict with ontological circumscription - with the positing of a finitude, a status of being to conferred to any being, or being itself - that the locality of any such ontological positing is evinced: no finitude expresses anything beyond locality, as this finitude is complicit with the ontologizations of, e.g., time, being, which are already local *contra* an eternity that discloses the locality of all ontology. In this regard, the latter, despite its locality, remains non-reduced as it is (non)reduced only to itself; or in other words, it is reduced to *nothing*, hence, in at least one sense, it is not reduced. This is the (non)locus of resurrection and immortality's prescription of the limit of ontology, its continual intervention into ontology: *the ontological destitution of Fyodorovian metaphysics evinces the stricture of any ontology*.

This is nevertheless a classical form of philosopheme. Fyodorov's initial metabasis from ontology to meontology is already in itself the suspicion of any strain of *doxa*. It concomitantly invokes, in a resemblance to the Husserl of the *Cartesian Investigations*, the question of the radicality of this suspicion in its (analogous) methodological forms of suspension, reduction, epoche or elimination. In this regard, to effectively actuate the philosophical suspension entails the meontological: the cursory problematic of the Task remains one of the degree and remainder of this suspension, i.e., that of the immanent material remains after this suspension has been performed. Whatever remainder is posited (whether self-reflexivity, consciousness, language, etc.), this is insufficiently radical as a remainder for Fyodorov. There remains an impression of the as-we-are, such that, if Marion will state "so much reduction, so much givenness", this imperative indicates that the reduction has not been radically performed: there must rather be a "so much reduction, so much nothingness". Berdyaev can thus remark that for

[29] This retroactive here is not time, but rather may be construed as denoting a form of unilaterizatlion as developed by Francois Laruelle, and incisively utilized by Ray Brassier in distinction to "correlationism", which may be abstracted following Fyodorov, as the commitment to the as-they-are. Cf. Ray Brassier *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Fyodorov "everything is pushed to the limits, and permits of no sort of quibblings nor compromises."[30] The limit that is coextensive with such reduction is not denotative of a rigour to thought, but rather, in Berdyaev's terms, its utter compromise. In the problematic of the degree of the remainder, the acumination of this suspension thus requires a meontological eliminativism: it is necessary to eliminate this remainder itself, to coincide thought with the hypostatization of death. The Task of resurrection and immortality evokes the immanence of that which is radically improbable to the rhetorical series of any *eikos*, *doxa*; that is, the transcendence, the non-worldliness of the world itself - in consequence, this eliminativism will effectuate the unlimited, the petitioning of the meontological minimum of an eternity - that in ontological collapse there is a meontologico-materialist thesis: "finite things…are not real."[31] (Schelling)

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[30] N.A. Berdyaev "The Religion of Resuscitative Resurrection: The 'Philosophy of the Common Task of N.F. Fedorov", ed. Dirk H. Kelder in *The Berdyaev Online Library*, http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1915_186.html (accessed June 25, 2009).

[31] Friedrich Schelling "Philosophie und Religion*",* in *Sammtliche Werke*, part 1, band 6, 6:38, 1804.

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IV. BOOK REVIEW

On Gadamer and the Question of Divinity

Ernest Wolf-Gazo (American University in Cairo)

Walter Lammi, *Gadamer and the Question of the Divine*. New York andLondon: Continuum Books, 2008, $130.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century Gadamer appears to recede into the pre-internet age. He certainly was a thinker of the "Gutenberg Galaxy," to use Marshall McLuhan's term, and the last representative of the nineteenth-century academic world. Although his life spans one century, the entire twentieth century, the topic s and the style of presentation in his books and articles remind the reader, at least the one still acquainted with the Great Books or the classics, of the grand tradition of nineteenth-century classic German philosophy as well as the famous Humboldt University curriculum, *Freiheit der Lehre und Forschung* (Freedom of Teaching and Research). He is the last classic representative of the German *Geisteswissenschaft* tradition in the age of on-line mass communications and Wikipedia "take away knowledge." However, unexpected events from 9/11 to international fundamentalist religious frenzy have upset the ideal world of indefinite progress. There is skepticism about the future as a world without injustice, suffering, hunger, and nasty power games. Multiculturalism, parallel communities, and tolerance towards those who are different are waning. Ugly passions, revenge, and humiliation seem the order of the day. Insecurity and angst have grown since the global financial crisis. We may ask: what does it all add up to?

Walter Lammi, associate professor of philosophy at the American University of Cairo, Egypt, has published a work that seems, at first sight, tame; but a second look reveals that his topic, Gadamer and the question of the divine, appears highly relevant. Professor Lammi, a member of the

1968 generation, has given us a work of insight, supported by superb scholarship, and sound judgment, using the foliage of Gadamer's philosophical panorama, spanning from classical Greek philosophy via the classics of German idealist philosophy to the revolutionary movements of the twentieth century, such as the phenomenology and existentialism embodied by Martin Heidegger. For a long time Gadamer was treated as the shadow of Heidegger until, slowly, the student emerged as a master in his own right. Despite the relatively well-known story about Heidegger-Gadamer circulating among historians of philosophy, the specific aspects of that philosophic relationship are unclear to many. Lammi presents us with something that delves into one of the unknowns of that relationship, specifically the question regarding the nature of the religious and the divine. Despite the enormous bulk of secondary literature surrounding Heidegger and, to a lesser degree, Gadamer, the religious question has hardly even been raised in the case of the latter. Lammi has done the philosophic academic world a great service by producing an outstanding scholarly work that can be used as a platform for further research. His book introduces the *Gretchen Frage* directed at Gadamer: how do you stand on the religious question? We read in the introduction, "How do we conceptualize the non-conceptual? What happens when we make the divine an object of thought?"

Gadamer earned his doctorate on Plato under the supervision of the neo-Kantian Paul Natorp at Marburg University in 1922. That same year he was to meet, fateful for his entire life, Martin Heidegger, who was, as one of his most famous students, Hannah Arendt, put it, the new emperor in the realm of philosophy. Gadamer was to follow Heidegger to Freiburg for a few semesters, to hear him as well as the older master of the phenomenological method, Edmund Husserl. Returning to Marburg, as Heidegger embarked upon his masterpiece, *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), Gadamer found himself plunged in doubt: in which direction should he pursue work and research? Since meeting Heidegger, Gadamer was in perpetual crisis and anxiety. Yet this turns out to be a catalyst to find his self, in the long run. He joins the circle called "Graeca" around the Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann, along with his friends Karl Löwith and Gerhard Krüger. The methods of classical philology open the door to the chamber where Gadamer can feel secure and independent from the master. Thus, he con-

joins rigorous classical language study with the phenomenological method he acquired from Husserl and Heidegger. The stage was set for the long process that was to end up with Gadamer's own masterpiece, *Wahrheit und Methode* (*Truth and Method*), published in his sixtieth year (1960). He was to be the successor of Karl Jaspers at Heidelberg University, alongside his old friend Karl Löwith. Heidelberg was to become one of the major centers of philosophy in post-war Germany. Gadamer's own charming autobiographical work entitled *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (1977) and the more comprehensive Gadamer biography by the Canadian scholar Jean Grondin (1999), give us a good introduction to a German academic world that no longer exists. This writer had the good fortune to meet Gadamer personally in 1996 during the German Philosophy Association meeting at Leipzig, sitting at the table alongside his student Jürgen Habermas. It was an aesthetic and intellectual delight to listen to the two thinkers who have, after Heidegger, influenced German philosophy, perhaps even philosophy on a global level, substantially during the latter part of the twentieth century. Lammi himself, during the time of intensive research on Gadamer, had the opportunity to visit Gadamer in Heidelberg in 1998 and was able to get a sense of the practice of hermeneutic philosophy.

Lammi's book makes it clear that in speaking about the divine we do not necessarily deal with philosophy of religion; rather, we deal with religious experience. In order to deal with human experience and transcendence, our conceptual tool box is not sufficient, a point already made by Nicolas Cusanus in the fifteenth century. Lammi's book reminds us that we need to rediscover the question of the divine, not simply because of the religious resurgence in our time, but in order to clarify our understanding in a time of acute cultural crises, globally. He suggests that we need to reexamine the possibility of human experience in terms of the religious, the transcendent, the divine, without the Marxian prejudice of modern jet-set intellectuals, that the religious is a Tylenol (extra strength) for the laboring classes. Lammi's book traverses myth and logos, the tension between Greek philosophy and Christian theology is explored, while Gadamer's application of a phenomenological hermeneutics is selectively exhibited, foremost in pursuit of the question of the divine.

Every reader of Lammi's book will be well served by the excellent scholarship, not only from English translations, but from original sources in German and French, which make up an extensive and very useful bibliography. The reader should take congnizance of the Notes that provide extensive explanations of scholarly interest and finer points of interpretation. The book is to be recommended as a first introduction to the topic at hand and provides a solid basis for further research into the question of the divine as understood by Gadamer.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Master's and Doctoral Studies in Philosophy Taught in English at Sofia University

Sofia University was founded in 1888 following the best patterns of the European higher education. Sofia is the capital city of the Republic of Bulgaria. Bulgaria is a Member of the European Union (EU).

MASTER'S PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

The MA Program in Philosophy taught in English provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy; besides, the master's thesis can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy as well - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. This program secures guidelines by faculty and leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses offered: Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics, Axiology, Philosophical Method, Truth and Meaning, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Social Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy for Children, Philosophy of Culture, Logic in the Continental Tradition, Theories of Truth, Existential Dialectics, Philosophy of the Subjective Action, Phenomenology, Renaissance Philosophy

Faculty Members: All faculty teaching at the program are approved by the Bulgarian State Highest Assessment Commission. They feature successful teaching experience in this country and abroad and are well published in Bulgarian and English.

Duration of Studies: two semesters of course attendance plus a third semester for writing the master's thesis; opportunities for distance learning.

Admission Requirements: Bachelor's degree in any field of humanities, social science, science, or professional disciplines. No tests or applica-

tion fee are required (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland applying for a state scholarship 10.[15] € fee is charged and an interview is held). No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Tuition fee:

1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – 612 € per school year

2) international students - 3 850 € per school year

Financial aid:

A) ***The citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland*** are eligible for state scholarships carrying 70% tuition waiver plus a monthly stipend beginning from the second semester.

B) The Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to ***American citizens*** as a form of a very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, the American applicants are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site, http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html; at Sallie Mae, http://www.salliemae.com/, and at Student Loan Network, http://www.privatestudentloans.com and https://www.discoverstudentloans.com. It is possible to use some other sources of government financial assistance by the American citizens (please contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to ***Canadian nationals*** is provided in the form of Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside.

D) ***The Western Balkans citizens*** are welcome to apply for Erasmus Mundus/BASELEUS Project scholarship carrying full tuition waiver and monthly stipend, http://www.basileus.ugent.be/index.asp?p=111&a=111 .

E) ***Students from Turkey*** can receive financial aid within the Erasmus Student Exchange Program.

F) Financial aid for ***Chinese students*** is available within the bilateral Chinese-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Chinese Ministry of Education for more information.

H) ***Students from Russia*** (Financial aid for ***Russian students*** is available within the bilateral Russian-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Russian Ministry of Education for more information), ***Ukraine, Belarus, and the other CIS countries, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America,***

and the Middle East receive financial aid in the form of inexpensive dormitory accommodation (about 40 € per month including most of the utilities) plus a discount on public transportation and at the University cafeterias. The same type of financial aid is available for ***the citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland, American citizens, Canadian nationals, Western Balkans citizens, students from Turkey,*** and ***Chinese students.***

Application deadline: September 30, to start in November; January 31, to start in March.

Student Visa Matters: The Sofia University in cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary documents for student visa application to all **eligible** candidates outside the ***EU/EEA and Switzerland.***

Cultural Life and Recreation: Being the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia features a rich cultural life. In most of the cinemas, English language films can be seen. There are a number of concert halls, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. Streets of Sofia are populated by cozy cafés and high quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing in the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia and can be found at http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php. You can follow Sofia and Bulgarian news at http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php.

Contact person: Dr. Alexander L. Gungov, Program Director

E-mail: gungov@sclg.uni-sofia.bg**,** agungov@yahoo.com

Phone: (+3592) 9308-414 (Bulgaria is within the Eastern European Time Zone)

Mailing address: Department of Philosophy, Sofia University, 15 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., Sofia 1504, BULGARIA.

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field will be appointed as the supervisor. This program secures guidelines by faculty and leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses offered: Psychoanalysis and Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology, Applied Ethics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Philosophical Method, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy for Children, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Culture, Time and History.

Eligibility Requirement: Master's degree in any field. No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Checklist: CV, two letters of recommendation, standardized tests scores are NOT required. No application fee (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland a 20.30 € fee is charged and an entrance exam is held).

Tuition fee:

1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – in residence: 940 € per school year; extramural: 600 € per school year

2) international students - in residence: 6 400 € per school year; extramural: 2 600 € per school year

Dissertation defense fee: 1 400 €

Duration of studies: in residence – 3 years; extramural – 4 years; opportunities for distance learning.

Financial aid:

A) ***The citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland*** studying in residence are eligible for state scholarships carrying full tuition waiver and waiver of the dissertation defense fee plus a significant (for the Bulgarian standard) monthly stipend. For extramural studies only tuition waiver and the dissertation defense fee waiver are available.

B) The Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to ***American citizens*** as a form of a very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, they are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site, http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html; at Sallie Mae, http://www.salliemae.com/, and at Student Loan Network, http://www.

privatestudentloans.com and https://www.discoverstudentloans.com. It is possible to use some other sources of government financial assistance by the American citizens (please contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to ***Canadian nationals*** is provided in the form of Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside. This type of aid is usually unavailable for extramural studies.

D) ***The Western Balkans citizens*** are welcome to apply for Erasmus Mundus/BASELEUS Project scholarship carrying full tuition waiver and monthly stipend, http://www.basileus.ugent.be/index.asp?p=111&a=111 .

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E-mail: gungov@sclg.uni-sofia.bg**,** agungov@yahoo.com

Phone: (+3592) 9308-414 (Bulgaria is within the Eastern European Time Zone)

Mailing address: Department of Philosophy, Sofia University, 15 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., Sofia 1504, BULGARIA.

Information about the Authors and Editors

Dr. habil. Jerard BenSussan is Professor at the Department of Philosophy, University of Strasbourg, France, the EU.

Dr. habil. Jacob Rogozinski is Professor at the Department of Philosophy, University of Strasbourg, France, the EU.

Dr. habil. Maria Dimitrova is Associate Professor at the School of Philosophy, University of Sofia, Bulgaria, the EU.

Dr. habil. Sergey Gherdjikov is Professor at the School of Philosophy, University of Sofia, Bulgaria, the EU.

Dr. Temenuga Trifonova is Assistant Professoor at the Department of Film Studies, York University, Toronto, CANADA.

Dr. Ernst Wolf is Associatte Professor at the Department of Philosophy, University of Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA.

Dr. Ernest Wolf-Gazo is Professor at the Department of Philosophy, American University in Cairo, Egypt.

Dr. Vassiliki Tsakiri is Visiting Leeturer at the University of Patras and Assoc. Leeturer at the Hellenic Open University, Greece, the EU.

Dr. Adam Rosen-Carole is Visitng Assistant Professor at Bard College, New York, the USA.

Mr. Myroslav Feodosijevič Hryschko is a PhD candidate at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, the EU.

Dr. Alexander Gungov is Associate Professor at the School of Philosophy and Director of the Graduate Program in Philosophy Taught in English, University of Sofia, Bulgaria, the EU.

Dr. Peter Borkowski is Lecturer at the Department of Rhetoric and Academic Writing, American University in Cairo, EGYPT.

Mr. Karim Mamdani is an independent scholar residing in Toronto, CANADA.

Dr. Kristina Stöckl is Marie Curie Post–doctoral Research Fellow, Department of Philosophical Research, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy, the EU.

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Alexander L. Gungov, University of Sofia, Editor
Peter S. Borkowski, American University in Cairo, Associate Editor
Karim Mamdani, Sofia University, Book Review Editor
Kristina Stöckl, University of Innsbruck, International Editor
Aglika A. Gungova, Artist

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