

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

IDENTITY, FECUNDITY, SUBSTITUTION:
DEVELOPING JUSTICE THROUGH LEVINAS' ETHICS

A Dissertation in

Philosophy

by

Peter J. Giannopoulos

© 2017 Peter J. Giannopoulos

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2017

The dissertation of Peter J. Giannopoulos was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Robert L. Bernasconi
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Philosophy and African American Studies
Dissertation Advisor
Chair of Committee

Leonard R. Lawlor
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Philosophy

Brady Bowman
Associate Professor of Philosophy

Allan Stoekl
Professor of French and Comparative Literature (Emeritus)

Amy Allen
Liberal Arts Research Professor of Philosophy and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality
Studies
Department Head

*Signatures on file in the Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

My primary thesis is that Levinas' central question is: Who must I be in order to be for another? He poses it as a challenge to both egoism and altruism. If egoism motivates my response to another in need, then I never really depart from concern for my being. By contrast, altruism threatens the loss of my identity if it means the outright denial of myself for another. If I seek to maintain some sense of myself through my altruism, it is far from clear how *I* can motivate a *denial* of myself without at once *affirming* myself. Thus altruism does not resolve the problem raised by egoism but simply affirms my egoism. Egoism and altruism, then, are only apparently alternatives. They are built on the same model of personal identity, in which what the I gives to another returns to it. Such an economic exchange never departs from concern for my being.

Levinas proposes in its place an account of identity in which the self is for another. That this is Levinas' central concern becomes clear in his second major work, *Otherwise than Being*, which is largely neglected by commentators who tend to confine themselves to his first, *Totality and Infinity*. One major consequence of my approach is that it establishes the basis on which Levinas breaks from a symmetrical account of justice in which all must be treated equally. That account maintains a model of identity built on self-reference and return to self, not self for another. Levinas' notion of justice preserves the ethical asymmetry he sees in the ethical relation.

Two pillars frame my reading. First is Levinas' engagement with anti-Semitic racism. Many commentators have neglected his early critique of the failed political responses of liberalism and Marxist communitarianism to Hitlerism and racial eugenics.

From these critiques identity emerges as the problem and key that drives his ethics. I show how Levinas further refines his account of identity with Husserl's transcendental subjectivity and Heidegger's Dasein in mind. Second is Derrida's reading of Levinas' thought. His "Violence and Metaphysics" (1964) presents Levinas with certain philosophical challenges, which I read and explain through Husserl's phenomenology. This in part drives a change in Levinas' ethical language, argument, and exposition from his first to his second major work. Part of my challenge to commentators is that I place the largely ignored *Otherwise than Being* into dialogue with *Totality and Infinity* by showing how the former responds to Derrida. The task is to show how Levinas retrieves his earlier concerns about racism and identity and adapts them to reply to Derrida in *Otherwise than Being*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
A. Levinas' Central Question and Three Tasks for Understanding Levinas' <i>Otherwise than Being</i> as a Response to Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics"	3
B. Plan of the Present Work	6
 CHAPTER 1. DERRIDA'S PHILOSOPHY AT THE TIME OF THE CLOSURE OF METAPHYSICS AND THE STRATEGY OF DOUBLE READING IN HIS "GENESIS AND STRUCTURE' AND PHENOMENOLOGY" AND "THE ENDS OF MAN"	11
A. Preliminaries: Derrida's Double Reading of Levinas and Levinas' Response	12
B. The "Debate" between Closure and Opening in Husserl's Thought: Derrida's "Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology"	14
(i.) The Thing Itself as an Idea in the Kantian Sense in Husserl's <i>Ideas I</i>	23
(ii) The Focus of the Double Reading: Reason as Idea in a Kantian Sense	30
C. Metaphysics, Anthropological Teleology, and Philosophy at the Time of the Closure: The "Subterranean Necessity" in Derrida's "The Ends of Man"	40
(i.) Metaphysics' Prescription: Anthropological Teleology and the We in Hegel's Dialectic of Knowing and in Husserl's Transcendental Historicity	45
(ii.) Metaphysics' Prescription: Anthropological Teleology and the We in Heidegger's Question of Being and Truth of Being	52
(iii.) Two Strategies of Deconstruction, the Path of Interiority and the Path of Exteriority, and Derrida's Response	62
Conclusion	66
 CHAPTER 2. HISTORY, TRANSCENDENCE, AND THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OF THE INFINITELY OTHER: THE CHALLENGE OF DERRIDA'S "VIOLENCE AND METAPHYSICS"	69
PART ONE. PUTTING TRANSCENDENCE TO THE TEST:	
THE PROBLEMS OF HISTORY AND LANGUAGE	73
A. Athens or Jerusalem? Transcendence, History, and the Injunction for Philosophy at the Closure in Derrida's Opening Remarks	74
B. Transcendence, Trace, and Philosophy at the Closure	81
C. How Derrida Writes with Two Hands, Face and Trace, at Once. Should It Have Led Him to a "Rehabilitation" of the Trace? Or Is It Part of the Strategy of Double Reading?	87
D. History, Language, and "Structural Totality": The Challenge to Levinas' Notion of Transcendence	105

(i.) Levinas' Conceptions of History and Language as Derrida Presents Them: The Question of Origin	106
(ii.) History and the "Idea of Peace": The Question of End. Is Levinas' Discourse an Irresponsible Discourse?	110
(iii.) Transcendence, "Structural Totality", and Writing: Derrida's Conception of History in "Violence and Metaphysics"	116
PART TWO. THE PROBLEM OF THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OF THE INFINITELY OTHER	126
E. How Husserl's Transcendental Legitimation of the Alter Ego Justifies the Right to Speak of an Infinitely Other	127
F. Derrida's Three Counter-Arguments to Levinas' Reading of Husserl's Theory of Intersubjectivity and the Resources Derrida Develops for Responding to the Problem of Philosophy at the Time of the Closure	133
(i.) First Argument: from Husserl's Notion of "Originary Nonpresence"	133
(ii.) Second Argument: from Husserl's Notion of Analogical Appresentation	137
(iii.) Third Argument: from Husserl's Notion of the Form of the Ego	145
Conclusion	150

CHAPTER 3. IS SOCIAL-POLITICAL LIFE A PROJECT FOR RACIAL EUGENICS?

HOW LEVINAS' EARLY POLITICAL COMMENTARIES SHAPE HUMAN IDENTITY

AS THE PROBLEM AND KEY DRIVING HIS SUBSEQUENT THOUGHT	154
A. Hitlerism, Human Identity, and Racism	156
B. A Live, Unsettled Question: Is Politics a Project for Applied Eugenics?	162
C. The "Tragedy of the Individual Opposed to Universal Life": Eugenics, the Politics of State Racism, and Identity in Levinas' Reading of Carrel	167
(i.) Racism and the Individual's Salvation	172
(ii.) Christianity and the Individual's Salvation	173
(iii.) Liberal Democracy and the Individual's Salvation	179
D. The Political Context of Structures "Beyond the Face": Family "Outside" the State	181
Conclusion	185

CHAPTER 4. INTELLIGIBILITY AND INFINITY BEYOND BEING:

FROM IDENTITY WITHOUT IDENTITY IN *FROM EXISTENCE TO THE EXISTENT*

TO SUBJECTIVITY AND PROXIMITY IN <i>OTHERWISE THAN BEING</i>	187
A. An Overview of Transcendence in <i>From Existence to the Existent</i> and <i>Totality and Infinity</i>	190
B. Two Themes for Reading <i>From Existence to the Existent</i> : The Plan for Parts One and Two	192

PART ONE. FIRST THEME: DOUBLE POSSESSION.

FROM THE I'S IDENTITY IN *FROM EXISTENCE TO THE EXISTENT*

TO THE OTHER-IN-THE-SAME, OR SUBJECTIVITY IN <i>OTHERWISE THAN BEING</i>	195
C. A Terminological Primer for Levinas' Proto-Ontology	195
(i.) A Note on Methods: From Intentional Analysis to Ethical Language	197
D. The Refusal "in" Lassitude and the Need to Escape	200
E. Fatigue, Experience, and the Immemorial	203
F. The Other-in-the-Same, or the Ordeal of Subjectivity, in <i>From Existence to the Existent</i>	206
(i.) The Embodied Self as the Key to Understanding the Other-in-the-Same	207
(ii.) Two Views of the Subject: Double Possession as a Framework for Conceiving the Relation between the Major Works, <i>Totality and Infinity</i> and <i>Otherwise than Being</i>	210
(iii.) The Ordeal of Subjectivity. Subject as Host in <i>Totality and Infinity</i> and Subject as Hostage in <i>Otherwise than Being</i>	213
(iv.) Does Levinas' Intend to Offer a Transcendental Legitimation of Ego and Infinitely Other? A Partial Response to Derrida's Double Reading	218
PART TWO. SECOND THEME: RUPTURE FROM AND REFASTENING TO BEING.	
PROXIMITY AND IDENTITY WITHOUT IDENTITY IN <i>FROM EXISTENCE TO THE EXISTENT</i>	223
G. The Structure of Proximity in <i>From Existence to the Existent</i>	229
(i.) The Affective Residue of Proximity: Disturbance	230
(ii.) Fatigue as Disturbance in <i>From Existence to the Existent</i>	233
H. Concrete Transcendence or A Beyond Being? How Identity Without Identity Offers a Formula for Non-Ontological Intelligibility	236
(i.) Intelligibility and a Beyond Being in Levinas, Kant, and Husserl	239
(ii.) A Closer Examination: Concrete Transcendence and a Beyond Being through Trace and Fecundity	241
(iii.) A Formula that Makes a Beyond Being Intelligible: Identity without Identity	245
I. Sensation: Enduring Patiently	249
J. Three Features of the I's Identity in <i>From Existence to the Existent</i> that Bridge to the Identity of Ipseity in "Substitution"	256
(i.) First Feature: Non-Coincidence	259
(ii.) Second Feature: Recurrence on This Side	260
(iii.) Third Feature: Concern, Despite Myself, For Another	263
Conclusion	265

CHAPTER 5. FROM FECUNDITY TO FRATERNITY:

THE RESOURCES IN THE FAMILY FOR RESPONDING TO HITLERIAN

ANTI-SEMITIC RACISM AND TOTALITARIANISM IN *TOTALITY AND INFINITY*

A. The First Conclusion of <i>Totality and Infinity</i> : "From the Like to the Same [<i>Du pareil au Môme</i>]"	271
---	-----

B. The “Jewish Question”, 1946-47	275
(i.) Sartre’s Response to the Jewish Question in <i>Réflexions sur la question juive: The Identity of the Like</i>	277
(ii.) Levinas’ Dialectical Response: The Displacement of the “Jewish Question”	282
(iii.) The Meaning, Beyond the Fact of Being, of Jewish Facticity: Reference to Another Who Pardons. A Bridge to <i>Totality and Infinity</i>	287
C. “[P]olitics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself”: The I’s Fecundity as a Response to Hitlerism and also to Totalitarianism	298
(i.) The Problem of the Closure Revisited: Trace and “Infinite being, that is, always recommencing being...”	303
§ 1. Trace and the “Idea of Infinity in Us”	304
§ 2. Trace and the “Always” of Time	307
§ 3. Trace and the <i>Experience</i> of Infinity: From the I’s Fecundity to the Ethical Language of <i>Otherwise than Being</i>	310
§ 4. Trace and Ambiguity: An “Affectivity that is Transcendence”	319
(ii.) The Dialectic Filiality and Fraternity	325
§ 1. Fraternity in <i>From Existence to the Existent</i> : The Need for Filiality	327
§ 2. Refastening to History “in a Nation”: A Troubling Passage in <i>Totality and Infinity</i>	329
§ 3. How is the Family Possible? Paternal Love and the Meaning of Asymmetry in Filial Being	332
§ 4. From a Father’s Son to Solidarity with Others: Equality Wrought from Asymmetry	335
§ 5. Transcendence, Justice, and the “Unjustifiable” Identity of Ipseity in <i>Otherwise than Being</i>	339
CONCLUSION	344
BIBLIOGRAPHY	347

ABBREVIATIONS

Carrel, Alexis

- HI *L'homme, cet inconnu*. Paris: Plon, 1935.
 MU *Man, the Unknown*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935.

Derrida, Jacques

- ED *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris, France: Seuil, 1967.
 DG *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Minuit, 1967.
 M *Marges de la philosophie*. Paris: Minuit, 1972.
 WD *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
 MP *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.
 A *Adieu: À Emmanuel Lévinas*. Paris, France: Editions Galilée, 1997.
 VP *La voix et le phénomène*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989.
 OG *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
 AEL *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
 VaP *Voice and Phenomenon*. Trans. Leonard Lawlor. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011.

Heidegger, Martin

- BT *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Cambridge: Blackwell, 2003.
 SZ *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 2006.

Husserl, Edmund

- Ideen I* [a] *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch*, volume I. *Husserliana III/1*. Ed. Walter Biemel. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950.
Ideen I [b] *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch*, volume I. *Husserliana III/1*. Ed. Karl Schuhmann. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976.
Ideas I *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. F. Kersten. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983.

Levinas, Emmanuel

- EA “*Existentialisme et antisémitisme*”. *L'cahier de Alliance israélite*

- universelle. Vol. 14-15 (June-July 1947): 2-3.
- RPL “La substitution” in *Revue philosophique du Louvain* 66:89 (February 1968): 487-508.
- AE *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.
- TI *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l’extériorité*. Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984.
- DL *Difficile Liberté*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1983.
- DC “The Trace of the Other” in *Deconstruction in Context*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Ed. Marc C. Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986: 345-59.
- EL *Emmanuel Levinas: Qui êtes-vous? Interview with François Poirié*. Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987: 63-136.
- DF *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Trans. Seán Hand. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- RPH “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”. Trans. by Seán Hand. *Critical Inquiry* 17:1 (1990:Autumn): 62-71.
- CH *Emmanuel Levinas: Cahier de l’Herne*. Eds. Catherine Chalié and Miguel Abensour. Paris: L’Herne, 1991, 151-52.
- EN *Entre nous Essais sur le penser-à-l’autre*. Paris: Grasset, 1991.
- BPW *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Eds. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- DE *De l’évasion*. Paris, France: Librairie générale française, 1998.
- ENTO *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- EAS “Existentialism and Anti-Semitism”. Trans. Denis Hollier and Rosalind Krauss. *October*. Vol. 87 (Winter, 1999), 27-31.
- EE *Existence and Existents*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001.
- IRB *Is it Righteous to Be?* Ed. Jill Robbins. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- OE *On Escape*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- EJ “Être juif”. *Cahiers d’Études levinassiennes* 1 (2003): 99-106.
- TaI *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005.
- QRPH *Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l’hitlérisme*. Ed. Miguel Abensour. Paris: Rivages Poche, 2006.
- BJ “Being Jewish”. Trans. Mary Beth Mader. *Continental Philosophy Review* 40 (2007): 205-10.
- OB *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2008.
- Carnets* *Œuvres I: Carnets de captivité et autres inédits*. Eds. Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalié. Paris, France: Grasset et Fasquelle / IMEC, 2009.

EDE *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*. Paris: Vrin, 2010.

Sartre, Jean-Paul

RQJ *Réflexions sur la question juive*. Paris: Gallimard, 1987.

EN *L'être et le néant*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990.

BN *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel Barnes. New York: Washington
Square Press, 1992.

ASJ *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Trans. George J. Becker. New York: Schocken
Books, 1995.

INTRODUCTION

The present work stems from the motivation to develop the notion of justice in Levinas' philosophy, particularly in his two major works, *Totalité et infini* (*Totality and Infinity*, 1961) and *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 1974). This entails specifying the relation of justice to his ethics. In his major works, the discussion of justice always proceeds in conjunction with the description of his ethical notions, demonstrating that this relation occupied Levinas himself. His earliest philosophical essays and political commentaries on Hitlerism's rise in Europe in the 1930s set this occupation. Hitlerian racism's violently reductive view of a human being's identity is the basis for its political philosophy. Identity, the relation of I and embodied self, is the existential and philosophical problem that drives the development of Levinas' ethical notions subsequently. It is through exposition and analysis of Levinas' notion of identity that one can bring the relation of justice and ethics in his mature philosophy into view.

Yet even to the casual reader that there is an apparent sea change in Levinas' ethical language, argument, and exposition between *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*. On my view, Derrida's systematic engagement of Levinas' philosophy in his "*Violence et métaphysique. Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas*" ("Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas") accounts in good measure for this change. Derrida publishes "Violence and Metaphysics" in 1964 and

republishes it, with significant revisions and additions, in his volume *L'écriture et la différence* (*Writing and Difference*) in 1967. To introduce the main claim of this essay briefly, where Levinas speaks of a beyond being, such as infinity or an other that absolves itself of relation with the same, Derrida points out that the very language of philosophy, ontology, undermines his intentions. Derrida identifies this as the problem of philosophy at the closure of metaphysics.

To respond in *Otherwise than Being* to the problems Derrida's reading presents, Levinas does not draw from the ethical relation upon which commentators tend to focus in *Totality and Infinity*, the face to face with another human being. He rather draws from his earlier descriptions of the I and embodied self. These are descriptions that he first formulated with Hitlerian racism in mind, and then shortly after with Husserl's transcendental subjectivity and Heidegger's Dasein in view. Therefore, to understand how Levinas responds to Derrida, one must show how he retrieves, adapts, and integrates the problem of identity into the argument of *Otherwise than Being* and show, further, how this argument leads to the major ethical notions of the second major work.

This interpretive route does not leave Levinas' first major work to one side. Rather, reading the argument and conceptual innovations of *Otherwise than Being* in this way illuminates deep points of connection with certain formal and concrete structures described in *Totality and Infinity*, particularly those that relate ethics to justice. That this has for the most part gone hitherto unseen among commentators testifies principally to the narrative that has built up around *Totality and Infinity*. According to this narrative, an actual encounter with the face of the other, destitute, hungry, etc., disarms me of my egoism, puts my freedom to shame, and calls me to her aid. This narrative, however, invites

precisely the transactional model of ethics Levinas seeks to address: in giving another aid, I get something in return. My egoism reinstalls itself with my good conscience. Nonetheless, the vast secondary literature on *Totality and Infinity* rests largely on this ready to hand reading, even as the encounter with the face is absent from *Otherwise than Being*. Lacking a developed framework for the two major works, commentators have tended either to isolate or neglect the second altogether. One must begin to articulate this framework on the basis of Levinas' central ethical question.

A. Levinas' Central Question and Three Tasks for Understanding Levinas'

***Otherwise than Being* as a Response to Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics"**

My primary thesis is that Levinas' central question is: Who must I be in order to be for another? He poses it as a challenge to both egoism and altruism. If egoism motivates my response to another in need, then I never really depart from concern for my being. By contrast, altruism threatens the loss of my identity if it means the outright denial of myself for another. If I seek to maintain some sense of myself through my altruism, it is far from clear how *I* can motivate a *denial* of myself without at once *affirming* myself. Thus altruism does not resolve the problem raised by egoism but simply affirms my egoism. Egoism and altruism, then, are only apparently alternatives. They are built on the same model of personal identity, in which what the I gives to another returns to it. Such an economic exchange never departs from concern for my being. Levinas proposes in its place an account of identity in which the self is for another. That this is Levinas' central concern becomes clear in *Otherwise than Being*.

In order to put the two major works into dialogue with one another, the first task is to show how Levinas addresses his central question through the description of

structures in *Totality and Infinity* that commentators either criticize or undervalue. For Levinas, the ways family members relate to one another are a locus for the production of the I's identity outside the state and its institutions. On the one hand, fecundity, a father's responsibility for his son, and, on the other hand, fraternity, solidarity with others and the demand of justice for the oppressed, each offers a concrete account of identity in which the self is for another.

The second task is to show how Levinas' earlier engagement with Hitlerism in large part motivates these descriptions. Where the I is reduced, without the possibility of escape, to its embodied being, there Levinas formulates the desideratum of his philosophy, transcendence: the human existent's "...departure [*sortie*] from being and from the categories which describe it" while maintaining a "foothold in being" (DEE 9,EE xxvii). He conceives transcendence beyond being, then, as an intra-mundane affair. Concretely, it is responsibility for another, such as when a parent substitutes herself for her child, despite materially scarce relations, without concern for herself. By keeping Levinas' central question in view, one sees how *Totality and Infinity's* fecundity is the forerunner of the principal ethical notion of *Otherwise than Being*, substitution.

The fulfillment of these tasks may bring *Totality and Infinity* into dialogue with *Otherwise than Being* but it does not yet account for why the conceptual innovations of the latter seemed necessary to Levinas. The third and final task is to identify the problems that the framework of Derrida's exposition in "Violence and Metaphysics" imposes on Levinas. That only few commentators have attempted to measure this impact has further hindered the development of the notions of *Otherwise than Being*, leaving the secondary literature still largely determined by the vocabulary of *Totality and Infinity*. The question

Derrida draws for us from his systematic exposition of Levinas' thought is how transcendence toward a beyond being or an infinitely other is possible, intelligible, or even able to be said in a discourse that has only ever spoken of beings or known being in a mediated way.

In response, Levinas will in *Otherwise than Being* deepen his claim about transcendence and its concretion in fecundity through a notion he introduces explicitly in 1963, the trace. The point will be to show how, as Levinas puts it already in the Preface of *Totality and Infinity*, infinity or the “beyond” the totality and objective experience “...is reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience” (TI xi, TaI 23). Consequently, the argument of *Otherwise than Being* will no longer be dominated by the ready to hand narrative I sketched above, where another's face dispossesses me of my egoism and property. It will rather argue, through the very exposition of a new ethical terminology, that identity is structured primarily as the-one-for-the-other of substitution. To explain this differently, by retrieving the ontological descriptions of the I and embodied self from his earlier work, Levinas will argue that my very claim to a personal identity *already* dispossesses me of my interest in being. My very claim to an identity that is mine makes me responsible for another's destitution. In being, I am both for my being and beyond it.

Conceiving human identity and the major ethical notions of *Otherwise than Being* through the trace, Levinas repudiates the framework in which Derrida tries to capture his thought. He does not do so straightforwardly, as in, presenting each of Derrida's claims, followed by analysis, and then by refutation. Rather Levinas shows how the notion of the trace already presents a response to the very framework that characterizes Derrida's

reading, the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics. If one takes one lesson from the reading Derrida conducts of Levinas' works in "Violence and Metaphysics", it is this problem: every metaphysical text by necessity transgresses metaphysics and, by this very transgression, is recaptured by metaphysics. With the trace, Levinas poses the problem of the closure and responds to it.

These three tasks, which the present work sets out to perform primarily by uncovering the resources upon which Levinas will draw to respond to Derrida, strongly integrates *Totality and Infinity* with *Otherwise than Being*. If it is successful, it will specify the relation of Levinas' understanding of justice to his ethical notions. One major consequence of this approach is that it establishes the basis on which Levinas breaks from a symmetrical account of justice in which all must be treated equally. That account maintains a model of identity built on self-reference and return to self, not self for another. Levinas' notion of justice preserves the ethical asymmetry he sees in the ethical relation.

B. Plan of the Present Work

A brief presentation of the plan for each chapter of this work shows how I intend to bring the relation of justice and ethics in Levinas' mature philosophy into view.

I devote Chapters 1 and 2 to expositions of Derrida's philosophy around the time of *Writing and Difference*, whereas the description and analysis of how the human existent's identity is produced in Levinas' philosophy is the central focus of Chapters 3 through 5.

Chapter 1 presents the notions important to setting the stage for Derrida's interpretation of Levinas' texts in "Violence and Metaphysics". I cover two essays in

particular, Derrida's reading of Husserl in "*Genèse et Structure' et la Phénoménologie*" ("Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology"), and his reading of Hegel and especially of Heidegger in "*Les fins de l'homme*" ("The Ends of Man"). By means of these readings I define the important notions of the metaphysics of presence and the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics. What will be of particular value in my analysis of "Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" is Derrida's reading of Husserl's Idea in the Kantian sense. I argue that Husserl, by conceiving the thing of perception as an Idea, provides a way to conceive an actual infinity in experience (albeit for which one can only have inadequate evidence). This will be important in Chapter 5 when I describe infinity "*within experience*" in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* (TI xi, TaI 23). From my analysis of "The Ends of Man", the two strategies of deconstruction for responding to the problem of the closure as well as Derrida's own response will be of particular significance.

In my view, "Violence and Metaphysics" exercises a seminal influence on the formulation of these strategies because it is by means of a double reading of Levinas' texts that Derrida first specifies the problem of the closure. Chapter 2 is a presentation of the problems "Violence and Metaphysics" bequeaths to Levinas and outlines the resources upon which Levinas will rely to respond. In Derrida's estimation, Husserl's phenomenology remains tied to a metaphysics of presence and without resources to respond to the problem of the closure. If, in the final analysis, Levinas' thought escapes this fate, then "Violence and Metaphysics" should not be understood merely as a work of criticism, as some commentators have it. Rather, it demonstrates the textual practice of double reading. On the one hand, Derrida shows that the infinity beyond being that

transcendence involves is “unthinkable, impossible, unutterable” (ED 168,WD 114). Levinas’ notion of transcendence thereby illustrates the problem of belonging to metaphysics and breaking through it, or the problem of the closure (ED 163,WD 110). On the other hand, Derrida recognizes that the encounter with the other is “*present* at the heart of experience” not, he continues, as “total presence” but as a “*trace*” (ED 142,WD 95). With the trace, Derrida acknowledges a resource “*within* language” not merely for posing but for responding to the problem of the closure, even if he himself does not recognize in “Violence and Metaphysics” how it operates implicitly in Levinas’ thought (ED 163,WD 110). That Derrida maintains these two positions is demonstrative of double reading, and not of critique.

Chapter 3 changes terrain not only from an exposition of Derrida’s philosophy in the mid- to late 1960s and its relevance for Levinas’ subsequent thought but also to an earlier period. In the 1930s and 1940s, Levinas engages the philosophical underpinnings of Hitlerian anti-Semitic racism. I argue that Levinas’ early political and philosophical commentaries set the trajectory for his philosophical agenda, which entails in part reconceiving the relation between ethics and justice. His early concerns about politics and racial eugenics culminate in the descriptions of how identity is accomplished outside the framework of the state and in the family in *Totality and Infinity*. This sets up my argument and exposition in Chapter 5. Many commentators have neglected his early critique of the failed political responses of liberalism and Marxist communitarianism to Hitlerism. Importantly, from his interpretation of Hitlerian racism and the shortcomings of these responses identity emerges as the problem and key that drives his philosophy, crystallizing in the central question I presented above. His early political and philosophical

commentaries are therefore integral to understanding and developing Levinas' notion of justice.

Chapter 4 picks up the problems of Chapter 2, where I presented philosophy at the time of the closure through Derrida's double reading of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics". I examine Levinas' descriptions of embodied selfhood in his 1947 book *De l'existence à l'existant* (*From Existence to the Existent*) through the lens of key ethical notions he develops later in *Otherwise than Being*. My main claim is that Derrida's challenging reading draws Levinas back to his earlier philosophy, particularly to the descriptions of the I's identity and the meaning of the embodied self in *From Existence to the Existent*, in order to formulate the argument and conduct its exposition in *Otherwise than Being*. A primary thesis that he retrieves from the earlier work for the later is that, for a human existent to establish a personal identity, what is beyond being flashes *in* being. Implicitly at work in the earlier book is the very notion Derrida acknowledges as a resource to respond to the problem of the closure, the trace.

The present work culminates in integrating Levinas' two major works and in depicting the notion of justice that emerges from his philosophy in Chapter 5. I focus on the descriptions of how identity is produced concretely as self for another in relations between family members. The proper context for understanding these descriptions is Levinas' earlier concern to develop a response to the threat that social and political life is becoming a project for racial eugenics. I argue, moreover, that fecundity in *Totality and Infinity* is the forerunner of substitution in *Otherwise than Being*, which few commentators have noticed. Understanding fecundity through Levinas' notion of the trace, where there is an experience of infinity of a *certain* sort, is key to this argument

and underscores how Levinas will respond to Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics" in his second major work. Finally, the dialectic of filiality and fraternity, as I call it, shows that ethical responsibility is inseparable from the demands of justice. If my account is persuasive, then what comes into scope is how Levinas conceives the relation of responsibility for another and justice for many.

CHAPTER 1.

DERRIDA’S PHILOSOPHY AT THE TIME OF THE CLOSURE OF METAPHYSICS AND THE STRATEGY OF DOUBLE READING IN HIS “‘GENESIS AND STRUCTURE’ AND PHENOMENOLOGY” AND “THE ENDS OF MAN”

I understand Levinas’ second major work, *Otherwise than Being*, as primarily a response to the challenging reading of his thought that Derrida’s essay “Violence and Metaphysics” offers.¹ Without a proper understanding of the problems with which Derrida’s essay leaves him, any commentaries on Levinas’ later work, and particularly *Otherwise than Being*, are incomplete. I argue, further, that the force of these problems alter Levinas’ philosophical trajectory such that its arc cannot be understood without a robust understanding of Derrida’s philosophy around the period of writing “Violence and Metaphysics”. One may understand these problems as variations of one central argument in that essay. Levinas’ description of the ethical relation to the Other is “unthinkable, impossible, unutterable” in the language he must use to describe it, the language of ontology, or philosophy (ED 168, WD 114). The experience of this ethical relation presupposes discourse, which reduces the Other to the Same. The consequence of this argument is that transcendence—the desideratum of Levinas’ philosophy—fails.

Over the course of this chapter and the next, I examine these points in detail and explain their relevance. As a general point of orientation in the philosophy Derrida is developing in the years immediately preceding his book *Writing and Difference*,

¹ Levinas publishes *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* in 1974. Derrida first publishes “*Violence et*

however, the following remark may be helpful. Derrida first publishes “Violence and Metaphysics” in 1964, revising and making significant additions to the essay for inclusion in *Writing and Difference* in 1967. These two occasions for a systematic encounter with Levinas’ thought give Derrida occasion to identify and describe the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, the leading framework of deconstruction as a textual practice during this period of Derrida’s writing. It is not as easy as saying that, by such a formulation as the closure of metaphysics, Derrida would understand the *end* or *eclipse* of metaphysics. Rather, philosophy at the time of the closure means that the metaphysical claims of every text necessarily transgress metaphysics, on the one hand, and that every attempt to break from metaphysics is recaptured in it on account of the very language one must use, on the other hand (ED 163, WD 110-11). Derrida’s interest in “Violence and Metaphysics” lies in the first place in how Levinas’ thought poses the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure and not in criticizing Levinas’ attempts (as one may, misguidedly, understand them) to break from metaphysics. I shall have further opportunity to revisit this in the next section and as it concerns the development of Derrida’s philosophy through his reading of Levinas in Chapter 2.

1. A. Preliminaries: Derrida’s Double Reading of Levinas and Levinas’ Response

Derrida’s writing during in the middle to late 1960s period is preoccupied with the notion of the closure (*clôture* or *fermeture*) of metaphysics and with the development of philosophical resources to respond to the time of the closure. Philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics is for Derrida a chief interpretive framework for texts. One of the resources to respond to its challenge is the strategy of double reading, a central

characteristic of deconstruction, which he employs both methodologically to juxtapose two interpretations of a text and productively to displace and move beyond those poles. The double reading of a text shows, in the first instance, that what the text actually does, that is, its very logic, undermines the author's intentions, in particular, his or her claims to have gotten beyond classical metaphysics or ontology. Derrida develops his notion of the closure and his strategy of double reading through engagements with, among others, Husserl and Heidegger. Appropriately, I take up in this chapter two of Derrida's essays, "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" and "The Ends of Man", in order to set up the stakes for "Violence and Metaphysics" in the next chapter.

It is the notion of the closure that allows Derrida to formulate his central argument against Levinas, namely, that transcendence in the ethical relation with the Other cannot be thought, that is not possible, and that it cannot be said in ontological propositions. Levinas titles Chapter 1 of *Otherwise than Being* "The Argument". But it is by no means clear *to whom* he directs his argument, and it is often unclear precisely what the argument *is* and what is *at stake* in it. If this argument sets the stage for the rest of the work, then the work itself is incomprehensible without making these points clear.

The primary claim of Chapter 1 of *Otherwise than Being* is that subjectivity *itself* is already the formal structure of transcendence. Transcendence is concrete in substituting myself for another in responsibility.² Levinas' primary philosophical interlocutor in this regard is Derrida. If this is the case, then it follows that not only Chapter 1 of *Otherwise than Being* but indeed the next four chapters (the bulk of the work), which Levinas titles "The Exposition" (viz., of Chapter 1's argument), are in large part designed to respond to

² "In its *being* subjectivity undoes *essence* by substituting itself for another. Qua one-for-another, it is absorbed in signification, in saying or the verb form of the infinite. Signification precedes essence" (AE 16,OB 13).

the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure and to Derrida's double reading. My reading provides the intellectual resources to interpret the abrupt entry of new "ethical terms", such as the central notion of substitution, in Levinas' works after "Violence and Metaphysics" (RPL 504, BPW 89). He develops this ethical language in *Otherwise than Being* in a way that *retrieves*, as I claim in Chapter 2 and show in Chapter 4, certain themes from his works prior to *Totality and Infinity*, his first major work in 1961. One can hardly underestimate how deep an impact "Violence and Metaphysics" has on Levinas' philosophical trajectory in the works leading up to and including *Otherwise than Being*.

The plan for this chapter is to investigate Derrida's essay "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology", first delivered in 1959, published in 1965 and republished, with revisions and additions, in 1967, and his 1972 essay "The Ends of Man" in order to lay out the main features of the notions of the closure and the accompanying notion of the metaphysics of presence as well as to give an account of double reading, the characteristic strategy of deconstruction. I investigate "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" and "The Ends of Man" with an eye toward explaining what is at stake in the double reading at work in "Violence and Metaphysics" and what problems this double reading bequeaths to Levinas.

1. B. The "Debate" between Closure and Opening in Husserl's Thought: Derrida's "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology"

Derrida begins "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" with, as he puts it, a precaution and a confession. The precaution tries to clarify Husserl's aims in using the operative concepts of structure and genesis in order to preempt a misreading of those

aims, while the confession states Derrida's own, despite the fault lines that await the reader who still insists on entering Husserl's thought with this framework. Derrida cautions against the violence of a reading that imposes "...a debate, a dilemma, or an aporia..." onto Husserl's thought when Husserl himself exerted great effort to avoid such entanglements (ED 229, WD 154). Derrida's framework—already announced in the conjunctive phrase, "Genesis and Structure"—does not mean to introduce a debate over whether Husserl favored structural analyses of static constitution or analyses that sought the genetic constitution of those structures, nor does his reading propose to criticize slippage from one to the other in Husserl's texts. The aim of a deconstructive reading is not criticism.³ Besides, Husserl is careful to employ either one operative concept or the other according to the givens under examination, and indeed plainly marks boundaries in texts like *Ideas I* when the structural analysis opens onto a question of genesis.

Nonetheless, it is precisely how Husserl maintains his discourse at the limit of structure and genesis, of closure and opening, that motivates Derrida's reading. I want to show how this early but twice revised text is instructive for understanding Derrida's notion of the closure of metaphysics, his key interpretive framework, and the primary strategy deconstruction uses to unearth the problem of the closure within the texts he reads, double reading. The notion of the closure of metaphysics describes the historical moment

³ This may be the point at which to introduce a debate in the secondary literature surrounding the question of whether the value of Derrida's reading of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics" lies in his criticisms of Levinas' thought or in Derrida's discovery of his own philosophical voice in and through a systematic encounter with that thought. The best representatives of the former are Leonard Lawlor's *Husserl and Derrida. The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 145-65 and Martin Hägglund's *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) 76-102; of the latter, Robert Bernasconi's Bernasconi's "The Trace of Levinas in Derrida" in *Derrida and Différance*, edited by David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 13-29 and Simon Critchley's *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, third edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 11 and 92-97. Insofar as I state above that the value of a deconstructive reading does not lie merely in its criticisms of the text under analysis, I have already given my position on "Violence and Metaphysics". I substantiate my reasoning and return to this debate in below and in Chapter 2.

of which, on Derrida's reading, philosophy is presently becoming aware. Roughly, the closure connotes the exhaustion of metaphysical concepts and the need to break through their long hegemony. However, philosophy has at its disposal only a language already saturated by metaphysical conceptuality to effect this breakthrough. Philosophy at the time of the closure is the description of this double bind: the need to produce an exit from the metaphysics of presence or logocentric conceptuality and the inability to do so because the very language philosophy must use compromises the attempt. The strategy of double reading in "Violence and Metaphysics" imposes this double binding framework onto Levinas' thought. This casts the dye for Levinas' subsequent philosophical development, particularly his second major work, *Otherwise than Being*, in 1974. Any reading of that work is insufficient without accounting for the impact Derrida has on the development of Levinas' central ethical notions.

For these purposes, it will be important to focus in "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" on how the debate captures Husserl's thought at the time of the closure.⁴ With the bedrock principle of originary evidence, on the one hand, Husserl joins what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence; with the concept of the Idea in a Kantian sense, on the other hand, he undermines this allegiance to metaphysics.⁵ The principle of

⁴ I take it that this narrower aim distinguishes my reading from Lawlor's in his *Husserl and Derrida* 24-33. Lawlor offers a more comprehensive presentation of Derrida's "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology", setting it into a larger argument that tracks how Derrida develops deconstruction by transforming Heidegger's ontology and how this leads to certain Derridean concepts (like *différance*). By contrast, I limit myself to showing how the essay is instructive for understanding Derrida's notion of the closure and the double reading it requires in order to prepare the way for my reading of "Violence and Metaphysics". See also Critchley's analysis of "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" in his *The Ethics of Deconstruction* 63-68.

⁵ With *originary evidence* I refer to the "Principle of All Principles" in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch*, volume I (*Husserliana* volume III, book 1), edited by Karl Schuhmann (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), § 24, 51; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, translated by F. Kersten (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), § 24, 44-45. The "Principle of All Principles" states that that an "*originary presentive intuition [originär gebende Anschauung]*" is a "legitimizing source [*Rechtsquelle*]" of cognition and that

originary evidence is the foundation for analysis proceeding by the operative concept of structure, while the Idea in a Kantian sense marks the opening within a given structure that must proceed by an altogether different operative concept, genesis. Thus Derrida's reading tries to show how by different gestures Husserl maintains himself at the closure: his thought neither belongs entirely to the metaphysics of presence nor does it succeed in breaking away from it. This, *in nuce*, characterizes philosophy at the closure. Derrida's argument digs more deeply than this. The gestures, while superficially different, are in fact related by a "subterranean necessity", as he puts it in "*Les fins de l'homme*" ("The Ends of Man") (M 142, MP 119). Understanding this necessity will be crucial to Derrida's argument in "Violence and Metaphysics". It will call for a new form of writing philosophy by the end of Derrida's 1972 essay "Ends of Man", although this form is already in practice in the first published version of "Violence and Metaphysics" four years prior.

But why did Husserl maintain an aversion to debates like the one between genesis and structure? Typically, the philosopher seeks, Derrida comments, to "...reach a conclusion, that is, to close [*fermer*] the question, to enclose [*clore*] his expectations or his concern in an option, a decision, a solution..." (ED 229, WD 154). To Husserl, this suggests a "speculative or 'dialectical'" attitude that both metaphysicians and empirical scientists share, one rooted in a dogmatic presupposition that imposes certain ontological boundaries onto the field of inquiry. Whether or not the philosopher or empirical scientist is aware of it, the presupposition is really a decision made at the outset that defines the

any such originary data offered in "*intuition* [*Intuition*]" is to be taken simply as what it is presented as given (within attention to the limits of what is there given). Consequently, the truth of any cognition or theory of cognition is its ability to ground itself on an originary presentive intuition. According to Derrida, this founding principle harbors a decision that values the temporal dimension of the presence of the present ("*originary presentive intuition* [*originär gebende Anschauung*]"). This decision is determinative for our understanding of being.

way in which phenomena within his or her field of inquiry appear. Thus the imposition of boundaries or limits to close off a field and distinguish it from an outside is congenital with the initial decision that opens that field. This decision harbors an unarticulated value, namely, that the basis for the proper determination of a being is the temporal modality of the present. On Derrida's reading, Husserl in fact rejoins classical metaphysics on account of this evaluative presupposition, particularly, in prioritizing the value of what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence.⁶ The question that interests Derrida is how things stand vis-à-vis the metaphysics of presence and Husserl's philosophy.

In "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology", Derrida wants to show two things. First, that the debate, operating at a level below what Husserl expressly says,

⁶ The notion of the metaphysics of presence is familiar to many readers of twentieth-century phenomenology, particularly to those readers of Heidegger and Derrida. Like the notion of the closure, it is indispensable to understanding how Derrida organizes many of his double readings in the mid to late 1960s and to understanding how these double readings function. A chief consequence of the closure of metaphysics is that philosophy today finds itself at the historical moment where its conceptual reservoir is exhausted. The ground for this conceptual reservoir is the deceptively simple proposition that identifies truth with presence or the logos. Thus, when Derrida speaks of the metaphysics of presence, he sees it closely associated with his notion of logocentrism. The notion of the metaphysics of presence grows from Derrida's engagement with Heidegger's philosophy leading up to and during this period; thus it bears features of Heidegger's thought, most distinctly its organization around the central question and task of philosophy, the question of the meaning of Being and the task of its reawakening (although Heidegger will not be immune from deconstructive reading, as we will see in "The Ends of Man"). Despite the shortcomings of Derrida's notion, which are well known, I think it is important here to offer a brief summary of the metaphysics of presence. I follow Leonard Lawlor's excellent exposition in his introduction to Derrida's *Voice and Phenomenon* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), xiv-xvi. The metaphysics of presence means that a determination concerning the meaning of Being has been made on the basis of the temporal dimension of the present. The response, therefore, that dominates western metaphysics when it asks about the meaning of Being is that Being means Being-present, or, more concretely, that one can know a being when it meets the conditions of being fully present (an simple example is Plato's so-called Two Worlds doctrine: the Forms or Ideas are the source and beginning of true knowledge, while the finite representations associated with each Idea respectively is derivative or secondary, and therefore lacking). The presence of the present has two aspects: the intuition of a content before one's look or under one's gaze (the present is what is near or proximate) and the form that remains constant across changes in content (the present is repeatable, an ideal-being). Derrida's claim is that an evaluative judgment that prioritizes the presence of the present has been made at the outset of western metaphysics and upheld throughout its many iterations, namely, that the proper end or goal (*telos*) of a being is its full presence. The end is intimately tied, thereby, with the value accorded to presence. The desire for precisely this fulfillment—to capture the full presence of a being—characterizes western metaphysics.

“...regulates and gives its rhythm to the progression of [Husserl’s] description...” and even animates it (ED 232,WD 157). The debate between genesis and structure is that which makes every phenomenological description incomplete, “leaves every major stage of phenomenology unbalanced”, and necessitates the indefinite renewal of reductions. Second, Derrida proposes to test a hypothesis. The debate “appears”, as he tentatively puts his thesis, to cause Husserl to transgress the legitimacy of “purely” descriptive and transcendental claims. Husserl’s thought seems to move toward a “metaphysics of history” organized by “the solid structure of a *Telos*” that would permit him to reappropriate a “wild genesis [translation modified]” of philosophy in general. That genesis promises to give philosophy authority for its claims and authority to the task of phenomenology. This genesis is reason as Idea in a Kantian sense, knowledge of which is the end of philosophy. Husserl’s teleologically oriented metaphysics of history rather resembles the movement of a circle: recovery of a genesis is the end, in the dual sense of finality and of fulfillment, of its structure.⁷ If Derrida’s argument gives one reason enough to suspect that Husserl moves towards a metaphysics of history, then it follows

⁷ Cf. M 145-47,MP 122-23. Between a discussion of Hegel and a substantial discussion of Heidegger in “The Ends of Man”, Derrida briefly discusses Husserl’s teleological reason—history itself for Husserl—once again. The Husserl portion does not substantially depart from what he says at greater length in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” about reason as Idea in a Kantian sense, namely, that it gives philosophy its end (reappropriation or recovery of the genesis) and regulates how phenomenology goes about achieving this end (infinite reductions). But there is one great difference in emphasis, which fits with the theme of the essay: *man*, “...as *animal rationale* who, in his most classical metaphysical determination...”, is the site for this teleological unfolding of reason or history. As in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”, Derrida focuses on the pivotal role the concept of *end* or of *telos* plays. “The end of man (as a factual anthropological limit) is announced to thought from the vantage point of the end of man (as determined opening or the infinite of a *telos*)” (M 147,MP 123). As I read the argument, we have here a relation of opening and closure: the transcendental end of man appears (the “determined opening or the infinite of a *telos*”, i.e., man as Idea in a Kantian sense) *on the condition of* the finite man (the “factual anthropological limit”, i.e., man’s death). In other words, the mortal end of man must be presupposed in order that idealization (repeatability of form), the very opening to the infinite, can appear. Between the two essays, Derrida shifts the grounds of his reading of Husserl’s metaphysics of history from reason as Idea in a Kantian sense to man (qua rational animal) as Idea in a Kantian sense. This is not a major departure from “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”, only a deepening of the same argument, as I show below.

that Husserl's thought accommodates itself "...less and less to phenomenological apriorism and to transcendental idealism". While the concept of the Idea in a Kantian permits Husserl's thought to break through the metaphysics of presence, Husserl's employment of the Idea in a teleological narrative about the history of reason seems to entangle his thought once again. Let me unfold this in a bit more detail.

When Husserl confronts the question of opening within a constitutive analysis of structure, he decides to uphold the value of presence and undercuts it in the same stroke. The end or the *Telos* of the structure, what does not belong to it, is in fact its genesis. Therefore the end of a structural analysis, in the dual sense of its finality and its fulfillment, is the recovery of the genesis itself. The "wild genesis" of philosophy is reason as Idea in the Kantian sense. While I will explain this in more detail below, I want to mark here how, on Derrida's reading, the concept of genesis is overdetermined in Husserl, in the sense that it demonstrates how Husserl's phenomenology neither entirely belongs to metaphysics nor is able to break free of it. The Idea in a Kantian sense opens the phenomenologist onto the experience of the infinity in the life-world. This calls for the practical task that brings phenomenology closer to knowledge of the thing itself, the task of infinite reductions of sense.⁸ In terms of the metaphysics of history that Derrida is emphasizing in his reading of Husserl, this thing is reason itself. Reason is philosophy's ultimate end and "wild genesis", whose reappropriation calls the phenomenologist to the practical task of infinite reductions.⁹ Naming the genesis of philosophy reason as Idea in

⁸ See the discussion of "The reduction of sense [*sens*; translation modified]" at the end of the essay "The Ends of Man" (M 161-62, MP 134). The reduction of sense is one of the "general rubrics" that, according to Derrida, characterize French thought today in relation to the thinking of humanism or philosophical anthropology at the time of the closure of metaphysics. For a helpful discussion, see Lawlor 41.

⁹ To be clear, on Derrida's reading of Husserl, "...reason is history, and there is no history but of reason" (M 146, MP 122). Philosophy in general in Husserl, then, would be the recovery of and knowledge of its wild genesis, reason as Idea in the Kantian sense.

a Kantian sense bears features both of the metaphysics of presence and of what cannot be defined within that orbit. To begin with the latter first, the notion of a thing as Idea in a Kantian sense undermines the great vestige of the metaphysics of presence and principle of phenomenology, the “...*original self-evidence* and *presence* of the thing itself in person...”, i.e., Husserl’s “Principle of All Principles” (ED 244, WD 164).¹⁰ While a thing as Idea in a Kantian sense is a necessary presupposition of the continuous and synthetic experience of perception, one only ever has inadequate evidence for it. Yet, as his thought tends toward a teleologically oriented “metaphysics of history”, Husserl understands *reason*, not a thing of perception, as an Idea in a Kantian sense. This would mean that the idea of the “*perfect givenness*” and unity of reason that must be presupposed in order to do philosophy (*Ideen I* § 143, 331, *Ideas I* § 143, 342). The desire to “reappropriate” the “wild genesis” of philosophy, reason itself, then, is little more than another iteration of a dogmatic metaphysics that seeks to make reason present to itself, or, in other words, seeks reason’s self-recognition in the presence of the present.

A debate like this one—whether phenomenology confines itself to the static investigation of structures or whether it ventures into their constitution and genesis—is just what Husserl carefully tries to avoid. But Derrida’s interest in the relation between structure and genesis in Husserl’s phenomenology is not merely commentary (e.g., faithful exegesis), nor is it merely critical (e.g., to show an illicit move or a slippage in the analysis from the operative concept of structure to that of genesis). Rather his interest lies in explaining *why* this debate, dilemma, or aporia, between structure and genesis appears to Husserl, and even more forcefully to his readers (like Derrida), *by necessity*.

¹⁰ This partial quote is from an important addition to the 1965 published version of “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” for inclusion in the 1967 publication of *Writing and Difference*. I discuss it at greater length below.

One can render, as I have already indicated, this debate more generally as the question of belonging to the tradition of western metaphysics, on the one hand, and breaking through it, on the other. This is the question of philosophy at the closure. It is the dominant lens through which Derrida investigates texts during this period of his writing. Philosophy at the time of the closure requires a specific kind of strategy in order to formulate a response that would displace or neutralize the double bind belonging-breakthrough. This strategy, already on display in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”, particularly in its revisions for inclusion in the publication of *Writing and Difference* (1967), is double reading.¹¹

Double reading, the characteristic strategy of deconstruction as a textual practice, interweaves two motifs: first, that of commentary, which follows closely and repeats the text’s stated intention or the text’s dominant interpretation; second, within and through the repetition, to leave the plane of commentary and expose the text’s ellipses or blind spots, i.e., to show how the logic of the text or what it *does* runs what the texts *wants to say* aground. As I will show below, the double reading in “Violence and Metaphysics” argues that the very language Levinas must use to describe to describe the ethical relation with the other undermines what he wants to say about that relation. He alleges that the ethical encounter with the other brings the ego or the first person ‘I’ beyond concern for its being; put differently, the ‘I’ encounters a meaning that is irreducible to ontology. But,

¹¹ Lawlor documents some of the more important revisions in his *Husserl and Derrida* 30-33. For a comprehensive record of them, see Critchley’s “The Problem of Closure in Derrida (Part One)” in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 23,1 (January 1992): 18 fn. 11. I am interested primarily in the revisions made for the publication of “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” in *Writing and Difference*. For an account of the conceptual development of the notion of the closure in Derrida, in particular, how Derrida came to see it as the problem characterizing philosophy, see Critchley’s *The Ethics of Deconstruction* 68-76. For a cogent presentation of double reading, see Bernasconi’s “The Trace of Levinas in Derrida” 13-29 and Critchley’s *The Ethics of Deconstruction* 20-31. For a concise presentation, see the Editors’ Introduction of *Re-Reading Levinas*, edited by Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), xii. My description follows these.

since this encounter must take place through discourse, the ‘I’ reduces the other to the Same. Levinas remains held by the very ontology he claims to have overcome, on Derrida’s rendering, because of the metaphysical concepts he cannot help but use. Derrida’s deconstructive double reading applies not only to “Violence and Metaphysics” but also to Heidegger in “The Ends of Man”, as I show in 1. C. (ii.) below, and to Husserl in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”.¹² The focus of the double reading in this latter case is the “*strange* presence” of reason as an Idea in the Kantian sense (ED 242, WD 162). “*Strange* [étrange]” is a later addition to the text made for its inclusion into *Writing and Difference*. I offer why Derrida adds this adjective below in 1. B. (ii.). But before I transition to present particular instances of the relation between structure and genesis in Derrida’s reading of Husserl, I first discuss Husserl’s Idea in the Kantian sense in *Ideas I*.

1. B. (i.) The Thing Itself as an Idea in the Kantian Sense in Husserl’s *Ideas I*

The focus of Derrida’s double reading in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” is what he calls the “*strange* presence” of reason as Idea in the Kantian sense (ED 242, WD 162). In order to set the stage, he investigates how certain structures that Husserl describes are correlated to openings. In each of these cases, the question will be one of what authorizes or, as Derrida puts it once again, what “permits” Husserl to

¹² Derrida tips the reader off to this double reading of Husserl early in the essay when, in the midst of explaining that Husserl is well aware of the difference between structure and genesis, employing each operative concept carefully as befits the givens under investigation, he remarks, “And even when one comes to think that the opening [*ouverture*] of the structure is ‘structural’, that is, essential, one has already progressed to an order heterogeneous to the first one: the *difference* between the (necessarily closed [*close*]) minor structure and the structurality of the opening—such, perhaps, *is the unlocatable site* [*lieu insuitable*] *in which philosophy takes root* [my emphasis—PJG]” (ED 230, WD 154). It is this “unlocatable site in which philosophy takes root” that Derrida wants to excavate as *the* question that preoccupies the philosophers of his time. As I read him, this is the question of the closure, whereby every text of metaphysics necessarily transgresses metaphysics and every attempt to break with metaphysics is corralled once again by it.

pass from an analysis of structure to one of genesis. What gives Husserl permission to investigate beyond the structure to its genesis is taking the thing under description as an Idea in the Kantian sense. This is the reason that it is of special interest to Derrida's reading of closure and opening in Husserl's thought. Derrida's reading suggests, on my interpretation, that Husserl's Idea in the Kantian sense is not merely descriptive but is a legitimating or normative source for his phenomenological investigations of transcendental subjectivity.

Husserl's retrieval of aspects of Kant's transcendental idealism in order to investigate transcendental subjectivity beginning in 1907 brought with it certain unresolved tensions in the critical philosophy that dogged its exponents and provided fodder for its critics. Chief among these is a distinction Husserl aims to overcome, that of appearance and thing in itself. He appropriates Kant's insight into the regulative function of infinity in part to this end. Unlike Kant, however, the idea of infinity will serve not only a purpose in the successive syntheses of experience; it will have, moreover, an actual object. This is Husserl's notion of a thing as an Idea in a Kantian sense.

One way in which Kant theorizes infinity in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is as an idea that performs an indispensable regulative function in experience. In the chapter on the antinomy of pure reason, he shows how the idea of infinity guides successive syntheses of appearance in the world.¹³ Perceptual experience, for instance, always admits of yet another view, which then supplements and coalesces with the former. Infinity serves as a rule for experience, Kant comments, "...prescribing a regress in the series of conditions for given appearances, in which regress it is never allowed to

¹³ *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003), A 508ff., B 536ff.; *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), A 508ff., B 536ff.

stop...”.¹⁴ Thus experience is an open whole of successive syntheses. One may account in this way for the incompleteness of experience or its character of being *in the making*, that is to say, its successive character and its continuity. The idea of infinity as a regulative principle of reason, Kant says, is the “...principle of the greatest possible continuation and extension of experience...”.¹⁵ While its purpose is indispensable for experience, a regulative principle does not correspond to a given object. It is not therefore a constitutive principle.¹⁶ Kant’s notion of infinity is, then, potential, not actual. By positing an actual infinity *in* experience itself, by contrast, Husserl takes it that he overcomes the problematic distinction of appearance and thing in itself in the critical philosophy.¹⁷ In *Ideas I* in 1913, he identifies the thing in itself, or the thing itself, as an Idea in the Kantian sense.

By Idea in the Kantian sense, Husserl understands the adequate givenness of a physical thing in perceptual experience (*Ideen I* [a] § 143 350-51, *Ideas I* § 143 342-43).¹⁸ He intends it as a contribution to a general theory of objects (*Gegenständstheorie*).¹⁹ A

¹⁴ *Critique of Pure Reason* A 508-09, B 536-37.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* A 509, B 537.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* A 509-10, B 537-38.

¹⁷ For further analysis, see László Tengelyi’s *Welt und Unendlichkeit. Zum Problem phänomenologischer Metaphysik* (Alber: Freiburg, 2014), 411, 459-61, and 534-42; see also his *Erfahrung und Ausdruck. Phänomenologie im Umbruch bei Husserl und Seinen Nachfolgern* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

¹⁸ My presentation of Husserl’s Idea in the Kantian sense has been deeply informed by a lecture László Tengelyi delivered at the University of Memphis on 29 September 2009 titled “Experience and Infinity in Kant and Husserl” and by his *Welt und Unendlichkeit*, particularly 208-09, 313-17, and 534-44. Three other admirable readings from Rudolf Bernet also inform my presentation: *La vie du sujet* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), “Perception, thing, and space” in *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999): 115-40, and, finally, *Conscience et existence. Perspectives phénoménologiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004).

¹⁹ He makes this clear in *Ideas I* § 149, where he proposes to take the material thing as “clue [*Leitfaden*]” to guide him in the transition from the formal ontology hitherto described in the theory of reason to regional ontologies. The region he wants to outline is that of the physical thing. He investigates the constitution of the physical thing as the correlate of an eidetically governed noetic-noematic complex, specifically, the physical thing-noema. He says, “If we understand what this guide [read: the material thing] means, then at the same time we seize upon, accordingly, a universal problem which is determinative for a great and relatively self-contained phenomenological discipline: *the problem of the universal ‘constitution’ in transcendental consciousness of objectivities pertaining to the region, Physical Thing*. More briefly

thing's adequate givenness is the sum total of its appearances. By *appearance* (*Erscheinung*) or *representation* (*Vorstellung*) Kant means the immediate relation to a sensibly intuited object for a being with our cognitive constitution. Apart from the representation, the object can be something in itself independent of sensible intuition.²⁰ There is no room in Husserl, by contrast, for the conclusion one may draw from this, namely, that appearance and the thing itself refer to distinct beings.²¹ By appearance, he means the profile or aspect that a thing gives or presents to a perceiving subject.²² Experience is by nature perspectival: a profile is a partial view. Where I currently perceive only one side of my laptop (the display, keyboard, and trackpad), I anticipate that the others, hidden from view, meld with this one if were to pick it up and turn it around. A thing's partial view or profile foreshadows or delineates others. Moreover, perceptual experience posits by necessity the thing as a unified whole by which its profiles fuse seamlessly with one another. When Husserl understands the thing itself as an Idea in the Kantian sense, therefore, he does not mean that the sum total of thing's

expressed: 'the phenomenological constitution of any physical thing whatsoever' (*Ideen I* [a] § 149 344, *Ideas I* § 149 355).

²⁰ *Critique of Pure Reason* A 252, B 306. Kant puts this distinction to use as the concept of a noumenon in a negative sense (B 307ff.).

²¹ The question of whether appearance and thing in itself refer to distinct beings would have been more pronounced for Husserl than it is for contemporary interpretations. On my reading, there is more evidence that appearance and thing in itself in Kant's *Critique* and other works (e.g., the *Opus Postumum*) refer to the same being, not to distinct ones. For a leading contemporary view, see Henry Allison's *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). See also Bernet's analysis in this regard: from the transcendental-phenomenological attitude, Husserl's thing as Idea in the Kantian sense is "...not a progressive discovery of an objective reality independent of consciousness and firmly determined in itself, but a progressive determination and validation of the *being* of individual things. [...] [T]he thing is...the noematic correlate of the (noetic) identificational synthesis unifying these manifold appearances within a continuous process of fulfillment" ("Perception, thing, and space" 130).

²² For this reason a thing's appearances or profiles should not be confused with its physical properties. A thing can have an infinite number of profiles only from the phenomenological point of view. In the world of a scientist, by contrast, a thing has a finite number of properties. Thus, while properties are countable and can be completely determined, profiles cannot. The reason that its profiles cannot be enumerated follows not only from the infinite number of perspectives a subject can take on a physical thing; it follows, moreover, from the reduction, whereby the thing is seen as embedded in an infinite number of horizons. I explain this in more detail below.

appearances can be apprehended *uno actu*. This wrongly implies *sum total* is *total view* (a view from every perspective at once). Perceptual experience is successive and synthetic. A thing as an Idea is, as Husserl defines it, a “*continuum of appearances*” “infinite on all sides [*allseitig unendliches*]” by which one and same thing X is “continuously-harmoniously [*kontinuierlich-einstimmig*] determined” (*Ideen I* [a] § 143 350, *Ideas I* § 143 342). As one commentator puts it, it is an “eidetic preconception”, material-ontological in nature, that acts as a subjective supplement or transcendental foundation of three-dimensional space but is not a property of that space.²³ This preconception, he adds, is the “...maximum fullness or ultimate givenness of the thing” that teleologically orients and guides synthetic experience as an infinite continuum in all directions.²⁴

To overcome the problematic division of appearance and thing itself, however, Husserl argues the Idea in the Kantian sense is not merely a regulative principle. Infinity does not merely have a purpose, as in Kant’s *Critique*. It has an *actual* object: the sum total of appearances of a particular empirical reality or thing.²⁵ Husserl thus identifies the adequate givenness of a physical thing in general as an Idea in the Kantian sense. Infinity

²³ Bernet’s “Perception, thing, and space” 125.

²⁴ Concerning the rule-boundedness of a thing’s partial self-givenness, Husserl writes, “Now, however, it is a general eidetic insight [*Weseneinsicht*] that each *imperfect givenness* (each inadequately presentive noema) *includes in itself a rule for the ideal possibility of its being perfected*” (*Ideen I* [a] § 149 346, *Ideas I* § 149 357). What does it mean phenomenologically to speak of a rule for the course of intuitions for an inadequately given region, “*physical thing*”, Husserl goes on to ask? It means that, “There belong to the essence of such a physical thing-noema, and with absolute evidence, ideal possibilities of ‘*limitlessness in the progression*’ of *harmonious intuitions* and, more particularly, according to typically determined predesignated directions...” (*Ideen I* [a] § 149 346, *Ideas I* § 149 358). This “*limitlessness in the progression*” of harmonizing intuitions is infinity *in* experience, which Husserl designates as the physical thing. Each physical thing is an Idea in the Kantian sense.

²⁵ Bernet affirms that each particular empirical reality or thing is an Idea in the Kantian sense when he says that, “...from the essential inadequacy of every appearance of a thing, there follows the infinity of the experience of the thing...” (“Perception, thing, and space” 129). I take by this that Bernet agrees that for Husserl there is a specific experience of infinity in perception. See also his *Conscience et existence* 161 and Tengelyi’s *Welt und Unendlichkeit* 208-09 and 313-17.

is not merely *potential*, as in Kant, but *part and parcel* of the intentionality specific to perceptual experience. In short, Husserl's Idea posits an actual infinity *in* experience.

One must qualify Husserl's notion of an actual infinity in experience further, however, by introducing the distinction between adequate and inadequate evidence.²⁶ For Husserl, one can only have *inadequate* evidence of infinity. He writes,

It is precisely the peculiarity of the ideation which sees a Kantian 'idea' that it does not on that account, perhaps, lose the insight because *the adequate determination of its content*, here the stream of mental processes, *is unattainable* [my emphasis—PJG]" (*Ideen I* [a] § 83 186, *Ideas I* § 83 198-99).

One can identify two interrelated reasons that Husserl's actual infinity admits only of inadequate evidence. Firstly is the perspectival nature of perceptual experience itself. Phenomenological seeing takes its cue from the partial self-givenness of a thing in everyday visual perception, brackets the scientific (or theoretical) attitude, and infers an infinite continuum of a thing's appearances in all directions. The thing as an Idea in the Kantian sense is not only a unified or whole infinity; it is open-ended. This means that another real profile can always be added to the set.²⁷ Husserl's conception of infinity does not revert back to that of dogmatic, pre-critical metaphysics. Dogmatic metaphysics conceives infinity as absolute: a positive plenitude, unique (or incomparable), and internally undifferentiated. An open-ended but whole infinity leads, furthermore, to the

²⁶ For Husserl's doctrine of adequate evidence (*Evidenz*), see the sixth of the *Logische Untersuchungen* § 36-39 645-56, especially 651-52, *Logical Investigations* § 36-39 760-70, especially 765.

²⁷ With regard to the Idea as an open-ended infinity, Husserl writes, "[The] transcendence [of the individually determined physical thing] is expressed in *each limitlessness in the progression of intuitions of it* [my emphasis—PJG]. Always and again the intuitions are to be converted into intuitional continua and the pre-given continua are to be amplified. No perception of the physical thing is definitively *closed*; *there is always room for new perceptions, for determining more precisely the indeterminateness, for fulfilling the unfulfilled* [my emphasis—PJG]. With every progression the determinational content of the physical thing-noema, which continually belongs to the same physical thing-X, is enriched. It is an eidetic insight that *each* [original emphasis] perception and multiplicity of perceptions is an *endless one* [my emphasis—PJG]; accordingly, no intuitive seizing upon the physical thing-essence can be so complete that a further perception cannot noematically contribute something new to it" (*Ideen I* [a] § 149 347, *Ideas I* § 149 358). For insightful analysis and the influence of the concept of a transfinite infinite in Georg Cantor's set theory on Husserl's conception of infinity, see Tengelyi's *Welt und Unendlichkeit* 534-44.

important phenomenological concept of horizon. Not only is it the case that the set of a thing's profiles can be further augmented; the thing is, moreover, embedded in an infinite number of horizons. What follows, secondly, is the demand for ever-new reductions. Therefore, the thing as an Idea in the Kantian sense is an actual infinity, but only admits of inadequate evidence. This analysis shows that Husserl's phenomenology is not exclusively a flight into the finite, as it is often caricatured. In seizing in "Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" upon the "*strange* presence" of reason as Idea in the Kantian sense Husserl's thought, Derrida is, perceptively, aware of this (ED 242, WD 162).

By conceiving in the very same work, *Ideas I*, the "principle of principles" alongside the Idea in the Kantian sense, Husserl is led from an analysis of structure to one of genesis (ED 244, WD 164). On Derrida's interpretation, this poses the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics: Husserl's text necessarily transgresses metaphysics at the same time that the very claims attempting this break capture it once again in metaphysics. I move in the next section to this analysis.

But the presentation of thing as an Idea in the Kantian sense in Husserl has an additional value to the present work. This value lies in conceiving an *actual*, not merely potential, infinity *in* experience without reverting to a dogmatic metaphysics. We will see below in 5. C. (i.) § 3. how Levinas conceives in *Totality and Infinity* an actual infinity *in* experience for which experience gives us inadequate evidence in the form of desire for the other human being.²⁸ I submit that Derrida did not, particularly in the 1964 publication of "Violence and Metaphysics", sufficiently understand how infinity, what is "beyond" the totality and objective experience, as Levinas puts it in the Preface to

²⁸ For insightful analysis, see Tengelyi's *Welt und Unendlichkeit* 279-86.

Totality and Infinity in 1961, "...is reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience" (TI xi, Tal 23). This may have provided him the clue to seeing how the structure of the trace already operates, albeit implicitly and not as a theme in its own right, as the formal structure of the "idea of Infinity in us" in *Totality and Infinity* (TI 52, Tal 79). The "idea of Infinity in us" is a critical structure that guides the most important of Levinas' descriptions and the claims about the other and the same that follow from them in that work. In Chapter 2 I show through a close comparison of the two versions of "Violence and Metaphysics" that Derrida attributes far greater significance to the trace in the essay's 1967 republication in *Writing and Difference*. If he missed the trace in 1964 but sees its significance for describing philosophy at the time of the closure in 1967, then one cannot label "Violence and Metaphysics" a critical reading of Levinas' thought and leave it at that, as some commentators do.²⁹

1. B. (ii.) The Focus of Derrida's Double Reading: Reason as Idea in the Kantian Sense

As I mentioned above, in "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" Derrida investigates how certain structures in Husserl's thought, particularly when he is discussing historicity, are correlated to openings. In each of these cases, Derrida's interest will be in what authorizes or, as he puts it, once again, what "permits" Husserl to pass from an analysis of structure to one of genesis. What authorizes to move beyond description of structure to its origin or genesis is taking the thing under investigation as an Idea in a Kantian sense, i.e., the thing's *infinitezation* or *idealization*.³⁰

²⁹ I have in mind Hägglund's *Radical Atheism* 76-102.

³⁰ Although outside the bounds of the present work, a full discussion of Derrida's reading of Husserl's Idea in the Kantian sense would also consult Derrida's earliest book from 1962, *Edmund Husserl: L'origine de la géométrie*, particularly paragraphs VIII-X (110-55) (*Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, 107-41). In this work, Derrida introduces for the first time the question that will be central to the trio of works he publishes in 1967, *Of Grammatology*, *Voice and Phenomenon*, and *Writing and Difference* (which contains the revised version of "Violence and Metaphysics"), the question of language

What characterizes the two cases Derrida presents is a “question of *closure* [*clôture*] or of *opening* [*ouverture*]” (ED 240, WD 162). This usage of “closure [*clôture*]” is not exactly the sense I discussed at length above, viz. the closure of metaphysics. Nonetheless, following the debate between closure and opening within these two phenomenological structures is instructive for understanding how Derrida reads Husserl as both belonging and not belonging to the metaphysics of presence. For instance, in the first case, Derrida comments that what characterizes mathematical essences is their “*exactitude*”, while what characterizes the essences of pure consciousness is not so much their ‘inexactitude’ as that they are ““anexact””, but no less rigorous, for that matter (ED 240-41, WD 162). A finite number of concepts and propositions determine completely and by pure logical necessity the totality of possible formations in, e.g., geometry. What characterizes such a structure is closure. By contrast, the “infinite opening of lived experience [*vécu*; translation modified]” characterizes the essences of pure consciousness (and, by extension, of all phenomena) (ED 242, WD 162). The thing as an Idea in a Kantian sense, an open-ended and whole infinity in experience that must be presupposed for the continual and uninterrupted synthesis of a perception, marks this difference in Husserl’s texts. It is the “*strange presence*”, a phrase about which I will have more to say presently, of this Idea that “permits every transition to the limit”, i.e., every passage from structure to genesis, in Husserl’s thought. And indeed one can see this in Derrida’s second case, which deals with the noetico-noematic correlation or structure and the *morphé-hylé* correlation or structure in *Ideas I*. Even if Husserl does not explicitly take the noema or *hylé* as an Idea in a Kantian sense in these descriptions, I take it that

(see *L’origine de la géométrie* 84-85, *Origin of Geometry* 88). For analysis, including Jean Hyppolite’s influence on how Derrida takes up this question in *Origin of Geometry*, see Lawlor’s *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 88-142.

Derrida's point is that the model of an irruption of the infinite in a structural analysis of pure transcendental consciousness serves as guide for each phenomenon and "permits" Husserl once again to "transition to the limit", i.e., to what is beyond the closed structure, its origin and genesis. With the decisive rendering of the noema as intentional but "non-real (*reell*)", neither a phenomenon of consciousness nor of the world yet, as the objectivity of the object itself, indispensable for consciousness of an object, Husserl acknowledges an agency *within* consciousness that does not belong to it. Derrida calls this the "*anarchy*" of the noema, for the transition to investigate an indispensable genesis of the transcendental structure of consciousness (the noema, as objectivity in general) threatens to put the entire noetico-noematic structure in question (ED 242, WD 163). In obverse fashion, Derrida takes Husserl's rendering of the *hylé* as the non-intentional yet real (*reell*) element of lived experience, the sensate material of an affect, to permit Husserl to yet another transition to the limit, this time of the *morphé-hylé* structure. At bottom, the *hylé* is "temporal matter" (ED 244, WD 164). This opens the structure of transcendental consciousness onto the "possibility of genesis itself", temporality. Thus investigation into the structure in each case, the noetico-noematic structure and the *morphé-hylé* structure, opens an infinite that exceeds that structure and is its source or genesis.

This infinite, taken on the model of the Idea in a Kantian sense, permits or authorizes the transition to transcendental investigations that exceed what can be made present in an intuition. These investigations include the decisive themes of the other and of time in Husserl's thought. In an addition, which I already partially quoted above, appearing in the version of "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" published in

1967 in *Writing and Difference*, Derrida remarks that these pivotal investigations transgress the commitment to the metaphysics of presence found elsewhere in Husserl's work: "It is that the constitution of the other and of time refers phenomenology to a zone in which its 'principle of principles' (as we see it, its *metaphysical* principle: the *original self-evidence* and *presence* of a thing itself in person) is radically put into question" (ED 244, WD 164).³¹ It is in positing a "question of *closure* [*clôture*] or of *opening* [*ouverture*]" in each of these cases that Husserl's thought neither entirely belongs to metaphysics, since the Idea in a Kantian sense permits him to transition to questions of genesis that exceed structure, nor entirely to twist free of it, since this transition is possible only on the condition of structure, the very language of metaphysical conceptuality. Thus each case demonstrates Derrida's notion of philosophy at the time of the closure, whose description demands double reading.

Husserl discovers these openings in his analyses of structure. Even while they are different in kind from and do not belong to the structure and call for different conceptual tools for their recovery and examination, they are nonetheless the genetic constitutions of the structure under investigation. The "metaphysics of history" organized by the "solid structure of a *Telos*" can be seen as the model for these particular relations of structure and genesis. The presence of a *Telos* of history, reason as an Idea in a Kantian sense, is, as I mentioned, at once an opening in the sense that it calls phenomenology to an "infinite practical task" of reductions of the thing itself, reason (ED 250, WD 157). Thus far,

Derrida is only faithfully commenting upon the claims Husserl himself makes. But, in

³¹ This passage is added to the earlier version of "'Genèse et Structure' et la Phénoménologie", which was first published in 1965 in the volume *Entretiens sur les notions de Genèse et de Structure*, 243-60. See 255 for the original passage to which the above quote is added for republication of the essay in *Writing and Difference* in 1967. For a contemporaneous presentation in *La Voix et le phénomène* (*Voice and Phenomenon*) of the "principle of principles" in the context of a deconstructive reading of Husserl on temporality, see VP 67-77, particularly 69, VaP 51-59, particularly 52.

and through this commentary, a blind spot arises in the text: How can Husserl posit reason as the *Telos* of history and claim to read signs of its irruption and unveiling not only in human but also in natural history when the evidence for such claims, in the strict terms for evidence that *Ideas I* lays out, is entirely lacking? Holding up this blind spot to the text itself, Derrida asks,

How can such an affirmation [i.e., reading reason's ruptures and unveilings in elementary forms of life, in animality, and in nature in general], made necessary *by* and *in* phenomenology itself, be totally certain within phenomenology? For it does not only concern phenomena that are experienced and self-evident" (ED 248, WD 165).

In the absence of evidence for a *Telos*, Husserl decides dogmatically. What Derrida's reading suggests is that the motivation for this decision to transgress phenomenal experience is Husserl's attempt to legitimate the task of phenomenology within the history of reason's unfolding. Moreover, if one characteristic of the Idea in a Kantian sense is a unified thing X that, while never adequately given in experience, must nonetheless be presupposed in order to have a synthetic and continuous experience of X, and if X in the case of a "metaphysics of history" is the unity of reason working through history, then would this not be the most banal repetition of classical metaphysics? At a point at which he seems to break free of the metaphysics of presence, viz. the Idea in a Kantian sense, a notion of infinity that is neither a positive plenitude without negativity nor the full presence of the present as in classical metaphysics, Husserl's application of the Idea entangles him once again in the very metaphysics from which he tried to distinguish himself. This follows by necessity. For the only history of reason available is a thoroughgoing metaphysical discourse.

In the Idea in a Kantian sense lies the authority that "would permit [Husserl] to reappropriate...a wild genesis" of philosophy. That is to say, it is the recovery of reason

as Idea, the “...irruption of the *logos*, the accession to human consciousness of the idea of an infinite task of reason...”, that, at this stage in history, would legitimate philosophy’s claims and authorize phenomenology’s task, none other than the infinite renewal of the phenomenological reduction (ED 247, WD 165).³² In short, Husserl’s Idea in a Kantian sense, when put into action in his “metaphysics of history” as the “presence of a *Telos* or *Vorhaben*”, is the normative justification for philosophy as the project of reason’s self-recovery and self-knowledge and, in particular, for the task of phenomenology. What lies in the presence of reason as *Telos* is not merely a descriptive claim but rather a normative one, Derrida suggests. Commenting on the “historico-teleological route” in Husserl’s thought, he says that it

...is to provide access to the *eidos* of historicity in general (that is, to its *telos*, for the *eidos* of a historicity, and thus of the movement of sense—a necessarily rational and spiritual movement—*can only be a norm, a value more than an essence*) cannot be a route among others [translation modified; my emphasis—PJG] (ED 247, WD 165).³³

At stake in recovering and knowing the “wild genesis” is the very normative source of philosophy and what legitimates phenomenology’s task, the reduction of sense, and what makes the task infinite. Derrida is suggesting that the debate between genesis and structure in Husserl’s “metaphysics of history” turns on the question of philosophy’s normative source and authority. I want to underscore that his suggestion is only apparent by following out a double reading of Husserl’s texts.

Thus far I have shown how, in and through Derrida’s commentary on Husserl’s texts, the texts themselves meet with a substantial blind spot of their own making. In developing a “metaphysics of history”, Husserl’s thought undermines the strictures for evidence that Husserl lays out elsewhere. However, it would be shortsighted to leave the

³² As Derrida notes, phenomenology is the third and final stage of historicity in Husserl (ED 249-50, WD 166). Cf. M 147 fn. 13, MP 123 fn. 17.

³³ The translator of *L’écriture et le différence* omits “*et spirituel*” from the English translation.

double reading at the level of criticism. It is not merely the Idea in a Kantian sense, but its “*strange* presence” that permits or authorizes the transition to the limit of historical empirical experience, i.e., from description to normative source, from closure to opening, or from structure to genesis. This “*strange* presence” of the Idea in a Kantian sense is the focus of Derrida’s double reading.

“*Strange* [*étrange*]” is a later addition to the text made for its inclusion into *Writing and Difference*. The reason for the qualification of the presence of the Idea, I argue, is that between 1965 and 1967 the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics came into greater relief and became more pressing for Derrida. This is due primarily to double reading of Levinas he gave in the first publication of “Violence and Metaphysics” in 1964 and is even more apparent in the revisions he made for its republication in *Writing and Difference* in 1967. I will show this in the next chapter. But I would like to end this section by substantiating my claim above that the focus of the double reading in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” is the “*strange*” presence of the Idea in a Kantian sense. Any interpretation of this early essay that misses this cannot adequately account for the pivotal role “Violence and Metaphysics” plays in the development of Derrida’s notions of philosophy at the time of the closure, of the metaphysics of presence, and of the notion closely associated with but not identical to the latter, logocentrism.

The presence of the Idea in a Kantian sense is a “*strange*” one because it shows how Husserl’s thought neither belongs to the metaphysics of presence nor does it break through it. In fact, it displaces both options. Derrida points out that Husserl understood phenomenology as a corrective to classical metaphysics: phenomenology departs from

metaphysics' naiveté, but accomplishes its ultimate intentions. This amounts to saying, as Derrida remarks in another addition to the 1967 republication of "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology", that "...in critiquing classical metaphysics, phenomenology accomplishes the most profound project of metaphysics" (ED 249, WD 166). Thus Husserl decides to claim a legacy for phenomenology not beholden to but nonetheless within metaphysics. We have seen how, on Derrida's reading, some of his innovations, like the Idea in a Kantian sense, twist free of the metaphysics of presence. But this twisting free cannot be maintained. It is absorbed once again not only because of Husserl's explicitly stated intentions (viz. phenomenology as a corrective to classical metaphysics) but implicitly by the very language that he must use to articulate it. This is the language of philosophy, the Greek *logos*. What becomes more pressing for Derrida alongside the problem of the metaphysics of presence in the years intervening the publication and republication of "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" is the question of the language of philosophy and the problem of logocentrism. This is primarily due, I claim, to Derrida's reading of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics". My account of this claim will come in the next chapter.

Ultimately it is the Greek *logos* that causes a double reading to displace the exclusive options of belonging to and breaking through the metaphysics of presence. In other words, double reading shows that a decision for either path must fail because the attempt is undermined by logocentric conceptuality. In Husserl's thought, the Idea in a Kantian sense is overdetermined: from the central role it plays in his descriptions of pure transcendental consciousness and its phenomena in *Ideas I* (even if it is not always mentioned, it serves as a model, as I explained above, that "permits every transition to the

limit”) to the “solid structure of a *Telos*” in his “metaphysics of history” (reason as Idea). A double reading, starting from commentary and out of which the text is made to face up to its own blind spots, shows that this overdetermination is inevitable because of the very language Husserl must use, logocentric conceptuality.

Allow me to detail how the double reading of Husserl’s Idea in a Kantian sense operates. On the one hand, the presence of a *Telos* of reason or history leads to the questions of the genetic constitutions of time and of the other, which put Husserl’s commitment to the metaphysics of presence radically into question. It is the formal model of the Idea in a Kantian sense that permits or authorizes phenomenology to pursue the openings that do not lie within static analysis yet account for the structure itself. The presence of the Idea in a Kantian sense, as *Telos* or *Vorhaben*, can never be the object of an intuition but is rather the “infinite theoretical *anticipation* [my emphasis—PJG]” of the *Telos*, which legitimates phenomenology as an “infinite practical task”. In other words, Derrida understands the presence of reason as *Telos* as a “*strange* presence” because its progress is an infinite asymptotic approximation, but never a coincidence with, the goal or end. There is always a gap in the experience of this presence, which motivates and authorizes infinite reductions. Thus the “*strange* presence” of the Idea in a Kantian sense, when it turns up in Husserl’s thought, marks a significant break with the metaphysics of presence: presence, as that which is an object of intuition before one’s eyes and as that which has a repeatable form across changes in content, does not define the being of the *Telos*. As an Idea, there is always a gap in the experience of this presence. This gap motivates and authorizes infinite reductions. But how could Husserl understand phenomenology as a break with and corrective for naïve metaphysics if his

thought did not presuppose a *belonging to* classical metaphysics? Thus, on the other hand, a teleology of reason that anticipates the self-recovery and self-knowledge of reason and uses this to legitimate philosophy's practical task would seem to repeat the most banal narrative of classical metaphysics. The point is that this repetition cannot be avoided. It happens by "subterranean necessity": Husserl must use the language of presence, viz. logocentric conceptuality, in order to read history as the anticipation of a *Telos* that "would permit [Husserl] to reappropriate...a wild genesis" of philosophy, reason. What is more apparent to Derrida by the 1967 publication of *Writing and Difference* is this necessity lodged in "some unforeseeable resource of the Greek *logos*", as he puts it in "Violence and Metaphysics" (ED 165, WD 111). In that essay he describes the *logos* as an "...unlimited power of envelopment, by which he who attempts to repel it would always already be *overtaken*" (ED 165, WD 112). To be sure, even in his more radical moments, Husserl did not attempt to "repel" the Greek *logos* or classical metaphysics. In fact, he decided to stake phenomenology as a corrective of metaphysics but still in line with its ultimate pursuits. The point, however, is that this decision of belonging to metaphysics meets the same fate as the decision to break away from it: to be always already "*overtaken*" by the Greek *logos*. This neutralizes and displaces the decision for either option. Philosophy at the time of the closure must respond with a different alternative than these options. This is the productive task of double reading.

While Husserl for the most part tries, by innovative breaks and corrections, to carve out an alternative terrain within metaphysics, on Derrida's reading Levinas has an altogether different response to philosophy at the time of the closure. In fact, Derrida takes Levinas to be posing precisely this problem in "Violence and Metaphysics", the

formal question of belonging and breaking through the tradition. For Derrida, Levinas ventures a total change of terrain, a breakthrough the metaphysics of presence with recourse to nonphilosophical experiences, particularly, the ethical encounter with the Other. However, his attempt to change terrain and face philosophy up to its radical other is thwarted because it takes place in discourse. The only language available is Greek, the language of philosophy, which reduces the Other to the Same. We will see this attempt to change terrain and develop an outside of philosophy, as well as the problems this framework bequeaths to Levinas for his subsequent work, in the next chapter. First, however, I present another attempt to confront metaphysics without change of terrain, namely, through the repetition of its concepts and an exit from within them. This is the path, on Derrida's reading in "The Ends of Man", that not only Husserl but Hegel and Heidegger also pursue.

1. C. Metaphysics, Anthropological Teleology, and Philosophy at the Time of the Closure: The "Subterranean Necessity" in Derrida's "The Ends of Man"

As we will see also in "Violence and Metaphysics", Derrida makes it a point to foreground the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics in "The Ends of Man". But what ties the subject of this essay, the thinking of *man*'s truth—whether this takes the form of anthropologism, of humanism, of the human sciences, etc.—to metaphysics?³⁴ Derrida's basic thesis is that the primary questions of metaphysics, viz. the ground of beings (general ontology) and the determination of the highest being (speculative theology), must pass through thinking the truth of man as a

³⁴ Throughout my discussion of "The Ends of Man", the reader will notice reference only to *man* and its plural. In this, I am following Derrida (*l'homme*). The sexist language is unavoidable, as Derrida, I believe, is trying to stay faithful to the texts of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, respectively. Derrida does not address this sexism in this essay.

thinking on the *end* of man. Derrida will endeavor to prove this through a reading of how Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger critique anthropologism and yet reinstate an anthropological teleology in their respective projects. Despite the diversity among the paths and aims of these thinkers, what unites them, on Derrida's reading, is their common response to philosophy at the time of the closure.³⁵ Each practices a thinking of the *interior* or the *implicit*, of that which is simply and immediately present—*man himself*, what is proper to him as his truth—in order to secure their aims, whether this aim is absolute knowing in the science of consciousness, Reason as an Idea in a Kantian sense in a transcendental historicity, or the question or truth of Being. The conclusion is that, despite carefully delimiting anthropologism and humanism, through a discourse on the end of man each reaffirms and supplements the metaphysics of presence. Learning from these pitfalls, the upshot for Derrida is to outline another deconstructive strategy for responding to philosophy at the time of the closure. It is the one he first practiced in a sustained way in his reading of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics", which I discuss in detail in the next chapter.

Asked to address the question, "Where is France, as concerns man?", Derrida is writing at a time when many leading French thinkers are trying to come to terms with

³⁵ This phrase, *philosophy at the time of the closure*, solicits further reflection than I am able to give it here. In his *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, Critchley takes it that to practice philosophy at the time of the closure is to be aware of the "duplicious historical moment—*now*" in which one finds oneself (20). This motivates a double refusal, namely, of remaining within the metaphysical tradition and of transgressing it. That, *in nuce*, is the problem of the closure. But one may ask whether Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger are themselves responding to the time of the closure as a moment in history, whether the problem of the closure is a function internal to the texts themselves when they are read at the time of the closure (in this regard, one may think of the internal necessities that govern Rousseau's texts or Plato's in Derrida's *Of Grammatology* and *Dissemination*, respectively), or some combination of these options. I thank Robert Bernasconi for pointing out the need to reflect on this question in order to come to terms with this phrase, *philosophy at the time of the closure*, which I use liberally. Even as I mark its importance, however, I leave it to one side until further reflection.

another facet of this question.³⁶ Given metaphysics' complicity in determining the subject as thinking ego or of determining man as rational animal, the question pressing French thinkers at the time of the closure may be put in the following way: "Who or what comes after the subject or man determined according to these old metaphysical values?" This should concern contextualize Derrida's readings of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, whose questions were not primarily "Who or what comes after the subject or the human being?" What does bind them together, in Derrida's mind, is that they *retie themselves* to metaphysics through a discourse on what is man's proper end. Despite the attention exerted to effect breaks with classical anthropology, there remains an unexamined presupposition in Hegel's, Husserl's, and Heidegger's anthropologies. This is an

...uninterrupted metaphysical familiarity does not interrupt that which, so naturally, links [*rapporte*] the *we* of the philosopher with the 'we men', to the *we* in the horizon of humanity [translation modified]" (M 137,MP 116).

This "uninterrupted metaphysical familiarity" of the *we* slips by in their philosophies as an unexamined presupposition. It secures that man's truth is his end. Metaphysics prescribes this anthropological teleology by a "subterranean necessity" (M 142,MP 119). Indeed, this is Derrida's basic claim: metaphysics, by a deep necessity, prescribes anthropological teleology. Thus, in the context of what occupies contemporary French thought at the time of Derrida's writing, each thinker runs the risk of reinstating another sort of anthropology even as they displace the old metaphysical values that informed conceptions of the subject or of man.

³⁶ While published in 1972 in the volume *Marges de la philosophie (Margins of Philosophy)*, Derrida originally delivers "*Les fins de l'homme*" in October 1968 at an international colloquium in New York. This makes it a contemporary of the volume containing "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" and "Violence and Metaphysics", *Writing and Difference* (1967). The theme of the colloquium was "Philosophy and Anthropology".

While Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger each offer conceptual resources for a critique of anthropology, humanism, and the human sciences, they are not put to use in the dominant trends of French thought today, according to Derrida. The question is *why*. French thought today in fact tends to “...*amalgamate* Hegel, Husserl, and—in a more diffuse and ambiguous fashion—Heidegger with the old humanist metaphysics [translation modified]” (M 118,MP 141). Thus Derrida sets this as the main questions of his analysis:

What must hold our interest...is the kind of profound justification, whose subterranean necessity makes the Hegelian, Husserlian, and Heideggerian critiques or *de-limitations* of metaphysical humanism appear to belong to the very sphere of that which they critique or de-limit. In a word, whether this has been made explicit or not, and whether it has been articulated or not...what authorizes [*autorise*] us today to consider as essentially *anthropic* or anthropocentric everything in metaphysics, or at the limits of metaphysics, that believed itself to be a critique or delimitation of anthropologism? What is the re-elevation [*relève*] of man in the thought of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger [translation modified]? (M 142,MP 119).

When current French thought bypasses these resources to critique anthropologism and humanism, it is not out of some dogmatic aversion or lack of attention. Derrida suggests that, in the very attempts to correct and complete metaphysics (as in Hegel and Husserl) or to find another, non-metaphysical beginning for philosophy (as in Heidegger), the Hegelian, Husserlian, and Heideggerian “critiques or *de-limitations*” are tied back into an anthropology of a certain sort. Derrida’s chief interpretive framework in making this claim is philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics. The Hegelian, Husserlian, and Heideggerian critiques or *de-limitations* of metaphysical humanism each poses the question of belonging to and break from the tradition. Each does so through, negatively, a critique or delimitation of anthropologism or humanism and, positively, through a retrieval of metaphysics’ founding concepts and the development of a renewed anthropological discourse. Specifically, this discourse takes the form of the *end* of man,

i.e., man's finitude. To position itself at man's finite limits means already to be *beyond* them. The renewed anthropological discourses complete or fulfill man's truth in an infinitization of his end. This determines an anthropological teleology. But what secures continuity between man's end conceived finitely and his end conceived infinitely? It is the first person plural pronoun, *we*, in Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger.

It is as if the very indication of man's end or finite limits, the raising up again of a discourse on man in order to *displace* and *relieve* the anthropologisms and humanisms of old, in fact *re-replaces*, *re-instates*, and *promotes* them, in multiple senses of *relever* at once.³⁷ What "authorizes us today" to see these three delimitations of anthropologism as reinstatements of metaphysical humanism is an important "subterranean necessity" that Derrida does not name directly. In "Violence and Metaphysics", this necessity is the *logos*. There, the Greek *logos* is the language of ontology that undercuts Levinas' attempt to speak of the ethical relation to the Other. In "The Ends of Man", this "subterranean necessity" is, I argue, once again the language of ontology, where the specific emphasis falls on the truth of *man* or *anthropology* rather than the ontological categories of Same and Other.³⁸ Seeing these essays through the subterranean necessity and unforeseeable resource of the Greek *logos* that animates Derrida's analyses, one can see the upshot of Derrida's argument: the *relève* of man catches the Hegelian, Husserlian, and

³⁷ Derrida uses the verb *relever* frequently in "The Ends of Man" to describe how Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger are lead to a certain reinstatement of a discourse on man that supplements the metaphysics of presence. Like the multiple and polar senses of Hegel's *aufheben* (to surpass; to destroy; to conserve; to maintain; etc.), Derrida plays on the ambiguity of *relever*. Its sense is contextual and multiple. I try to indicate this multiplicity accordingly, often giving two senses. But the others should be kept in mind as well. Here is a list of several of its more important senses: to elevate, to lift up again; to displace; to relieve; to replace; to restore; to reinstate; to promote; to recover, to get better.

³⁸ For another, attentive reading to how "necessity" functions in Derrida's essay, see Lawlor's *Derrida and Husserl* 34-36.

Heideggerian delimitations in the double-bind of belonging-breakthrough, of neither completing or exiting the terrain of metaphysics, nor breaking free from it.

1. C. (i.) Metaphysics' Prescription: Anthropological Teleology and the We in Hegel's Dialectic of Knowing and in Husserl's Transcendental Historicity

Derrida first shows how Hegel's delimitation of anthropologism poses the question of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics. Then he makes a brief foray to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology to show how it largely follows the same pattern before turning to a lengthy discussion of the truth of man in Heidegger. The third part of the *Encyclopedia*, "Philosophy of Spirit", first section (also titled "Philosophy of Spirit), contains three sections: "Anthropology", "Phenomenology of Spirit", and "Psychology". The object of the Anthropology, spirit as soul or as natural spirit, has its completion in consciousness, the structure of the I in general to the being-object in general. That is to say, the truth of anthropology is phenomenology (appearance; *phainesthai*; *Schein*), or the truth of the soul is consciousness (the structure of the experience of appearances in general). This is the rough map of how the delimitation of anthropologism takes place in Hegel, on Derrida's reading: the soul is eclipsed and preserved, displaced and reinstated, in the next step toward which truth tends, consciousness. In Hegel's sense, truth is "essence as *Gewesenheit*" or "*Wesen* as having-been" (M 143, MP 121). *Erinnerung* names the process by which man's truth appears to him, externally and alienated, then to be internalized and learned in the knowing that annuls space and time. Man's truth is an immanent progression toward a *telos*. So, the truth of anthropology—the phenomenological, or consciousness—is surpassed and conserved when the subject of the "Anthropology" meets its end. The soul

dies, in one sense; then it is born again into its truth, consciousness. Thus, in another sense, the *telos* or end of the soul or of finite man is the fulfillment or accomplishment of man. Man appropriates his essence, consciousness.

The question that interests Derrida is, On what condition does truth in Hegel—the external appearance to consciousness of its having-been (*Gewesnheit*), its recollection or reappropriation, internalization, and learning as its own proper essence (*Wesen*)—proceed? Truth in Hegel is the truth of *man*, or better, of *we* men. The necessity upon which truth proceeds is tied to man’s *telos* or end, which appears to consciousness as his having-been. ‘End’, as I indicated above, is equivocal: first, it is man’s finitude, a death outside him; second, it is the fulfillment or accomplishment of man, knowledge of his essence that annuls time. What Derrida is arguing is that in Hegel metaphysics must take the form of an anthropological teleology. The truth of the anthropological is the phenomenological, the science of the experience of consciousness. This entails the death of finite man and the reappropriation of his essence or having-been, his finitude. In an important passage that encapsulates his reading of the necessity metaphysics harbors in Hegel’s philosophy and in Husserl’s, Derrida says, “*The thinking of the end of man, therefore, is always already prescribed in metaphysics, in the thinking of the truth of man*” (M 144, MP 121). The point Derrida is driving home is that metaphysics prescribes an anthropological teleology. It is as if the basic questions of metaphysics—thinking that seeks to grasp, on the one hand, being as such (general ontology) and, on the other hand, the highest being or being in its totality (speculative theology)—must *by necessity* cast itself as the truth of man.³⁹ This truth is anthropological teleology, taking *telos* in its

³⁹ For this description of the basic questions of metaphysics in the context of what Heidegger calls ontotheology, see his *Identität und Differenz* in *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 11, 62-63, 66, and 76-77; *Identity and*

ambiguity: the death or finitude of man *as* man's fulfillment or accomplishment. Thus we see truth in Hegel's sense at work, the death of finite man, once exterior to him and alienated from him, is reappropriated as a having-been, accomplishing man's essence. What guarantees this "circular reappropriation" is, importantly, the *we*, that is, the coordination between or unity of natural and philosophical consciousness. This *we* is the starting point of the opening "Sense-Certainty" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and secures its path to the chapter on Absolute Knowing. That is to say, the *we*—we are talking about *we men*—guarantees that the externalized appearance of man's having-been, once alienated, can be taken up again as what is man's *own*, that is, internalized and learned as *his proper* end in the Knowing that annuls space and time (*Erinnerung*). This anthropological teleology completes man's truth and constitutes metaphysics. In sum, the *we* ensures the traction or transition between anthropology, phenomenology, and, finally, metaphysics. The highest knowledge of phenomenology, its completion and what is therefore beyond it, Absolute Knowing, could not get off the ground if natural and philosophical consciousness, or the anthropological and the phenomenological, were not already unified in the *we* that can retrospectively reappropriate man's having-been as his own proper end.

This is how Hegel responds to philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, if we accept Derrida's interpretive framework. It should be said that Hegel does not attempt to twist free of metaphysics by retrieving another beginning through its ground concepts and problem, like Heidegger; nor does he attempt to displace the primacy of ontology with the ethical relation to the Other, like Levinas. Nonetheless, the

Difference, 54-55, 58-59, and 70-71. See also his *Einleitung zu 'Was ist Metaphysik?'* In *Wegmarken* 208-09; "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics'" in *Pathmarks* 287-88. Finally, see his *Kants These über das Sein* in *Wegmarken* 277; "Kant's Thesis about Being" in *Pathmarks*, 340.

following can be noted by reading Hegel through the framework of philosophy at the time of the closure. On the one hand, his anthropological teleology critiques or delimits anthropologism, so that one cannot say that his thought belongs entirely to metaphysics; on the other hand, neither can one say, on account of the very same anthropological teleology, that his thought completes metaphysics. Its completion would put Hegel's thought *beyond* metaphysics. Derrida's argument is that the truth of man, his proper end, supplements and reinstates the values of classical metaphysics, undermining what the text wants to say about Absolute Knowing with the very language that it must use. Hegel delimits anthropologism by finding its truth in the phenomenological—in basic terms, the *appearance* of man's *end*, his having-been, as *his own*—but the very path to Absolute Knowing means that he does not seek to leave the anthropological behind—in basic terms, this is the *we* that links natural and philosophical consciousness. In sum, Derrida's argument is that truth in Hegel progresses from Sense-Certainty to Absolute Knowing on the condition of an anthropological teleology that metaphysics itself prescribes. This language of anthropology, lodged deep within metaphysics, is the “subterranean necessity” that “authorizes us today” to consider as “...essentially *anthropic* or anthropocentric everything in metaphysics, or at the limits of metaphysics...” (M 142,MP 119).

The conclusion one may draw from his discussion of Hegel—namely, that, in thinking the truth of man, metaphysics prescribes thinking man's *end* in the dual sense of death and completion—applies to Derrida's reading of Husserl as well. The insertion of this discussion, brief and sandwiched between the developed analysis of Hegel and a lengthy analysis of Heidegger's anthropology (the central figure in “The Ends of Man”),

does not differ essentially from what Derrida offered in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology”. But the terse treatment of Husserl’s transcendental historicity adds new claims by drawing from this work and others.⁴⁰ Thus the major claims about Husserl’s thought at the time of the closure are reiterated. The interpretive framework justifies the approach to read Hegel side by side with Husserl, even if Hegel’s goal was not to distinguish his philosophy from previous metaphysics so strongly as it was for Husserl in his attempt to complete it.

The conclusion one may draw from Derrida’s treatment of Husserl is that, as in Hegel, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology links the thought of the phenomenological, the intentional analysis of sense, with that of the *telos*, the truth of man determined as an Idea in the Kantian sense, or Reason, by a deep necessity that metaphysics itself prescribes. Man, as *animal rationale*, “...designates the site of teleological reason’s unfolding, that is, history” (M 146,MP 122). Reason is history for Husserl, just as it is for Hegel. It is an infinite Idea that regulates and unifies the project of western philosophy and now of transcendental phenomenology according to an immanent, anthropological, teleology. Concerning Husserl’s teleological metaphysics of history, Derrida writes,

Transcendental phenomenology would be the ultimate completion [*accomplissement*] of this teleology of reason that traverses humanity. Thus, under the authority of the founding concepts of metaphysics, which Husserl awakens [*réveille*], reinstates [*restaure*], if necessarily affecting them with phenomenological indices or inverted commas, the

⁴⁰ I agree with Lawlor that in “The Ends of Man” “everything turns on Heidegger” and no longer on Husserl, as in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” (34). If previously the point was to show how Husserl’s phenomenology, with its claims for a universal historicity, tie it back into a metaphysics of presence, the claim now is that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology or truth of Being belong to metaphysics as well. But I also think that Derrida adds a significant claim, without an argument to substantiate it, concerning the genesis of the Idea in the Kantian sense that one does not find in the earlier work. I discuss this claim concerning the “origin of ideality” below (M 147,MP 123). It is likely that Derrida is relying on his analysis elsewhere to substantiate his claim, particularly in his *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, a proper discussion of which would exceed the bounds of the present chapter.

critique of empirical anthropologism is only the affirmation of a transcendental humanism [translation modified] (M 146-47, MP 123).

Husserl's corrective—we might say—*phenomenological* metaphysics thus also subscribes to an anthropological teleology, specifically, a “transcendental humanism”. What ensures the unity of this vision of universal historicity is that each man—we men—shares in this infinite end, Reason, that reaches beyond without being external to his finitude. In fact, Reason is what is proper to man. Reason as an Idea completes or fulfills man's truth—that is to say, *brings to him to his proper end*—his finitude or death: “The end of man (as a factual anthropological limit) is announced to thought from the end of man (as determinate opening or the infinite of a *telos*) [translation modified]” (M 147, MP 123). Here we have the repetition of the two ends of man that we saw in the reading of Hegel: on the one hand, the factual end of man as his death or finitude (the “factual anthropological limit”) and, on the other, the transcendental end of man as his accomplishment or fulfillment (the “determined opening or the infinity of a *telos*”, Reason, as Idea). The latter end, infinite Reason, appears on the condition of the former, finitude. The repetition of man's finitude, the appearance of his death externally and then reappropriated as his own, proper end, is, Derrida claims, the “origin of ideality”. This means that it is the genesis of the Idea in the Kantian sense in general, and of Reason as Idea in particular.

This is a difficult claim to unpack, and Derrida offers little argument even while it is crucial to how he is reading Husserl's universal historicity. Derrida rather relies on arguments in “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” and especially in his *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*. Let me briefly explain the argument's major steps.

In transcendental phenomenology, an ideality like Reason as the end of history appears on the condition of the death of finite man. His death is brought back from the phenomenological and inserted into the teleological. That is to say, that which is outside of and alienated from man, his death or finite limit, must be reappropriated as his ultimate accomplishment and completion, viz. as his infinite end, Reason. What ensures the transition from the *external* appearance of man's finite limit to Reason as the *internal telos* of human history is the most classical value of humanist metaphysics, namely, that we men are all rational animals. As was the case for the progress of the shapes of consciousness and the development of spirit to Absolute Knowing in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the thought is that Husserl's universal historicity is certain of its claims because it unearths what is *internal* and *implicit* to its terrain, viz. the truth of reason that, as Husserl says, "functions in *every man* [my emphasis—PJG]" (quoted in Derrida M 146, MP 122). The anthropological teleology it constructs through this internalist operation distinguishes the phenomenological approach to a metaphysics of historicity from previous speculative or dogmatic metaphysics. The internalist re-appropriation of man's finitude is a repetition. The repetition of his death or end as what properly belongs to man is *productive*.⁴¹ It produces the Idea in the Kantian sense for finite consciousness. This is a passage to the limit of finite man, i.e., the creative power of infinitization beyond his finitude that, while no longer a phenomenal appearance, charges the phenomenologist with the responsibility of an infinite task. The infinitization

⁴¹ On the *productive* nature of the Idea in the Kantian sense, see Derrida's *Edmund Husserl: L'origine de la géométrie* 147 (*Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* 135). What authorizes and prescribes this infinite idea is not something external to finite consciousness but rather *internal* or *implicit* to it. The "idealization of anticipation", i.e., the *formal* structure of anticipatory consciousness (or, temporally speaking, the protentional phase of the Living Present) authorizes and prescribes the presence of the Idea in consciousness.

leads to Reason, man's proper end, as the *telos* of universal historicity in which we all share implicitly. Reason, since it is most properly man's end, is his truth.

The discussion of Hegel, and especially that of Husserl, is dense and complex. I want the following basic points to be taken away from what Derrida is arguing. Hegel and Husserl, each in his own way, is engaged in a project to complete metaphysics, to bring it to its end and therefore in a sense move beyond it. In this endeavor, each offers critiques of the anthropological pitfalls in previous metaphysics. Derrida's primary claim is that to complete metaphysics a meditation on the truth of *man* is necessary; metaphysics itself prescribes and authorizes the task of an anthropological teleology. The truth of man is his *end*. Man's end is, first and foremost, his finitude and death. In and through thinking man's finitude and death is produced an infinitization or an idealization of philosophy's task: in Hegel, it is Absolute Knowing, knowing that annuls space and time; while in Husserl, it is the infinite *telos* of history, Reason as Idea in the Kantian sense. This immanent anthropological teleology, infinitizing an end beyond man's finitude and death but nonetheless produced through an *implicit* or *internalist* operation of thought, promises the completion of metaphysics. Metaphysics, Derrida would say, *knows no other end than man's*.

1. C. (ii.) Metaphysics' Prescription: Anthropological Teleology and the We in Heidegger's Question of Being and Truth of Being

As I described above, the characteristic textual practice of deconstruction, double reading, interweaves two motifs: first, close commentary repeats the text's stated intentions or its dominant interpretation and, second, in and through the repetition, double reading leaves the plane of commentary and exposes the text's ellipses or blind spots.

Leaving the plane of commentary unearths the logic of the text, its hidden decisions, presuppositions, and the subterranean necessities that shape it. The way the text actually works *relieves while reinstating (relever)* and so *supplements* precisely that which it aims to critique. Faced up with this logic, the stated intentions or dominant interpretation is no longer tenable. The final, lengthy discussion of Heidegger in “The Ends of Man” is fully demonstrative of this strategy. Heidegger makes it no secret that his thought means to twist free of humanist metaphysics by and discover another, non-metaphysical beginning for thought by retrieving metaphysics’ “founding concepts and original problematic” (M 162,MP 135).⁴² Thus he far more explicitly poses the question of the closure of metaphysics, of belonging or breakthrough, than Hegel or Husserl. Nonetheless, Derrida shows that, despite Heidegger’s attentive containment of anthropologism and humanism, his thought runs the risk of supplementing precisely that which it wants to destroy, namely, the metaphysical tradition that privileges the present (*Gegenwart*) to determine the meaning of Being.

Derrida’s aim is to “...begin to sketch out the forms of the hold which the ‘humanity’ of man and the thinking of Being, a certain humanism and the truth of Being, maintain one another” (M 148,MP 123-34). Derrida is aware of the nuance this requires, for no one has been so attentive to delimiting anthropologism and humanism in his thought than Heidegger. It is not that Heidegger falls back into an ontic determination of the relation between the “humanity of man” and the “thinking of Being”. Rather it is a “more subtle, hidden, stubborn privilege” in his thought that leads us back to a reconsideration of the ‘we’. As I detailed above, the we is integral to securing Hegel’s

⁴² On this “other inception [*andere Anfang*]” in Heidegger, see, inter al., *Einführung in die Metaphysik* in *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 40, § 11 42 (*Introduction to Metaphysics* 43).

account of Absolute Knowing because it is the presupposition that links philosophical consciousness with natural consciousness; indeed also for Husserl's transcendental historicity and Reason as an Idea in the Kantian sense because the *we* presupposes that the condition for such a historicity, rationality, immediately belongs to all men. Hegel and Husserl each follow an internalist thought operation in order to construct an immanent anthropological teleology for truth. This teleology is secure and certain because man himself is the object of the investigation. Whether as philosophical consciousness or transcendental subjectivity, it is *we ourselves* who *appear* as the end in question. Recourse to the phenomenological continues to privilege the truth and certainty in knowing or in historicity on the basis of the evident self-presence of man. In these returns to the *we*—i.e., each one of us—Derrida detects a sleight of hand: our proximity to this *we*, which none of us can deny, is another way to privilege self-presence as the dominant mode of interpreting truth, history, and Being. If it is the case that the presence of the present is the key interpretive lens through which metaphysics seeks to grasp, on the one hand, being as such (general ontology) and, on the other hand, the highest being or being in its totality (speculative theology), then the totalizing project to complete metaphysics (Hegel) or the project that seeks to answer—although through an altogether different method—the basic questions of metaphysics (Husserl) in fact relieves metaphysics while reinstating it (*relever*), and so supplements that which Hegel and Husserl aim to complete or correct, respectively. With a sense of the gravity of his charge, Derrida imputes the same to Heidegger's attempt to exit the terrain of metaphysics altogether through a repetition and retrieval of its “founding concepts and original problematic” (M 162,MP 135). The exemplary mode of questioning the meaning

of Being is Dasein (as in *Being and Time*), the very beings that we ourselves are; of questioning the truth of Being (in such texts as the “Letter on Humanism”), we men. Hence the essay’s section title, “*Nous lisant*” in Heidegger.

Despite his remarkable attention to anthropologism and humanism in metaphysics, Derrida’s central thesis is that in Heidegger the “...thinking of the proper of man is inseparable from the question or the truth of Being” (M 148,MP 124). The “magnetic attraction” that the proper of man and the question or the truth of Being exercise on each other throughout Heidegger’s texts makes the so-called *Kehre* in his thought after *Being and Time* matter less. Derrida organizes the effects of this attraction under the general concept of “proximity”. It is the interior or implicit path of proximity, that is, what is nearest and most present to itself, that Heidegger’s thought follows. Derrida will understand proximity as a specifically Heideggerian iteration of the metaphysics of presence. He remarks,

It is in the play of a certain proximity, proximity to oneself and proximity to Being, that we will see constituted, against metaphysical humanism and anthropologism, another insistence of man, relaying, reinstating [*relevant*], supplementing that which it destroys [translation modified]... (M 148,MP 124).⁴³

This proximity is the treatment of ontology in the metaphysical tradition. For Heidegger, the emphasis falls on man’s proximity to the question of the meaning of Being (*Being*

⁴³ With the use of a verb like “*détruire*” to describe the aim of Heidegger’s thought, particularly after *Being and Time*, it is unclear if Derrida understands the difference between these stages of Heidegger’s thought vis-à-vis metaphysics, *Verwindung*, *Überwindung*, etc. My sense is that he does not appreciate the nuance and understands Heidegger’s project, in this passage at least, as the *destruction* (*Abbau*) of western metaphysics, viz. the privileging of the present as the determination by which it has understood Being. See “*Lettre à un ami japonais*” (“Letter to a Japanese Friend”) in *Psyché. Invention de l’autre*, volume II, 9-14 (*Psyche: Invention of the Other*, volume II, 1-6). It is the case that Heidegger announces this project of “destruction [*Destruction*]” in *Being and Time* (SZ 19-27,BT 41-49). Yet it would be wrong to understand him as saying that one can get *beyond* metaphysics entirely. Sometimes Derrida seems to suggest that this is Heidegger’s aim. Bernasconi’s article “Seeing Double: Destruction and Deconstruction” in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, edited by D. Michelfelder and R. Palmer (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 233-250, is a starting point for entering the past debate on this issue.

and Time) or, as his thought develops, man's vicinity to Being's coming to presence in the sense of *Anwesenheit* ("Letter on Humanism").

The guiding thread in *Being and Time* for how to reawaken the forgotten question of Being is the existential analytic of Dasein. As Derrida's series of long quotes from *Being and Time* emphasizes, this is the being that each of us himself is. Dasein has as one of the possibilities of its Being inquiring about, as Heidegger puts it, that of which it has a "vague average" understanding, Being (quoted in Derrida M 149,MP 124). In other words, the proximity that each of us has with regard to ourselves gives us the first (albeit "vague average") understanding of Being's presence. The criterion on the basis of which Heidegger decides to pursue the question of Being through the analysis of Dasein is not altogether different from the principle of self-evidence in Husserl (M 150,MP 124). Yet it is not presence as in adequate self-evidence for a particular empirical thing or nonphenomenal object (e.g., Reason), as with Husserl, that counts but Dasein's nearness to the ground for all such ontical determinations of Being. Derrida continues,

The proximity to itself of the inquirer authorizes the identity of the inquirer and the interrogated. We who are close to ourselves, *we* interrogate *ourselves* about the meaning of Being (M 150,MP 126).

The thought is that the analysis follows the path of what is *interior* or *implicit* to Dasein's own possibilities, namely, questioning Being, insofar as Dasein already has some vague average understanding of Being as an absolute fact. This internalist operation is, after all, why the existential discussion of Dasein is *analytic* and not *synthetic*. Thus, on the basis of the formal structure of proximity or self-presence of inquirer to what is inquired about, Dasein has the privileged position to question about Being. But Dasein is not some far off being, a remote possibility of ourselves that we encounter only on reflection. What secures access to the question of Being is in fact very near: we ourselves are Dasein. On a

pragmatic view, Dasein's 'eksistence' is essential to our lives. We conduct our business, shape our possibilities on the basis of our values and goals, and have concerns for our being and for the being of others on the basis of an everyday understanding of Being, as *Being and Time* goes on to show.

While the value of proximity, that is, the self-presence of the inquirer (Dasein) to that which is inquired (Being), guides the existential analytic, it is also the case, Heidegger acknowledges, that our proximity to ourselves is only an ontic determination. Ontologically, by contrast, we are very far from the Being that we ourselves are (paraphrased in Derrida M 152,MP 127). The reality is that we take our Being in a vague average and everyday way, determined essentially with regard to the context (historical, linguistic, cultural, etc.) in which we find ourselves. This preoccupation almost entirely clouds the question of the meaning of Being. What is most proper to Dasein, Heidegger argues in *Being and Time*, is to reawaken this forgotten question. The reason that this nearness-distance narrative of what is proper to us is important is that, after the so-called *Kehre*, Heidegger will not cease to attempt to close this distance, Derrida claims. There is, as I quoted above, a "magnetic attraction" in his thought that continues to pull together the proper of man and the truth of Being, of which Heidegger was no doubt aware. Derrida wants to unearth and articulate the "profound necessity [*nécessité profonde*]" that animates it (M 157,MP 131). This is, as I mentioned above, the *logos* or logocentrism. In particular, it takes the form in Heidegger of ontic metaphor, which continuously places his thinking back within the anthropological metaphysics from which he wished to twist free. While Heidegger devotes a massive effort to find another, non-metaphysical beginning for thinking, in Derrida's assessment his thought, focusing exclusively on the

internal or the *implicit* (the Dasein that we ourselves are, proximity, self-presence, what is proper, etc.) fails to respond adequately to the closure of metaphysics.

Heidegger is, in Derrida's coinage, attempting to come to terms with philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics. This entails a delimitation or a bracketing of humanism and anthropologism within metaphysics in order to repeat and retrieve its founding concepts and original problematic. Nonetheless, Derrida argues that, at the site of this delimitation, the thinking of the truth of Being "remains as thinking *of* man" (M 153,MP 128). It consists in man finding his way back into the nearness of Being. Thereby Derrida interprets Heidegger to be conducting a "reevaluation or revalorization" of the essence and dignity of man (although *not* the human) in the "Letter on Humanism" (M 154,MP 128). It is precisely in this "reevaluation or revalorization", a "restoration" of man's dignity to a mutual correspondence with Being's dignity and a restoration of man's proximity to a mutual correspondence with the proximity of Being, that Heidegger relieves while reinstating (*relever*) and so supplements that which his thinking seeks to destroy, anthropologism and metaphysical humanism (M 155,MP 130). In each of his analyses of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, Derrida argues that there is a "subterranean necessity" in metaphysics itself that prescribes the thinking of the truth of man *as* the thinking of the end of man (or anthropological teleology). Metaphysics knows no other truth than man's end. This leads, as we saw, to the *relève* of a certain anthropologism and a certain humanism in Hegel and Husserl. Ultimately, neither exits from metaphysical humanism, even while a massive effort is made to delimit or bracket the pitfalls of the tradition. For Hegel as for Husserl, the truth of the anthropological is in the phenomenological, which ties them back into the metaphysics of presence. What is

aligning itself in Heidegger is similarly, in the repetition of metaphysics' founding concepts and original problematic, the thinking of Being *as* a thinking of the truth of man and vice versa. One should understand the "end of man" in Heidegger as the destruction and completion of an anthropologic or humanistic determination of man. However, in thinking the truth of man under the concept of proximity—nearness and self-presence to Being as what is proper to man—he runs the risk of restoring once again the traditional value of presence. That is Derrida's claim.

In order to account for the "...properly ontological repetition of this thinking of the near and the far", Heidegger must resort to metaphor (M 157,MP 131). What "profound necessity" compels Heidegger to metaphorize Being's coming to presence and the corresponding truth of man? It is the alleged simplicity, the nearness, and the self-presence of the word itself that speaks Being. The presence of Being in language, as in poetry, prompts a carefully chosen "metaphorics of proximity" that would reduce the ontological distance in Heidegger's thought (M 156,MP 130). What unifies his metaphorics of proximity—of the house of Being, of shelter, of the voice, of listening, etc.; and also the traditional phenomenological metaphors of appearance and light—is the privileging of a certain kind of presence, albeit not presence determined on the basis of the present (*Gegenwart*), as in classical metaphysics. Being speaks to man because that is what is proper to man's essence. Without man's use of metaphor, Being could not announce itself at all. Yet, Derrida concludes,

...if Heidegger has so radically deconstructed the power of the *present* [viz. *die Gegenwart*] over metaphysics, it is in order to lead us to think the presence of the present [viz. *die Anwesenheit*]. But the thinking of this presence can only metaphorize, by means of a profound necessity, from which one cannot escape by a simple decision, the language that it deconstructs [translation modified] (M 157-58,MP 131).

We have already seen the ontic metaphor at work in the notions of the *near* and the *far*. The *near* and the *far* do not denote a spacio-temporal determination of we men with regard to our Being (*Being and Time*) or to Being itself (“Letter on Humanism”). While the proper anthropological thinking promises an immediate, simple, implicit disclosure of man’s proximity to the truth of Being, Derrida’s argument is that the *near* and the *far* actually follows a “*spacing* [espacement]” that *dislocates* and indefinitely *defers* the immediate and simple self-presence Heidegger is after (M 159-60, MP 130-31).

Heidegger’s thought gears itself toward bringing man back into the immediate and simple presence of the present through a meditation on the interior or the implicit. Yet it is built on the desideratum for self-presence that Heidegger fails to recognize is impossible; his thought only produces the *effects* of this self-presence. This argument concerning “*spacing*”, or *différance*, applies to any of the ontic metaphors Heidegger uses to approach the question of or truth of Being.⁴⁴ Exiting the plane of strict commentary on and repetition of the text’s main intentions, Derrida’s double reading exposes the blind spot that results from its very logic. Heidegger’s discourse on *interiority* or the *implicit*—i.e., the simple and immediate presence of man and Being co-articulating one another—runs the risk of restoring and supplementing precisely that from which he tried to twist free.

Derrida shows that the notions of proximity and the proper tie the truth of Being and the truth of man intimately such that Heidegger cannot help but say Being through a certain anthropology. This anthropology, in turn, runs the risk of renewing the metaphysics of presence. He writes, “Propriety, the co-propriety of Being and man, is

⁴⁴ On the notion of *différance*, which I take to be essentially the same as spacing (*espacement*), see Derrida’s essay “*La différence*” (“*Différance*”) in M 3-29, MP 3-27.

proximity as inseparability” (M 160,MP 133). It is not merely *Being’s* coming to presence that Heidegger privileges but *man’s coming into his own*. Thus, in securing the near, the co-belonging and co-propriety of man and Being, the claim is that a certain *relève* of man occurs. Transposing the key sentence from his discussion of Hegel to his discussion of Heidegger, one can revise it to read in the following way: *The thinking of the truth of Being (man’s proper end), therefore, is always already prescribed in metaphysics, in the thinking of the truth of man.*

Turning, then, to contextualize his analysis of the “...security of the near, that is, the co-belonging and co-propriety of the name of man and the name of Being...” in Heidegger in terms of the question, “Where is France, as concerns man?”, Derrida remarks that it is precisely this “security of the near” that is “trembling” today (M 161,MP 133). Recall that the we was integral to the discourses covered—the we linked philosophical and natural consciousness in Hegel; linked transcendental subjectivity with the rational animal in Husserl; linked Dasein with the being that each of us is in Heidegger—in order to establish the sure-footing of their respective paths. That is to say, because the first person plural pronoun connotes an immediate, simple, almost undeniable presence of the self to itself, it is hard to envision how a dialectical account of truth and knowing, a phenomenological account of transcendental historicity, or an account of the truth of Being could proceed *except through* positing man as its end, in the dual sense of his finitude and his accomplishment or completion. Collectively, each of these otherwise diverse philosophies is responding to philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, Derrida is arguing, with a certain *relève* of man, delimiting and

displacing anthropologism and humanism, yet reinstating them in a new and different way through a thinking of *interiority* or what is *implicit* in our presence to ourselves.

1. C. (iii.) Two Strategies of Deconstruction, the Path of Interiority and the Path of Exteriority, and Derrida's Response

Reading Heidegger's philosophy through the interpretive framework of philosophy at the time of the closure, Derrida is able to organize it under one of two banners.⁴⁵ Each of these two banners is a "form" or a "strategy" of deconstruction that responds to the closure by trying to make an exit from the metaphysical tradition. Heidegger's thinking follows a path of thinking *interiority* or what is *implicit*, that is, of repeating the tradition in order to "...attempt an exit and a deconstruction without changing terrain..." (M 162, MP 135). Yet his meditation on language as the site of Being's coming to presence, as we saw, runs the risk of reinforcing metaphysics by reinstating a discourse on man. This happens by consequence of a "profound necessity", in particular, the metaphorical language Heidegger must use about man's proximity (read: presence) to what is proper to him, the truth of Being. I suggest, stressing the seminal impact the writing of "Violence and Metaphysics" had on Derrida's thinking during this period (which we will see shortly), that we should identify this "subterranean", "profound", or "anonymous" necessity as the Greek *logos* or what Derrida will come to coin logocentrism.

The metaphors of proximity and the proper of man and of Being follow an *internalist* march toward the truth of Being in order to exit the terrain through another, non-metaphysical beginning in philosophy. In the very strategy of deconstruction he

⁴⁵ Besides this rubric, Derrida mentions two others in an effort to "mark the effects of the total trembling" not only of Heidegger's thought but of contemporary "'France' or French thought" that is left to deal with the question philosophy at the closure. For a cogent presentation, see Lawlor *Derrida and Husserl* 41-43.

practices, Derrida's reading implies, Heidegger *excludes* any possible question outside that of the question or truth of Being and the truth of man. Derrida's double strategy is keen on such exclusions, for they allege clean divisions. Yet the exclusion of one of the complementary terms in a conceptual coupling—e.g., inside-outside, interiority-exteriority, immanent-transcendent, etc.—is anything but clean. The excluded complementary term conditions and contaminates the term that remains. The "...repetition of what is *implicit* in the founding concepts and the original problematic [my emphasis—PJG]..." remains contaminated by what it has always excluded (M 163,MP 135). This is why the "security of the near", Heidegger's internalist thought, "*solicits* [my emphasis—PJG]" a "certain outside" that causes, from Derrida's point of view, the edifice of this thought tremble. Even Heidegger underestimated the unforeseeable resources in the Greek *logos*. To paraphrase Derrida in "Violence and Metaphysics", one who would seek to repel or neglect some part of it—like the outside, exteriority, the transcendent, etc.—would end up being overtaken by it (ED 165,WD 111-12). This is reverberating, on Derrida's reading of contemporary French thought, through France today.

Derrida first presents this understanding of the Greek *logos* in "Violence and Metaphysics", where he developed the reading of Levinas as a thinker of *exteriority*. This essentially informs his reading of Heidegger as a thinker of *interiority* in "The Ends of Man" and other essays.⁴⁶ Although he does not name Levinas, it is not a stretch to think that his thought is an example of the second strategy of deconstruction, which involves deciding to "...change terrain, in a discontinuous and irruptive fashion, by brutally placing oneself outside, and by affirming an absolute break and difference" (M 162,MP

⁴⁶ See, for instance, "Ousia and grammé" in M 31-78,MP 29-67.

135).⁴⁷ But this second strategy, like the first, runs a risk. The belief that it produces an exit by means of a focus that develops the thought of an outside of philosophy or nonphilosophy may be naïve. In Levinas' case, Derrida's argument will be that he must employ the language of ontology—philosophical language, the language of the inside—in order to describe the ethical relation to what is allegedly outside it, the Other. If that is the case, then the "...simple practice of language ceaselessly reinstates the new terrain on the oldest ground"; if he maintains a language that would claim not to reduce the Other to the Same, by contrast, then it would not be obvious how this could be cogent and understandable. The Other would be rather "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable", as Derrida memorably concludes in "Violence and Metaphysics" (ED 168, WD 114).

Although the two strategies of deconstruction follow divergent paths, one of interiority at the consequence of exteriority (Heidegger) and one of exteriority at the consequence of interiority (Levinas), the resulting risk remains the same: the impossibility of exiting from the ontological tradition and the constant reaffirmation, in new and diverse ways, of the metaphysics of presence in the face of the risk of being unintelligible. The upshot of the two deconstructive strategies for the textual practice of double reading is to render a choice between them undecideable.

This interpretive framework, philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, and the double reading that exposes the blind spots in each strategy, allows Derrida to formulate a consolidated or compatibilist response out of the bankruptcy of choosing one or the other.⁴⁸ Learning from the pitfalls of each strategy, yet acknowledging the need for

⁴⁷ Bernasconi is the first to suggest this reading in his "The Trace of Levinas in Derrida" 16-17.

⁴⁸ On this bankruptcy or impossibility of choosing today, see Derrida's remark at the end of "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" that "...I do not believe that today there is any question of *choosing*..." between "two interpretations of interpretation", namely, the structuralist negative

a “change of terrain”, a “...new writing must weave and interlace these two motifs of deconstruction. Which amounts to saying that one must speak several languages and produce several texts at once” (M 163,MP 135).⁴⁹ This “new writing” functions already in the first published version of “Violence and Metaphysics” in 1964 and crystallizes in the version revised for inclusion in *Writing and Difference*. I, following other commentators, have called it double reading: close commentary, repeating the text’s intentions (interiority), and, in an through this repetition, running what the text wants to say up against how it functions, exposing it to its own blind spots (exteriority). That he does not announce it as a guiding textual practice in “Violence and Metaphysics” has thrown many commentators off the mark. They focus on Derrida’s criticisms of Levinas.⁵⁰ Appropriately, my reading will not center on what seem like criticisms but rather the problems that this “new writing”, interweaving two forms of deconstruction, bequeath to Levinas. This approach will then put me in a position in Chapter 4 to present and assess the philosophical resources that Levinas retrieves from his earlier work in order to respond to Derrida’s challenging reading of his notion of transcendence. If, as I claim, Levinas directs the argument in Chapter I *Otherwise than Being* against Derrida and that, moreover, this argument sets the stage for the rest of the work, then one must come to clear terms with the near obsession “Violence and Metaphysics” seemed to exercise on his thought after *Totality and Infinity*.

thematic (Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss) and the “joyous affirmation of the play of the world” (Nietzsche) (ED 427-28,WD 292-93). Similarly, in “Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language”, Derrida remarks that “...one probably does not have to choose between two lines of thought” (M 207,MP 173). Rather, just as in his discussions of the security that the we establishes between man and knowing, historicity, or Being in Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, one has to “...meditate upon the circularity which makes them pass into one another infinitely”. Cf. also the remarks Derrida makes in *De la grammatologie* (*Of Grammatology*) (DG 91,OG 62).

⁴⁹ Cf. “Ousia and Grammé”, where Derrida remarks of the need for “Two texts, two hands, two visions, two was of listening. Together simultaneously and separately” (M 75,MP 65).

⁵⁰ For instance, Häggglund in his *Radical Atheism* 76-102.

Conclusion

In this chapter, my analysis has focused on two of Derrida's essays, "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" and "The Ends of Man". The aim was to describe philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, the dominant framework through which Derrida interprets texts during this period of his work, and to give an account of double reading, the characteristic strategy of deconstruction. This sets the table for my analysis of Derrida's systematic encounter with Levinas' thought in "Violence and Metaphysics", to which I devote the next chapter.

As I have already pointed out, "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology", on the one hand, was delivered in 1959, first published in 1965 and republished in *Writing and Difference* in 1967 and "The Ends of Man", on the other hand, was published in 1972. "Violence and Metaphysics", published first in 1964 and then revised and expanded for inclusion in the volume *Writing and Difference* in 1967, exercises a seminal influence, on my reading, on the development of the textual practices in these two essays. This is particularly clear in the revisions and additions Derrida makes to his analysis of Husserl in the first essay and the two strategies of deconstruction by which Derrida reads Hegel and Heidegger as well as Derrida's own response to these strategies in the second.

What in Derrida's reading of Levinas accounts for the development of philosophy at the time of the closure and double reading in the final version of "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" and in "The Ends of Man"? I suggest that part of the answer lies in the decisive role Levinas' notion of the trace plays on the development of Derrida's own philosophy. This notion gains particular significance for Derrida between the first and second publication of "Violence and Metaphysics", as I will detail in the

next chapter with a reading that highlights his additions to the second. According to one commentator, the two versions of “Violence and Metaphysics” present “...two different stages in Derrida’s encounter with Levinas’ notion of the trace”.⁵¹ I shall have occasion to revisit this in particular below in 2. C. To conclude, I should like to underscore the outcome of my analysis of Husserl’s Idea in the Kantian sense in 1. B. (i.) as it pertains to Levinas.

Levinas already conceives in his first major work in 1961, *Totality and Infinity*, an actual infinity *in* experience for which experience gives us inadequate evidence in the form of desire for the other human being. Infinity in that work is not that of dogmatic metaphysics, viz., a positive plenitude, unique (or incomparable), and internally undifferentiated. This is how Derrida often takes it in “Violence and Metaphysics”. By contrast, the infinity Levinas describes in *Totality and Infinity* as “beyond” the totality and objective experience “...is reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience” (TI xi, TaI 23).⁵² This suggests that the structure of the trace already operates, albeit implicitly, in the 1961 work, well before it is made a theme in “The Trace of the Other” (1963) and “Meaning and Sense” (1964). The trace operates implicitly, for

⁵¹ Bernasconi’s “The Trace of Levinas in Derrida” 15. Derrida mentions in the first footnote of the 1964 version of “Violence and Metaphysics” (retained in the 1967 revised version) that he can only give brief allusions to two important works, “*La trace de l’autre*” (“The Trace of the Other”) and “*La signification et le sens*” (“Meaning and Sense”), as they were appearing at the time his essay was in press (ED 117n.1, WD 311n.1). Bernasconi notes, however, that Derrida encounters the notion of the trace as early as 1963 when he hears Levinas’ early version of “Meaning and Sense” in a lecture at the *Collège Philosophique* (28n.7 and 8). He suggests that the trace comes too late for Derrida to make a proper account of it in 1964. However, even the significant additions on the trace in the revised “Violence and Metaphysics” do not reflect Derrida’s more positive attitude toward the trace in other works contemporaneous with *Writing and Difference*. I return to this below in 2. C.

⁵² In his review of *Totality and Infinity* thirty years after *Writing and Difference* in the work *Le mot d’accueil* (*A Word of Welcome*), Derrida is entirely aware of the significance of infinity reflected “...within the totality and history, *within* experience”. He does not quote this directly. But the variations on this thought are abundant in *Totality and Infinity*, such as when Derrida discusses discourse and teaching. There he quotes Levinas from *Totality and Infinity*, “...teaching does not come down to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and *brings me more than I can contain* [my emphasis—PJG]” (quoted in A 57, AEL 27). That formulation follows the formal structure Levinas names the “idea of Infinity in us” (TI 52, TaI 79).

instance, in Levinas' notion of the "posteriority of the anterior" when he interprets the causal argument for God's existence in the third of Descartes' *Meditations* (TI 25, TaI 54). I return to this reading and to the related formal structure of the "idea of Infinity in us" in 5. C. (i.) § 1 below (TI 52, TaI 79). It sets the stage for my discussion of the concrete structure of transcendence Levinas calls fecundity. By reading fecundity through the trace, and not merely as a biological notion, one can appreciate how it deeply integrates *Totality and Infinity* with the ethical language Levinas develop in later works to respond to the challenge that "Violence and Metaphysics" presents to his thought.

CHAPTER 2.

HISTORY, TRANSCENDENCE, AND THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OF THE INFINITELY OTHER:

THE CHALLENGE OF DERRIDA'S "VIOLENCE AND METAPHYSICS"

The conceptual work describing philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, double reading, and the metaphysics of presence have prepared the way for me to present and assess Derrida's systematic encounter with Levinas' thought in his long essay "Violence and Metaphysics". In Chapter 1, I drew on the two strategies of deconstruction that Derrida organizes at the conclusion of his 1972 essay "The Ends of Man" to show how, in his evaluation, Heidegger practices the first, the path of interiority, and to suggest that Levinas practices the second, the path of exteriority. I did not mention where Derrida places Husserl, even as I spent a fair portion of the chapter discussing Derrida's reading of his notion of reason as an Idea in the Kantian sense in "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology". Already in the introductory remarks of 1964 version of "Violence and Metaphysics" (retained in 1967), Derrida places him on the same footing as Heidegger (ED 120-21, WD 81).⁵³ Reading the two strategies of deconstruction back through this passage would suggest that Husserl practices the first, like Heidegger. But "The Ends of Man" also warns of the risk this "...repeating what is implicit in the founding concepts and the original problematic..." of Greek philosophy runs, namely,

⁵³ The 1964 publication of "Violence and Metaphysics" was split into two consecutive issues of the journal *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, with the first issue comprising Derrida's introductory remarks, part I "The Violence of Light" and part II "Phenomenology, Ontology, Metaphysics" and the second issue comprising the final part, III "Difference and Eschatology".

that of reconfirming a metaphysics of presence by reinstating a discourse on man (M 162,MP 135). In a 1967 addition to “Violence and Metaphysics”, Derrida makes his verdict on Husserl clear: his phenomenology “...remains dominated by a metaphysics of presence” (ED 197,WD 134).⁵⁴ In Derrida’s evaluation, Levinas’ thought, by contrast, *does not* belong to a metaphysics of presence. It poses the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure, as my reading in this chapter will show. For this reason, it is misguided to conclude that “Violence and Metaphysics” is only a reading critical of Levinas’ philosophy.⁵⁵

The plan for this chapter is as follows. I organize the problems Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” presents Levinas under two general headings, the problems of history and language, on the one hand, and the problem of the right to speak of the infinitely other, on the other hand. In Part One, my focus is the former. Section 2. A. sets the stage for the problems of history and language by explaining the enigmatic opening remarks of “Violence and Metaphysics”. It is not lost on Derrida that transcendence is the main proposition of Levinas’ thought. Should it fail, then so does the philosophy he develops from the nonphilosophical experience of the infinitely other. I sketch how Levinas will respond to this challenge in *Otherwise than Being*. Section 2. B. presents transcendence through the lens of the key passage Derrida adds to the 1967 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics” on the problem of the closure. Transcendence turns out to be a one-sided response to the problem of conceiving the difference that structures the conceptual oppositions in philosophical discourse. I make terminological distinctions in

⁵⁴ In his *Derrida and Husserl*, Lawlor attributes this verdict to Derrida’s reading of Husserl in his *Voice and Phenomenon*, which was published in the same year as *Writing and Difference* (160). For Lawlor’s informative analysis of *Voice and Phenomenon*, see 166-208.

⁵⁵ See Hägglund’s *Radical Atheism* 76-102.

order to get clearer on what the closure means and the degree to which transcendence is successful in animating it qua problem, even if for Derrida it is unsuccessful for developing a philosophical response to it. Reviewing passages in which Derrida takes Levinas to align with the metaphysics of presence and others in which he ruptures with it, section 2. C. presents Derrida's strategy of writing with two hands. I argue that he not only writes with two hands, but plays two hands at once: where Derrida sees ruptures from the metaphysics of presence in Levinas' thought, he finds the notion of the trace. Should it not be the case, then, that Derrida in the 1967 republication rehabilitate transcendence through the trace? I suggest that Derrida neglects the trace not in order to win the day or preserve the line from the 1964 publication, but because the closure framework is so persuasive. Key to my argument will be the changes and additions Derrida made to the 1964 publication of the essay for its inclusion in *Writing and Difference* in 1967.

These changes and additions will again be key in section 2. D., which presents Levinas' conceptions of history and language in juxtaposition with Derrida's. This leads Derrida to imply that Levinas' discourse runs the risk of irresponsibility for the claims it makes, an allegation that Levinas will take seriously, even if Derrida shows how Levinas escapes this charge. Derrida's reading is that Levinas' thought is mired in the typical tropes of transcendental philosophy, archaeology and eschatology. The test to which Derrida subjects transcendence is predicated on this reading. To substantiate his claims about transcendence, Levinas must use the very things he jettisons for their violent betrayal of the infinitely other, history and philosophical language, as supplements. For Derrida, history conceived on the formal model of what he calls a *structural totality* turns

out to better fulfill the criteria Levinas himself sets for transcendence and thus for philosophy at the time of the closure. The analysis in Part One sets up the main objective of my later chapters, particularly Chapters 4 and 5: to present the resources that Levinas will retrieve from his earlier works in order to develop transcendence through the notion of the trace in order to respond in his second major work in 1974, *Otherwise than Being*, and several essays leading up to its publication to the problems of history and language in “Violence and Metaphysics”.

In Part Two, my attention shifts to the problem of grounding the right to speak of an *infinitely other*, of whom Levinas in fact speaks abundantly. Section 2. E. covers Derrida’s challenge to Levinas to legitimate his basic premise that the other, without relation to the same, is an absolute origin or end of the world, history, and meaning without the handy tropes of archaeology or eschatology. Derrida understands the desire that the encounter with the infinitely other engenders in the same through the traditional language of moral philosophy, namely, through the theme of *respect* for the other. Characterizing desire in Levinas through the pacific and conciliatory movement of respect misses the mark, I suggest, and this is nowhere more apparent than in his notion of subjectivity in *Otherwise than Being*. I make this point here, but save it for my presentation of desire in *Totality and Infinity* in Chapter 5.

Finally, section 2. F. shows how Derrida writes with two hands, interweaving Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology and Levinas’ thought of the infinitely other. By posing two philosophies at once, Derrida is able to carve out a position that belongs to neither and to develop his own philosophical tools to respond to the closure, each of which I explain. Derrida finds resources in Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology,

specifically the thematic of intersubjectivity, for legitimating the right to speak of an infinitely other that stakes no claims about an origin or an end. If one underscores key additions Derrida makes to the 1967 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics”, one can show that this is because Husserl thinks the transcendental ego through what Derrida calls *system*: Husserl must include, as *necessary supplements*, in his analyses of the transcendental ego what a metaphysics of presence excludes. I suggest that we might find a similar logic at work if we understand Levinas’ notions of ego or I (*moi*) and self (*soi*), or his notion of ipseity, through the structure of substitution. While Levinas will develop more fully the identity of ipseity and substitution in works subsequent to “Violence and Metaphysics”, Levinas already has resources for them in earlier works. The closure framework is so persuasive that Derrida misses them. I take up the presentation and analysis of these resources from earlier works through the lens of key notions in *Otherwise than Being* in Chapter 4.

PART ONE. PUTTING TRANSCENDENCE TO THE TEST:

THE PROBLEMS OF HISTORY AND LANGUAGE

In Part One of this chapter, I want to cover two major problems for Levinas’ philosophy that arise from Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics”. With the problems of history and language, Derrida puts Levinas’ central philosophical idea, transcendence, to the test. The design of this test follows the chief interpretive framework through which Derrida investigates authors during this period—and, one might argue, throughout his writing—the problem of philosophy faced with the closure of metaphysics. Is the

structure Levinas specifies in transcendence successful in negotiating between the order of being and what is beyond being as he suggests, breaking through, as Derrida takes it, toward the "...beyond of philosophical discourse...*within language*"? (ED 163, WD 110-11) For Derrida, posing the problem of the "*relations between belonging and breakthrough*", or the problem of the closure, cannot conclude in a *choice* for one or the other. Rather, conceiving the *difference* in which these alternatives are maintained leads to undecideability. This difference is *writing* (as *différance*) and the series of terms with which Derrida associates it in this essay, each of which I will explain. Undecideability does not mean that one no longer writes; one is still obligated to do philosophy. Derrida for this reason develops writing with two hands, interweaving the internalist (belonging: chiefly, in "Violence and Metaphysics", Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger) and externalist (breakthrough: Levinas) forms of deconstruction that he sketches later at the close of "The Ends of Man". This is how one should read "Violence and Metaphysics". The interpretive framework and philosophical strategy are so persuasive, I shall argue, that Derrida neglects other resources in Levinas, like the trace, through which to understand transcendence. Where transcendence *should* negotiate between belonging and breakthrough, Levinas falls into the dilemma of a choice, undermining his thought of an infinitely other. History and language become problems for his discourse: each must supplement transcendence. Thus, for Derrida, transcendence succeeds only in provoking the problem of the closure, not in responding to it.

II. A. Athens or Jerusalem? Transcendence, History, and the Injunction for

Philosophy at the Closure in Derrida's Opening Remarks

Given the presentation of the previous chapter, we are in an advantageous position to contextualize the otherwise cryptic introduction to “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas”. The key interpretive framework Derrida uses for reading philosophy during this period of his writing is the problem of the closure of metaphysics. He begins *in medias res* with the question of the death or dying of philosophy and the foundation of the community of philosophers devoted to this question (ED 117-18, WD 79). What this means today, and at least since Hegel, Derrida continues, is that the community of philosophers conceives philosophy historically. Conceiving philosophy historically does not mean, merely or primarily, research that documents a history of philosophy. It rather means taking history itself as the primary philosophical question or problem. If the question of history is the other of philosophical thought, philosophy, recognizing itself in otherness, reflects upon its own finitude (death or dying) in the wake of the bankruptcy of traditional concepts that identify truth and presence. A reflection on finitude raises the question of philosophy’s future or fate. How does philosophy today conceive the problem of the relation between belonging to its history, a history in which, for Derrida, thought has been dominated by a metaphysics of presence or logocentrism, and the profound need, seen in figures like Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger (each of whom Derrida explicitly mentions in the opening passage), to break through this history toward the beyond of philosophical discourse? What accounts for the *difference* between the relations of belonging and breakthrough is a more systematic conception of history that Derrida conceives on the formal model of what he calls a structural totality, as I will detail in the final section of this Part One of this chapter. The chief resource he develops between the 1964

publication of “Violence and Metaphysics” and its revised publication in *Writing and Difference* for advancing this conception of history is writing. The claim will be that, through writing (as *différance*), history better fulfills the criteria for what Levinas calls transcendence.

For Derrida, the problem of the closure contextualizes the recent philosophical responses to the question of philosophy’s finite nature and future. This is what he calls the “community of the question” (ED 118, ED 80). Would these be the only ways of responding to the closure? Derrida speaks cryptically of an “...*other* absolute origin, an other absolute decision...” that “liberates an incomparable teaching: the discipline of the question [translation modified]”. Levinas does not fit suitably into the community of philosophers who reflect on the Greek lineage of philosophy and take up history, the problem of conceiving the relations of belonging and rupture from this lineage, as the problem of philosophy today *par excellence*. The point Derrida will demonstrate in the essay is that, whereas recent philosophers responding to the problem of the closure believe implicitly that a completion, reformation, or twisting free of metaphysics cannot be accomplished except using the primary philosophical resource, the Greek logos, Levinas explicitly rejects it in his attempt to articulate transcendence beyond philosophical discourse and history. On Derrida’s reading, the injunction for Levinas is not to philosophize as in Athens but rather an ethical injunction to take up the “teaching [translation modified]” and “discipline” of an “*other* absolute origin”, Jerusalem. What awakens philosophy for Levinas is not the problem of history but the problem of the other human existent, or the ethical relation. From the very outset of his essay, Derrida frames his reading of Levinas through the problem of the closure, where the problem of

the relation between belonging and breakthrough is one of a *choice* between Athens and Jerusalem. The question he will raise at the end is, If Levinas chooses Jerusalem, does this in fact constitute a rupture with Athens? Or does one still have to philosophize, i.e., speak in the language of Greek philosophy, the logos? (See ED 226, WD 152)

A difference between two conceptions of philosophy occupies the “community of the question” (i.e., of philosophers), as Derrida continues. On the one hand, there is the conception of philosophy as the “question in general” (ED 119, WD 81). Philosophy in this case is the only form the question or questioning in general has taken; or, at the very least, philosophy has historically dominated the form of the question and the responses to it, such that it can claim exclusive rights of determination and access. On the other hand, there is the conception of “...‘philosophy’ as determined—finite and mortal—moment or mode of the question itself...”. In this case, philosophy is conceived within the historical context of what Derrida calls the question. This is the conception that opens the essay, namely, that philosophy, reflecting on its death or dying (as if a work of memorializing), must be surpassed, renewed, or begin again otherwise. Is philosophy the “...power and adventure *of* the question itself...”, the only possible form of the question, such that what has been traditionally called philosophy claims exclusive rights for determining and accessing it? Or is philosophy only a “...determined event or turning point *within* this adventure”, subject to ruptures from the outside? It is not so much the *choice* between one conception and the other as it is the *difference* between them that, on Derrida’s reading, “...is perhaps the most deeply inscribed characteristic of our age”. A “combat” plays out that “maintains itself [or: is maintained, *se tient*]” in this difference. Conceiving the difference between these conceptions is characteristic of the problem of the closure.

To conceive this difference, Husserl and Heidegger, in particular, “have ordered us” to a “total repetition” of the origin of the question in Greek thought (ED 120, WD 81). This repetition, in other words, takes the form of a historical investigation into philosophy’s source and tradition, i.e., its Greek lineage. Husserl’s phenomenology and Heidegger’s ontology share this drive to investigate philosophy historically. They conduct the investigation, Derrida explains, according to three common motifs: first, they take Greek—as our very language, conceptually speaking—as the exclusive medium of philosophy; second, they put into brackets, or reduce, metaphysics; third and finally, they dislocate ethics. These three motifs “...arrayed at the unique source of the unique philosophy...”, Greek philosophy, would determine the “...only possible direction to be taken by any philosophical resource in general” (ED 121, WD 82). Derrida concludes forcefully that, “No philosophy could possibly dislodge [these three motifs] without finally destroying itself as a philosophical language”.

If we are to follow Derrida’s reading, Levinas, claiming the lineage of an “*other* absolute origin”, attempts to dislodge these motifs by speaking of an absolutely or infinitely other who cannot be conceived in the language of Greek philosophy. Derrida comments, first, that Levinas’ thought strives for liberation from the Same (the light of Being) and the One (the phenomenon) because ontological oppression (Heidegger) and transcendental oppression (Husserl) are the origin and alibi for all oppression in the world. Second, he notes that Levinas’ thought obstinately defines itself as metaphysical, even after the reduction of metaphysics Husserl and Heidegger practice. Finally, Levinas’ thought calls upon the ethical relationship, a “...nonviolent relation to the infinite as infinitely other [*autre*], to the Other [*autrui*]...” as the only way to open the “space” of

“transcendence and of liberating metaphysics” (ED 123, WD 83). These three are the basic propositions of Levinas’ thought, as Derrida understands it. Yet there is an implicit order of priority. Only through the ethical relation to the infinitely other and the structure that explains it, transcendence, are liberation from the violent domination of being, appearance, and the categories that describe them, on the one hand, and a metaphysics very different from the Greek, on the other hand, possible. Thus the third proposition, as the condition for the first two, has priority, if Levinas’ thought is to respond to the repetitions of Greek philosophy—that is to say, to *history* as the object or other of philosophy—that Husserl and Heidegger call for and to dislodge the three motifs these repetitions conduct.

The relation to the infinitely other, as one of transcendence, must negotiate between the order of being, on the one hand, and a beyond being, on the other. To conceive a pure beyond of philosophical discourse either says nothing, where *nothing* is a determinate category of being; or it is nonsense. While the axe of Derrida’s reading will fall on the “unthinkable, impossible, unutterable” other of which Levinas abundantly speaks, it does so *only because*, on Derrida’s reading, *transcendence fails* (ED 168, WD 114). “Violence and Metaphysics”, on my reading, is primarily a challenge to the desideratum of Levinas’ philosophy, *transcendence*. This is foremost how Levinas takes it in his subsequent works, and chiefly in *Otherwise than Being*. Where Levinas proposes a philosophy of transcendence, Derrida will put it to the test of his own design. Does transcendence convincingly conceive the difference that relates the oppositions that structure Levinas’ thought, indeed, that structure all philosophical thought, same and other, presence and nonpresence, infinity and totality, history and eschatology, etc.? Does

transcendence account for how to conceive a “...breakthrough toward the beyond of philosophical discourse”, yet still “*within language*”, that would accommodate the relations between belonging and breakthrough that structure every binary opposition without being conditioned by the terms themselves? (ED 163, WD 110-11) This is the test, expressed through the key interpretive framework of the problem of the closure, which Derrida proposes for Levinas’ thought.

It is a test that will be fecund for Derrida’s own thought. One would miss the mark, as I mentioned above, if one were to label “Violence and Metaphysics” a work of criticism. It is rather a double reading, i.e., a close reading or repetition of the three basic propositions of Levinas’ thought above and, in and through the reading itself, a confrontation with their blind spots, presuppositions, and unforeseen implications.⁵⁶ Where Derrida thinks that transcendence fails the test he designs for it, he will propose *history*, conceived more systematically and in contradistinction to what Levinas says on the matter, through the resource of *writing*. In part to respond to this challenge to the

⁵⁶ See Bernasconi’s “The Trace of Levinas in Derrida” for a defense of this position (16-19). Derrida gives the very definition of double reading in the context of the thesis of the essay. The thesis, which must be combined with what Derrida says about refraining from choice between the “opening and the totality” and resigning himself to incoherence (ED 125, WD 84), is: “If we recall that Heidegger, too, seeks to open the passageway to a former speech which, supporting itself from within philosophy, carries us to the outer or inner reaches of philosophy, what do this other speech and this other passageway signify here? And above all that this support required of philosophy signifies where they still converse? It is this space of interrogation that we have chosen for a very partial reading of Levinas’ work” (ED 124, WD 84). Derrida then says that he will pursue this thesis through double reading of Levinas’ work: “*First of all, in the style of commentary, we will try to remain faithful to the themes and audacities of a thought*—and this despite several parentheses and notes which will enclose our perplexity. Faithful also to its history, whose patience and restlessness [*inquiétude*] recapitulate again and carry within themselves the reciprocal interrogation of which we wish to speak. *Then we will attempt to ask several questions*. If they succeed in approaching the heart of this explication, *they will be everything but* [*ne seront rien moins que*] *objections* [my emphasis—PJG], but rather the questions put to *us* by Levinas [original emphasis; translation modified]” (ED 124-25, WD 84). Thus “Violence and Metaphysics” is not a work of straightforward criticism. When Derrida says that he will resign himself to be “incoherent” in order to comment on Levinas’ thought (ED 125, WD 84), *demonstrating* that incoherence, in which Levinas betrays his own intentions (ED 224, WD 151), is not Derrida’s objective (for a helpful discussion of these passages, see Lawlor’s *Derrida and Husserl* 153-54 and Critchley’s *The Ethics of Deconstruction* 95). His objective rather is to bring Levinas’ metaphysics into a dialogue that challenges phenomenology and ontology.

desideratum of his philosophy, Levinas will subsequently reconceive transcendence through three resources. First, through the *trace*, which he already makes a theme of for philosophical reflection independently of “Violence and Metaphysics” in the 1963 essay “The Trace of the Other” (EDE 275-82, DC 354-59); second, through the *identity of ipseity*, which was first explicitly made a theme in the 1968 essay “*La substitution*” (“Substitution”) and, by reconceiving what it means to be a *self* (*soi*), is the key to his notion of substitution; and, third, through the *saying and said* (*le dire et le dit*) distinction, which he first makes a theme in the 1970 essay “*Au-delà de l’essence*” and greatly expands in the 1974 work *Otherwise than Being*. The reworking of transcendence to respond to the challenge of “Violence and Metaphysics” will occupy me in subsequent chapters, particularly Chapters 4 and 5. Derrida, as I will show, is quite aware of the trace in “Violence and Metaphysics”. While Levinas reflects on the two other notions—the identity of ipseity and saying-said—only after the 1964 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics”, all three already operate implicitly in his earlier works, I will show. Because Derrida insists on reading Levinas through a framework of binary oppositions that transcendence cannot reconcile, he misses these resources. Most readings of *Otherwise than Being* in the secondary literature fail to take account of the impact that “Violence and Metaphysics” has in shaping the conceptual thrusts and style of that work. They are then unable to reconcile the second major work with Levinas’ first. This has led to an unfortunate neglect of *Otherwise than Being* in the literature.

2. B. Transcendence, Trace, and Philosophy at the Closure

In the previous chapter, I discussed Derrida’s chief interpretive framework in the context of essays on Husserl, Hegel, and Heidegger. Now I want to present the passage in

which Derrida first expresses the demand put upon recent philosophy, namely, the problem of the closure of metaphysics. This passage is new to the 1967 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics”. Derrida places it in the middle of a discussion of how Levinas misreads Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegel’s systematic philosophy. Where Levinas reads Kierkegaard as giving priority to the I or the ego who does not accept the system, and not to the other, Derrida responds on Kierkegaard’s behalf that the other does not accept the system *as an ego* (ED 162-63, WD 110). Levinas finds his discourse of alterity, on Derrida’s construal, undermined by precisely the subjective existence from which he wants to twist free. How else can one speak of the other except as another ego? Levinas cannot escape philosophical, and that means ontological, discourse, at least, Derrida notes, not without renouncing philosophical discourse (ED 163, WD 110). Derrida more clearly articulates the dilemma in which he claims to find Levinas’ thought as the problem of the closure of metaphysics. He writes,

And, if one wants to achieve a breakthrough [*percée*] toward the beyond of philosophical discourse by means of philosophical discourse, which one can never tear oneself away from entirely, one cannot possibly succeed *within language*... except by *formally* and *thematically* posing *the problem of the relations between belonging and breakthrough, the problem of the closure* [*clôture*]. Formally, that is, the most effective [*le plus actuellement*] and most formal, the most formalized, way possible: not in a *logic*, otherwise said, in a philosophy, but in an inscribed description, in an inscription of the relations between the philosophical and the nonphilosophical, in a kind of unheard of [*inouïe*] *graphics*, within which philosophical conceptuality would be no more than a *function* [translation modified] (ED 163, WD 110-11).

I will have more to say about this interpretative framework when in the final section of this part of the chapter I turn to Derrida’s notion of writing. I will also discuss it when I present the problem of the justifying the right to speak of the infinitely other in Part Two below. There my analysis of the resources Derrida gathers from Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology will show how he develops his response to the closure. Here I want to repeat the takeaway from this passage because it exercises a strong grip on Levinas’

subsequent response in *Otherwise than Being*. Derrida believes that Levinas, in emphatically transgressing philosophical discourse with transcendence, draws greater attention to the bind in which philosophy currently finds itself, namely, how to conceive belonging to philosophical discourse or the Greek logos and breaking through it with a resource other than the logos. There is, for Derrida, no resource uncontaminated by the logos. Given the inhabitation of the metaphysics of presence or of logocentrism in philosophical conceptuality, this problem demands the cultivation of different resources. Husserl and Heidegger each does this in a distinct manner, but they share the belief that philosophy must proceed to reinvent itself by repeating the whole of the Greek tradition.⁵⁷ Philosophy and its concepts are irremissibly Greek, i.e., there is no outside the Greek logos. Any alleged outside is naïve and proves to remain contingent on the concepts of metaphysics and ontotheology. With his most audacious idea, the nonphilosophical experience of transcendence that involves a beyond of being, Levinas develops a thought of absolute exteriority that claims to rupture the hegemony of the logos. Yet even if transcendence draws from the experience of the ethical relation, one still has to talk about it. And if one wants to talk about it (i.e., to talk *at all*, or to avoid staying silent, the consequences of which Derrida intimates and which I explore below), then one has to do philosophy, as Derrida, quoting Aristotle, says in the essay's concluding remarks (ED 226, WD 152).⁵⁸ Indeed, he notes there that Levinas himself seems to agree with this conviction elsewhere.⁵⁹ Thus the beyond Being that

⁵⁷ Among the vast differences is that, while for Husserl the repetition of the Platonic lineage culminates in phenomenology, Heidegger's repetition aims at another beginning beyond Platonic reason.

⁵⁸ The reference is to Aristotle's only partly extant dialogue *Protrepticus*. For ongoing scholarship attempting a reconstruction, see "Aristotle: Protrepticus, Or Exhortation to Philosophy", edited and translated by D.S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson, accessed 14 May 2016, <http://www.protrepticus.info/protreprecon2015i20.pdf>, 4-5.

⁵⁹ See "*Pièces d'identité*" ("Means of Identification") in DL 77, DF 53.

transcendence claims to reach is neutralized by the discourse of the same, or ontological language.

In his review of Levinas' earlier works, Derrida characterizes Levinas' philosophy as one that moves toward a "thought of originary difference" (ED 134, WD 90). "Originary difference" culminates in the structure of transcendence, whose *sine qua non*, as Derrida presents it, is the face of the infinitely other who gives transcendence its ethical sense. But transcendence is for Derrida a one-sided response to the problem of the "*relations between belonging and breakthrough*", that is to say, to conceiving the difference that gives structure to any conceptual opposition in philosophical discourse (e.g., presence-absence, same-other, inside-outside, etc.) yet is not included in that structure. The thought is that, where Levinas sees western philosophers implicitly deciding, by and large, to continue an unproblematic belonging to the logos to neglect the ethical sense of the relation to the other human being, Derrida sees Levinas explicitly deciding to break with the logos with the face of the infinitely other. This is not just a criticism of Levinas. Levinas' works, as Derrida presents them in "Violence and Metaphysics", rather animate the principal problem capable of bringing together the community of those who would call themselves philosophers today, the problem of the closure, and they do so *par excellence* through his notion of transcendence. In contrast to an alleged outside of philosophy, Derrida culls resources from within a tradition that relegated them to a secondary status, like writing, to mount a philosophical response at the closure "*formally and thematically*". The point is to show that one cannot do philosophy at the closure by choosing one of the alternatives, belonging or breakthrough; one must develop a writing that interweaves both at once, as we see Derrida' advocating

at the conclusion of “The Ends of Man”. One should take “*formally*” to mean a repeatable structure without a stable content. Any stable content would link it back to truth and presence, or logocentrism, when the point is to destabilize these. One should take “*thematically*” in its primary sense, i.e., an explicit object of reflection. If we follow Derrida rightly, he implies that Levinas’ works, in posing the problem of the closure, do so thematically but not formally.

I want to draw a terminological distinction to which I will refer often in this chapter between *posing* the problem of the closure and *developing a response to* it. A philosophical text that *poses* the problem of the closure finds itself enmeshed in the primary problem facing philosophy today for Derrida. It can do so either unthematically (implicitly)—like Husserl’s texts, which doggedly maintain a connection with the tradition in valuing presence to determine truth, on the one hand, and gesture toward a break in the themes of intersubjectivity and temporality, on the other hand—or thematically (explicitly)—like Levinas’ transgression of the priority that the philosophical tradition gives to the truth of ontology with his ethical sense of transcendence. When Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, particularly with the themes of intersubjectivity (which I discuss at length in Part Two of this chapter) and temporality, proposes to include what is conceptually excluded from the metaphysics of presence as a necessary supplement, Derrida takes him to think these in what he calls a system. This is enough to provoke the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure, but it does not respond to it. How do things stand with Levinas?

Levinas defines transcendence in his 1947 book *From Existence to the Existent* as the human existent’s “...departure [*sortie*] from being and from the categories which

describe it” while maintaining a “foothold in being” (DEE 9,EE xxvii). The locus of transcendence is the ethical relation with the other human being, which Derrida almost always understands, following a reading of *Totality and Infinity* that has become common, as an empirical encounter with another’s face. Transcendence involves, structurally, a beyond being, or infinity. Put to the test in “Violence and Metaphysics”, transcendence fails: an infinity beyond being is “impossible, unthinkable, unutterable” in the language of philosophy, ontology (ED 168,WD 114). Characteristic of the closure is that every metaphysical text by necessity transgresses metaphysics and, by this very transgression, is recaptured by metaphysics. Therefore transcendence animates or raises thematically the problem of philosophy at the closure.

One must not stop at the *failure* of transcendence, however, for then one reduces Derrida’s reading of Levinas’ texts in “Violence and Metaphysics” to a critique.⁶⁰ *Formally*, and not only thematically, Derrida recognizes Levinas’ notion of the “*trace*” at the heart of experience (ED 142,WD 95). The trace is a resource within the philosophical tradition that *responds* to the problem of the relations between “*belonging and breakthrough*” (ED 163,WD 110). *That* he writes, with one hand, of the failure of transcendence and, with the other hand, of the resource of the trace, testifies to Derrida’s double reading of Levinas’ texts.

I should like additionally to propose that one keep in mind two points. First, Derrida focuses on the *empirical encounter with the face* as Levinas’ thought of “originary difference”. He takes the empirical encounter with the face to be transcendence *par excellence*. Second, he neglects to read transcendence through the notion of the *trace* even as its significance increases in his eyes between the two

⁶⁰ See Hägglund’s *Radical Atheism* 76-102.

publications of “Violence and Metaphysics”. In *Otherwise than Being* and other works, Levinas will greatly deemphasize the role of the empirical encounter with the face in explicating transcendence (although he will not entirely do away with it) and, further, will reconceive transcendence through the trace.

2. C. How Derrida Writes with Two Hands, Face and Trace, at Once. Should It Have Led Him to a “Rehabilitation” of the Trace? Or Is It Part of the Strategy of Double Reading?

I want to make two principal claims in this section. First, I want to show that Derrida sometimes takes Levinas’ thought as belonging to the metaphysics of presence, and other times finds that it does not. What saves Levinas from this charge is his notion of the trace. Nonetheless, Derrida persists in taking the ethical sense of transcendence as the *presence* of an *empirical encounter with a face that speaks*. This runs counter to trace as it operates implicitly in *Totality and Infinity*, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 5 with the “posteriority of the anterior”, and causes Derrida to miss other resources in *Totality and Infinity*, chief among these fecundity, for understanding how transcendence may respond to the problem of the closure as he describes it (TI 25, TaI 54). Second, I want to show that Derrida recognizes the notion of the trace as a resource for *responding to* the problem of the “*relations between*” belonging and breakthrough, an “inscription of the relations between the philosophical and nonphilosophical”, or philosophy at the time of the closure (ED 163, WD 110-11). One finds the evidence for this in passages added to the body of the 1967 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics”.⁶¹ But Derrida does not take these passages as heuristics for developing the ethical sense of transcendence

⁶¹ Some of these are footnotes in the 1964 publication that Derrida incorporated into the text proper while others are new.

because of the grip that the closure framework exercises on his reading. With one hand, he takes the trace as a response to the closure; with the other, he shows how transcendence fails because one cannot speak of the ethical sense of the face without reducing it to the language of the same. Derrida writes with two hands at once, it is true, interweaving the internalist (belonging) and externalist (breakthrough) forms of deconstruction at the close of “The Ends of Man” to respond to the closure. But does he neglect to think transcendence through the trace? This would mean that he not only *writes* with two hands, but *plays* two hands at once.⁶²

In order to understand how Derrida is presenting Levinas through the framework of the problem of the closure and its characteristic strategy, double reading, it is helpful to see that, within “Violence and Metaphysics”, Derrida himself evaluates Levinas’ thought sometimes as a metaphysics of presence and other times as breaking with it.⁶³ It is true that Derrida’s ultimate evaluation will be that Levinas’ thought, unlike Husserl’s phenomenology (see ED 197, WD 134), does not belong to the metaphysics of presence. Yet within plain sight of the 1967 publication, one might be led to see a certain tension between opposing claims. This tension only becomes apparent when one compares it to the 1964 publication. As one commentator has argued, Derrida comes to recognize the importance of the thought of the trace between the two publications as a response to the problem of the closure.⁶⁴ This would lead one to the conclusion that the reason that Derrida makes significant additions concerning the trace to the later publication of the essay—in the form either of elevating existing footnotes to the text proper that

⁶² I take my thesis as a version of a claim first advanced by Bernasconi in his “The Trace of Levinas in Derrida” 19-22.

⁶³ On this topic, see Lawlor’s *Derrida and Husserl* 150.

⁶⁴ See Bernasconi’s “The Trace of Levinas in Derrida” 22-26.

acknowledge the trace (ED 142,WD 95, ED 191,WD 129, and ED 194,WD 132),⁶⁵ adding an entirely new passage on the trace (ED 160,WD 108),⁶⁶ or slightly modifying but largely leaving intact a passage that relates the trace to Derrida's notion of writing (ED 151,WD 102)⁶⁷—is that he recognizes it as an important challenge to any reading of Levinas' thought as a metaphysics of presence.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, several other passages remain that one can justly understand as interpretations of Levinas' thought as a metaphysics of presence.

Before I move on to present Derrida's conception of history as a major challenge to transcendence in the next section, I want to present the sides of this alleged tension in Derrida's text. I will then claim that Derrida allows the apparent tension to remain in plain sight because it is part of the strategy of double reading.⁶⁹ That Derrida incorporates for the essay's republication in *Writing and Difference* remarks on the trace vindicates Levinas from the charge of some commentators that "Violence and Metaphysics" is a work of criticism.⁷⁰ Rather, particularly on account of his notion of the trace, Derrida uses Levinas to *respond to* the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure.

To put this tension briefly. On the one hand, Derrida is pulled toward a criticism of Levinas' metaphysics. One need not look far to find certain ideas and turns of phrase

⁶⁵ One can find the original context for the first addition in "*Violence et métaphysique: Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas*", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69e Année, No. 3 (July-September 1964): 341. For the second addition, to which Derrida adds a new final sentence concerning contamination, in "*Violence et métaphysique: Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas*", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69e Année, No. 4 (October-December 1964): 446. For the third addition, in *ibid.*: 449.

⁶⁶ One can find the original context for this addition in "*Violence et métaphysique: Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas*", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69e Année, No. 3 (July-September 1964): 353.

⁶⁷ One can find the original context for this addition in *ibid.*: 347.

⁶⁸ As I mentioned above, Derrida already recognizes the importance of Levinas' "The Trace of the Other" and "Meaning and Sense" in the first footnote to the 1964 publication (ED 117n.1,WD 311n.1). He retains this for the republication in *Writing and Difference*.

⁶⁹ For Bernasconi, Derrida comes to recognize the value of the trace too late ("The Trace of Levinas in Derrida" 28n.7 and 8).

⁷⁰ See Häggglund's *Radical Atheism* 76-102.

in Levinas' texts that belong to a metaphysics of presence. Derrida puts this on display, for example, at many points in his presentation of the face, experience, and speech. While Levinas intends that his philosophy of alterity breaks through the philosophy of light and being, the use of ontological language in his descriptions of the face, experience, and speech undermine those very intentions. On the other hand, Derrida is attracted to Levinas' claims that rupture with the hegemony of presence because they attempt to address the problem of philosophy at the closure. This occurs with Levinas' claim that alterity is absolutely or infinitely other, which is often found in the very same descriptions that would tie Levinas' thought to a metaphysics of presence (descriptions of the face, experience, and speech).

To wit, Derrida focuses on passages and phrases in Levinas in which he describes the face as fully present, ignoring its retreat from presence, or nonpresence. He cites Levinas saying that the face is given ““in person””, is “*kath' auto*” or ““substance”” (ED 149, WD 100-01). From this Derrida concludes that the face is “presence, *ousia*”. Further, the face is “without allegory”, “not a metaphor, not a figure” (ED 149, WD 101). This is what Derrida means when he characterizes the face by its two essential features, glance and speech. On his reading, glance and speech are a “unity”. One should read “unity” as another term for plenitude and full presence, indeed, for the *form* of presence, or the present. Across iterations of empirically different faces, the face always appears as the unity of these two essential features. Nothing lacks from the face that expresses its hunger with a glance because, as Derrida reads it, its speech comes to assist the call for aid. The thought is that, if we strip speech of the semantic content of what is said, language is pure and unadulterated: speech *demands* or *commands* help for what the *call*

or *appeal* of the glance expresses. This is the dative or vocative dimension of language that exceeds the finite totality or the ego. On Derrida's reading, the face's speech points to a purely affective dimension of language that, in a present empirical encounter with another's destitution or hunger, binds the same to the other regardless of or prior to the semantic content of the other's words. This upends the primacy of intentional consciousness. A command slips in that is greater than the same can conceive. Hearing (metaphysical speech, or discourse), then, comes to assist seeing (glance), which had long been privileged by phenomenology and ontology (see ED 147, WD 99). In contrast to the face's speech, this purely affective or originary dimension of language, a sign is a deficient mode of being for Levinas. "The face does not signify, does not express itself as a sign.... To express oneself is to be *behind* the sign" (ED 150, WD 101). A sign does not present the full being as it is in itself, like the face does. The sign, according to the interpretation that has dominated western metaphysics, is a reference to that which is absent, the thing itself. The (perceptual) thing itself is more meaningful than the sign, since the sign is derivative and contingent on the (perceptual) thing. Therefore the sign is secondary and stands in relation to another, i.e., is ontologically determinate.

Matters are quite different for what Derrida calls "living speech [*la vive parole*]" in Levinas, i.e., the face's speech in the present of an empirical encounter with another, destitute or hungry. Living speech is "...able to assist itself; only living speech is expression and not servile sign...". The claim Derrida is making on Levinas' behalf is that only living speech, one of the two essential features of the face (the other is the glance), is independent of ontological interests and so, as an ethical demand, self-subsisting. This ethical saying (without said) would be *fully* and *purely* present, a

presence uncontaminated by absence. With his implicit decision to privilege speech or oral discourse, i.e., ethical saying, on the basis of its self-subsistence and alleged independence from ontological interests, i.e., from the said, writing would be secondary in status for Levinas. Written figures or words are merely signs of absent oral expressions. That is the point Derrida wants to underscore in his reading of the expression of the face. The demotion or “debasement” of writing for oral discourse, Derrida finds in other works, is common to the metaphysics of presence and in particular what he calls logocentrism (see DG 11-12, OG 3). Only the voice captures truth fully in its presence or *logos*. Here, Levinas seems to align himself with traditional metaphysical thinking on truth. Additionally, later in “Violence and Metaphysics” Derrida links this pure dimension of language with the present of an empirical encounter with the other (ED 218-20, WD 147-48). He shows that there can be no unadulterated appeal for help without a certain modicum of violence. The point would be that peace or nonviolence, i.e., ethical saying, cannot be offered to the other without an admixture of war or violence, i.e., without being couched in the language of the same. I will return to this in Part Two of this chapter. With his notion of the face, and especially with living speech, Levinas displays the hallmarks of a metaphysics of presence and particularly of logocentric discourse.

On the other hand, there is the claim, found with equal support in Levinas, which motivates a reading of Levinas’ thought as breaking away from a metaphysics of presence. This is the claim that alterity is absolutely or infinitely other. The face cannot be captured in ontological propositions and rises up behind the other’s signs, works, etc., in the world. The Other “...must present himself as absence, and must appear as

nonphenomenon” (ED 152,WD 103). Between the same and the other is radical ontological separation, or absolute exteriority. The other is not of this world, and yet is the origin of its meaning. The schema that supports the entirety of Levinas’ thought, Derrida says, is: “...the other is other only if his alterity is absolutely irreducible, that is, infinitely irreducible; and the infinitely Other can only be Infinity” (ED 154,WD 103). The infinitely Other expresses itself as face, inaugurating “asymmetry”, “non-light”, and speech as “commandment” that comes to the assistance of its own nonpresence. However, do these claims of a nonpresence and a nonphenomenality, which would purport to escape the philosophical logos, i.e., the traditional equation of truth with presence, break with the metaphysics of presence? Nonpresence and nonphenomenality are only the opposites of, and hence remain contingent upon, the order of presence. They would still belong to the metaphysics of presence. In order to clearly distinguish himself from the metaphysics of presence, Levinas would need a notion that can conceive the orders of presence and of nonpresence more systematically, i.e., as irreducible, irreconcilable, and yet inseparable. The additions and revisions concerning the trace Derrida makes to the 1967 publication, which I mentioned above, suggest that it is this notion that saves Levinas from the charge of a metaphysics of presence more than any other.

Recall what the empirical encounter with the absolutely other is not, as Derrida presents it. It is not a meeting of two egos in which one recognizes the other through dialectical negation or in which one understands the other against the background of already constituted meanings and concerns. The face’s speech itself prohibits the reduction to mere interestedness in being (i.e., to the being of the same or the I to whom

it is addressed), and so to understanding its speech as merely an ontological proposition. As Derrida quotes from *Totality and Infinity*, speech or ““saying to the other”” precedes ontological meaning and structures, precedes even the inside-outside structure by which language emerges, and overflows the speaking subject (quoted in ED 145, WD 98). No “...logos as absolute knowledge can *comprehend* [*comprendre*] dialogue and the trajectory toward the other”. Philosophical speech, irreducibly conceptual, does not include within itself the opening of language, the dative or vocative dimension of saying. Consequently, the other is absolutely and infinitely other, i.e., some aspect of the other escapes mediation. The face cannot be conceptualized nor can it be understood against the background of pragmatic concerns. This is because, Derrida explains, the concept supposes an anticipation or a horizon. This horizon would already neutralize the otherness of the other by prefiguring how she would appear to the same. The empirical encounter with the face is unlike the perception of an empirical thing. A thing is embedded within horizons wherein, e.g., the perceptual act apprehends a table simultaneously *as* oak, *as* roughly of such-and-such a size, *as* an inviting space for writing or for gathering to dine, etc. In the encounter with the absolutely other, the as-structure that characterizes perception runs aground.⁷¹ Horizon is always horizon of the same: what appears is already understood according to a network of familiar practices and their meanings that I recognize as mine or in regards to me and my world.

To sum up, the other is not grasped through the dialectical operation of the negative; the other is not conceptually determinate; the other does not appear against a horizon; and the other is not the object of disclosure and understanding. What these

⁷¹ On the as-structure characteristic of perceptual acts, see Heidegger’s *Platon: Sophistes* in *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 19, §26 182-84; *Plato’s Sophist* §26 125-26.

negative features of the empirical encounter with the absolutely other have in common is that they are determinations of a subject's *experience*. And a subject's experience has the irreducible form of the presence of the present. So to conceive or speak of the encounter positively, one must break with the hegemony of first personal experience of the same as it has been defined by the presence of the present (through negation, the concept, horizon, and understanding).

Levinas suggests such a break, Derrida rightly sees already in the 1964 version, with his notion of the trace. The encounter with the other is "*present* at the heart of experience" not, Derrida continues, as "total presence" but as a "*trace*" (ED 142, WD 95).⁷² A series of three passages, each one a former footnote in the 1964 publication elevated to the text proper of the 1967 publication, attest to the greater significance Derrida must have assigned to the notion of the trace between the two publications. One passage cites Levinas' 1963 essay "The Trace of the Other". The trace, he says, is beyond *my* historical time, i.e., beyond hope for myself and for my salvation (paraphrased in ED 142, WD 95). Trace offers a way of thinking about the ego and eschatology that is not just awaiting a future *presence*, and so breaks with the adventure that, on Levinas' reading, characterizes western philosophy. This is Odyssey, or the adventure of the ego always assured of its safe return home, i.e., reassurance of the ego's identity through recognition

⁷² One ought to compare this passage to a remark Derrida adds in 1967 to the concluding pages of the essay: "But can one speak of an *experience* of the other or of difference? Has not the concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence? Is not experience always an encountering of an irreducible presence, the perception of a phenomenality?" (ED 225, WD 152) Derrida neglects to conceive *experience* through *trace*, even while the quote above (the encounter with the other is "*present* at the heart of experience" as "*trace*") suggests already in 1964 that he recognizes the significance of the trace for double reading. This is because, particularly in the 1967 revisions and additions, Derrida plays two hands at once to respond to what he now recognizes as the closure, the problem of breaking through metaphysics and becoming ensnared in it once again in Levinas' texts. I return to conceiving experience through trace below in describing an experience of a *certain sort*—namely, an experience of how the "beyond" is reflected, as Levinas says, "*within* experience"—in my discussion of *Totality and Infinity* in 5. C. (i.) (TI xi, TaI 23).

of the same in otherness. Later, when he discusses the basic phenomenological truth that an ego's lived experience can only take the form of Husserl's living present, Derrida remarks that the living present excludes the notion of an irrecoverable past, i.e., one which can never take the form of a past *present*, as "*impossible-unthinkable-unutterable [impossible-impensable-indicible; translation modified]*" (ED 194, WD 132). This irrecoverable past, he continues, is the theme of the trace in Levinas' most recent writings. Finally, when discussing Levinas' notion of infinity as "positive infinity", Derrida uses this same phrase, twice, commenting that the infinitely other becomes "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable [*impensable, impossible, indicible*]" (ED 168, WD 114). He offers that Levinas perhaps "...calls us toward this unthinkable-impossible-unutterable beyond (tradition's) Being and Logos. But *it must not be possible either to think or state this call*".⁷³ Given that the first two passages explicitly acknowledge the theme of the trace as a resource to break with the hegemony of presence and lived experience, Derrida might have also acknowledged that the notion of the infinitely other and the structure that explains it, transcendence, must likewise be conceived through the notion of the trace. He does not, even when recognizing the affinity of the trace with his own notion of writing (ED 151, WD 102).

So it is not only that Derrida attributes to the trace a greater significance in the 1967 publication of "Violence and Metaphysics". That he puts it in proximity with his own notion of writing suggests that Derrida recognizes the trace as a resource for *posing the problem* of the closure and, further, for "*formally and thematically*" *responding to it*. Derrida had already said in the introduction to the 1964 publication that the double reading, if successful in its second movement, would attempt to ask several questions.

⁷³ The English translation does not apply italics, which are found in the French.

These “...will be *everything but* [*ne seront rien moins que*] *objections* [my emphasis—PJG], but rather the questions put to *us* by Levinas [translation modified; original emphasis]” (ED 124-25, WD 84).⁷⁴ Chief among these questions is the closure and developing resources for a philosophical response without reinstalling logocentrism. The face of the infinitely other and the structure that explains it, transcendence, must have already in 1964 put the problem of the closure “to *us*”. Writing (or *différance*) is Derrida’s response to the closure. Does Derrida acknowledge the trace as a resource for the problem he finds in Levinas’ thought?

Two more passages on the trace, significantly reworked and with new additions for the 1967 publication, suggest that he does. But Derrida does not integrate the lessons of the trace with the infinitely other and transcendence. Where the trace intrigues him (particularly in the 1967 additions I am discussing), these passages remain isolated from the essay’s thesis: the ethical relation presupposes discourse, which reduces the other to the same; hence, transcendence fails as a philosophy at the closure, even as its audacious transgression of the language of ontology brings into sharp relief the problem itself. By way of summary of Derrida’s reading in “Violence and Metaphysics”, one may say: on the one hand, if one follows the internal logic of Levinas’ texts, *transcendence poses the problem of the closure* while, on the other hand, *trace responds to it*. What Derrida neglects is to conceive transcendence *within* experience. The notion of the trace should have led him to this.

⁷⁴ The English translator has rendered this, “Then we will attempt to ask several questions. If they succeed in approaching the heart of this explication, they will be *nothing less than* [*ne seront rien moins que*] *objections* [my emphasis—PJG], but rather the questions put to *us* by Levinas [original emphasis]”. The first phrase in italics is incorrectly translated. Even in translation, it is incongruous with the subordinate clause that follows. My thanks to Dan Palumbo for pointing this out to me.

One particularly striking passage in this regard is Derrida's discussion of the closure and the essence and name of God in Levinas' thought. Derrida argues that God's name is a "function [*fonction*]" of the system of war, i.e., of the discourse of the same, in Levinas' world (ED 158, WD 107). This world, a system of war, neither pure peace nor pure violence (each contradictory concepts, for Derrida), is our very own. God is *both* presence (war "supposes" God) and absence (war "excludes" God). Yet God must also be *neither* of these alternatives because he exceeds the order of presence altogether.

Derrida's point is to show that it is only on the condition of the world as the "difference" in which God's "absence-presence...*plays*" (i.e., world as the system of war), that the face can be something at which violence aims and something that, commanding peace, can arrest violence. His point, in short, is to show Levinas that there is no face without the necessary presupposition of violence, without a modicum of violence in the other's speech. While he does not ask this explicitly, the question that implicitly organizes

Derrida's discussion is, How is it possible to conceive this *both* and *neither* simultaneously, belonging to presence (and absence) and breaking through it without being conditioned by it? What difference maintains these alternatives? Derrida does not name it directly, but it is unmistakable given his description (sc., world as the system of war, or as the "difference" in which God's "absence-presence...*plays*") that it is because Levinas conceives God according to the structure of the trace that he can name God or the infinite as excess over the order of presence. In Levinas, God's essence and name are not thought according to the system of presence (or its necessary accompaniment, absence). God, following the formal model in of the "infinity in the finite", is a thought that, placed in me and supported by another before my time, "ousts [*décarsonne*]" any

idea that I can have of it, as Levinas says in the 1963 essay “The Trace of the Other” (EDE 196,DC 354).⁷⁵ I discuss this in section 5. C. (i.) below when I revisit the problem of the closure with regard to the trace and experience of a *certain sort* in *Totality and Infinity*.

I take away from Derrida’s analysis that the trace, which makes it possible for Levinas to pronounce the name “God”, accounts for the “*relations between*” belonging to a system of presence and breaking through it, that is to say, for conceiving the *difference* that structures the two sides. Therefore the trace is a resource for responding to the closure: an undervalued or underdeveloped notion found within the metaphysical tradition itself that calls into question the traditional adequation of truth and presence, or logocentrism, without being conditioned by the concepts that support logocentrism.⁷⁶ In this case, at least, Derrida must recognize that trace comes close to his own notion of writing.

Indeed, is it not posing the problem of the “*relations between*” belonging and breakthrough, or the problem of the closure, that Derrida has in mind when, speaking of the trace in another new addition to the 1967 publication, he asks of Levinas, “...and if God were an effect of the trace?” (ED 160,WD 108) It is important to note that Derrida thinks that this question follows not only from his foregoing discussion of God as a “function” of system of war—i.e., of our world, the difference in which God’s “absence-presence...*plays*”—but indeed from Levinas’ own thought. After all, he puts the question using Levinas’ *own* term, (What if “God was an effect of the *trace* [my emphasis—

⁷⁵ The precursor to this is the formal structure of the “idea of Infinity in us”, an earlier formulation of the trace in *Totality and Infinity* (TI 52,Tal 79).

⁷⁶ Within the tradition, Levinas points to *ikhnos* in Plotinus’ *Enneads* V.5.5. Levinas quotes this passage in “The Trace of the Other” (1963) and in “Meaning and Sense” (1964) from Emile Bréhier’s French translation of the *Enneads* (Paris: *Les Belles Lettres*, 1931), 96-98, in EDE 201,DC 358 and HAH 68,BPW 63, respectively.

PJG]?”). That Derrida can pose this question indicates that Levinas has the intellectual resources (viz., the trace) to conceive God otherwise than on the basis of a metaphysics of presence or Heidegger’s ontotheology. Therefore it would be better to say that, adapting the second movement of the double reading Derrida earlier announced, this question is not an objection to Levinas but arises from his text as a question Levinas puts “to *us*”. It would miss the mark to understand it as a theological question, furthermore. It is rather a question about human existents. Derrida quotes Levinas, “*We* are ‘in the Trace of God’ [my emphasis—PJG]”. This would suggest that Derrida recognizes that it is the structure of the *trace* (not God) that permits Levinas to conceive the human existent as infinitely other and same, face and ego, nonpresence and presence, etc. The trace itself belongs to neither of these alternatives. My point is to show that Derrida’s analysis, at least implicitly, must acknowledge that the structure of the trace poses the “*relations between*” belonging to a system of presence and breaking through it, that is, the difference that gives the alternatives of belonging and breakthrough structure, or, the problem of the closure. These alternatives *are maintained* by this difference, which Levinas calls the trace and Derrida calls writing.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ I am using *is maintained* (or *maintains itself*) in the sense Derrida gives *se tenir* on three occasions in “Violence and Metaphysics”, one of which I will come to presently. Another occurs in the important context of Derrida’s conception of history: “...one would have to show...that history maintains itself [or is maintained, *se tient*] in the difference between totality [read: belonging] and infinity [read: breakthrough]...[translation modified]” (WD 180, ED 123). Below I will return to this passage and link it to the passage I discuss presently (ED 160, WD 108). Finally, another occurs in the context of reflection on and determination of the question that binds together the community of philosophers today, the problem of the closure: in reflection on and determination of the question, “...a combat [read: between belonging and breakthrough] also begins that is maintained [or maintains itself, *se tient*] in the difference between the question in general [read: the side of breakthrough] and ‘philosophy’ as a determined—finite and mortal—moment or mode [read: the side of belonging] of the question itself” (ED 119, WD 81). I covered this above. In each case, my point is that Derrida’s interest lies not so much in criticizing an author for choosing *either* to belong to philosophical discourse *or* to rupture with it, then showing that, against her stated intentions, she cannot sustain this choice. While this provokes double reading, one does not need it to critique. One can just as well use the tropes of Hegelian dialectical negation for this purpose. Double reading accomplishes more. Derrida’s interest lies rather in how the text poses *the difference by which these*

To wit, Derrida goes on to ask whether the “...trace permits [*permet*] us to think presence in its system, or whether the inverse order is the true one [translation modified]” (ED 160, WD 108). The “inverse order” to which Derrida refers would mean that the system of presence permits us to think the trace. This “inverse order” is “doubtless the *true order*”, he adds. This is what Derrida argued in the foregoing passage that I discussed above: the face, the unity of glance and speech, must presuppose the system of war or of presence (and absence), firstly in the form of the discourse of the same. The system of presence, then, permits one to conceive the infinitely other, transcendence, and the trace. He continues, “But it is indeed the *order of truth* which is in question”, i.e., Levinas’ often repeated thought, ethics before ontology.⁷⁸ The question—to adapt the second movement of the double reading once again—that Levinas puts “to *us*” is that of the priority traditionally given to the system of presence and the truth of ontology. I take from Derrida’s analysis that the “*order of truth*” is in question because the logic of the trace poses the problem of the “*relations between*” belonging to presence (and absence) and breaking through it, i.e., the difference that structures these alternatives. It is the difference in which these sides are maintained.

Levinas’ philosophy is one that moves toward the “thought of originary difference”, which Derrida understands in the 1964 publication as the face of the

alternatives are maintained (or *maintain themselves, se tient*; the ambiguity of the voice of the reflexive verb is deliberate, as I will argue later), i.e., the “*relations between*” them. Nevertheless, the closure framework will capture Levinas’ thought between these two propositions: *choosing* breakthrough while *belonging*, against what he wants to say, to philosophical discourse. It is able to do so because Derrida sufficiently neglects the notion of the trace even while he acknowledges it as a key idea in Levinas’ thought.

⁷⁸ This *before* is not to be understood by the order of time but by the order of reasons. It follows the model of the “idea of Infinity in us”, which I take as an early version of the trace in *Totality and Infinity* (TI 52, TaI 79). See Levinas’ explanation of the causal argument of God’s existence in the third of Descartes’ *Meditations* by the “posteriority of the anterior” (TI 25, TaI 54). The “idea of Infinity in us” is the governing formal structure of *Totality and Infinity*.

infinitely other in transcendence (ED 134, WD 90). Should it not be the case in the 1967 publication that transcendence be thought through the trace, given that trace responds to the problem of the closure? Rather, he captures Levinas in the closure framework without the resources to respond to it: it is between the “*true order*”, i.e., the system of presence and the truth of ontology, and the “*order of truth*”, i.e., transcendence and the infinitely other, that “Levinas’ thought *is maintained* [or *maintains itself, se tient*; my emphasis—PJG]” (ED 160, WD 108). If for Derrida it is writing (and *différance*) that poses “*formally and thematically*” the problem of the closure, then my analysis, modifying a suggestion Derrida earlier made to Levinas, gives Derrida the following reply: “The thematic of *writing*...should lead to a certain rehabilitation of the *trace*”.⁷⁹

Let me summarize my main points and stake my claim. Already in the 1964 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics”, Derrida recognizes that by the ethical sense of transcendence, the face of the infinitely other, Levinas puts certain questions “to us”. By the time of its inclusion in *Writing and Difference*, Derrida presents the main question that arises in the double reading of Levinas’ works in the form of the problem of the closure of metaphysics. In the period between the publications, two things happen. First, Derrida develops writing (and *différance*) as a resource to “*formally and thematically*” pose and respond to the problem of the closure or the “*relations between belonging and the breakthrough*”, i.e., as a resource to conceive the difference that structures the concepts of the metaphysics of presence and those that it excludes. Second, he accords a greater significance to Levinas’ notion of the trace, which allows Levinas to escape the charge that his thought belongs to the metaphysics of presence and has affinities with his

⁷⁹ I have alternated the positions of the italicized words, *writing* and *trace*. Derrida’s text reads, “The thematic of the *trace*...should lead to a certain rehabilitation of writing” (ED 151, WD 102).

own notion of writing. At once, in Levinas, Derrida sees the problem and a response to it. This should have led Derrida to reconsider the infinitely other and the structure through which Levinas conceives it, transcendence, through the trace in order to respond to his own interpretive framework, the problem of the closure. It does not. Derrida maintains that the other is, in the language of the same, “unthinkable, impossible, unutterable”. Levinas will take this as a direct challenge to his notion of transcendence. We know that Derrida writes with two hands to respond to the closure. He also plays two hands at once.

In many of the descriptions of the infinitely other in “Violence and Metaphysics”, including in his analysis of Levinas’ metaphors for the face (exteriority, nudity, and most high), what generally holds constant is that Derrida envisions a present empirical encounter with another’s destitution or hunger. This is because he focuses almost exclusively on the *face* as the nonphilosophical experience of transcendence from which Levinas’ philosophy arises. Without doubt, there are many passages that play up this narrative of an encounter with the face of the infinitely other who disarms me of my egoism and even of my egoity in *Totality and Infinity*, particularly the third section, titled “Exteriority and the Face” (TI 161ff., TaI 187ff.). But the infinitely other and her transcendence *need not* primarily to be conceived in the present of an experience or an actual empirical encounter.⁸⁰ Derrida himself recognizes this, particularly when discussing the trace. As I argued in this section, it is Derrida who shows that, even while one must acknowledge that the other in *Totality and Infinity* seems to belong to a metaphysics of presence (given that Levinas routinely describes an empirical encounter with the face that disarms me), it is the trace that ultimately saves Levinas from this

⁸⁰ See “*Au delà du visage*” (“Beyond the Face”) in TI 251ff., TaI 274ff. I discuss the significance of these pages for a response to Derrida’s challenge to transcendence *already found in* Levinas’ 1961 major work in 5. C. (i.) where I locate the trace at the heart of experience of a *certain sort*.

charge. The thought of the trace is not found only in works subsequent to *Totality and Infinity* but already gives the latter its very structure, even if it is not made an explicit theme.⁸¹ I will show this in Chapter 5.

The conclusion to draw from my analysis is that Derrida in certain passages of “Violence and Metaphysics” acknowledges the resource of the trace for escaping a metaphysics of presence while in others, particularly those concerning the ethical sense of the infinitely other, he neglects to take up the trace as a resource that responds to the problem of a “beyond (tradition’s) Being and Logos”. Again, by way of summary, one may say that in “Violence and Metaphysics”, *transcendence poses the problem of the closure* in Levinas’ texts while, on the other hand, *trace responds to it*. Derrida’s interpretive framework, the problem of the closure, causes him to isolate rather than integrate transcendence and the infinitely other, on the one hand, and the trace, on the other, as if these were distinct positions. Consequently, transcendence fails because the relation with the other is, on *Derrida’s* reading, “beyond history”:

One wonders whether history itself does not begin with this relationship to the other which Levinas places beyond history. The framework of this question should govern the entire reading of *Totality and Infinity* (ED 139, WD 94).

Derrida’s argument will be that, having disavowed history because it is irrevocably violent, Levinas forfeits the desideratum of his philosophy, transcendence. Derrida will press the thesis, as I move presently to show, that transcendence *is* history (ED 172-73, WD 117). Later, Levinas, reconceiving transcendence through the structure of the

⁸¹ In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas mentions “trace” six times. In only one instance does he use it in the technical sense of a logic that informs the formal structure of transcendence, and this is at best only a quasi-technical use (see TI 77-78, TaI 104-05). While he does not articulate the logic of the trace explicitly, it is nonetheless the case that it operates in the formal structure of what Levinas calls the “idea of Infinity in us” (TI 52, TaI 79). I elaborate this below in 5. C. (i.) § 1. when I discuss the what Levinas calls the “posteriority of the anterior” (TI 25, TaI 54). The idea of Infinity establishes the human existent as a being created and as a being absolutely separated from the other. I return to it below in 5. C. (i.). This formal structure is a preliminary understanding of the trace, which will undergo significant revisions beginning with the 1963 essay “The Trace of the Other”.

trace, will reject this thesis. In fact, already in his Preface to *Totality and Infinity* in 1961 he announces the intention to describe a “beyond” being that is reflected “...*within* the totality and history, *within* experience” (TI xi, TaI 23).

2. D. History, Language, and “Structural Totality”: The Challenge to Levinas’

Notion of Transcendence

Derrida claims that, in the course of his critiques of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas displaces history for eschatology and transcendence. Derrida takes Levinas to make a consequential choice when he recalls that the origin of history in *Totality and Infinity* is beyond history in the encounter with the other. On his interpretation, when Levinas faces the problem of the closure, he lapses into one of the typical tropes of transcendental philosophy, archaeology, and tacitly decides on transcendence and the other. After I present Levinas’ conception of history on Derrida’s reading, I will detail how Derrida aligns Levinas’ thought with archaeology and with eschatology. Through the latter in particular Derrida at least *insinuates* a significant allegation, the question of whether Levinas’ discourse speaks responsibly in staking its claims. While he shows that Levinas ultimately escapes this charge, floating the allegation could not have been lost on Levinas. The resolution itself, however, reties Levinas into the framework of the closure. This will introduce another major challenge “Violence and Metaphysics” poses to Levinas, How does Levinas philosophically justify his right to speak of the infinitely other? I explore this in depth in Part Two below.

One might put the problem schematically to start. Levinas’ decision to posit the other as origin or end of the world, history, and meaning, makes for one enclosure. The other enclosure is that over against which Levinas sets it, history and the same. Thus, in

Levinas one finds two enclosures, or, if we follow Derrida's implication, two totalities, that allegedly stand in no relation. It is Derrida's conviction that the play of these two enclosures structures Levinas' major work, *Totality and Infinity*. His reading argues that the history and same must in fact supplement the structure and the experience from which Levinas' philosophy arises, the structure of transcendence and the experience of the other. This will lead Derrida to a conception of history as "the very movement of transcendence itself" (ED 173, WD 117). Derrida does not integrate the trace that I presented above, which is present if not itself made a theme in *Totality and Infinity*, to go more deeply than the play, or better, logic of the supplement. As I suggested above, this is because the interpretative framework of the closure is so persuasive that Derrida neglects the trace as a resource for the closure. After the failure of transcendence to "...achieve a breakthrough toward the beyond of philosophical discourse ...*within language*...", Derrida proposes a different response to the closure, writing (as *différance*) and the series of terms with which it is allied (ED 163, WD 110). Through the model of a structural totality, Derrida's conception of history escapes the quagmire in which Derrida sees transcendence mired, that of positing an origin and end of history.

2. D. (i.) Levinas' Conceptions of History and Language as Derrida Presents Them: The Question of Origin

On Derrida's reading, Levinas conceives history as the "laborious procession of the same" (ED 139, WD 94). He places negativity on the side of the category of the same and removes it from the side of the category of the other. Derrida continues that a "certain negativity", namely, "finite" negativity, belongs to the same. Finite negativity makes it possible for the same to identify itself as an ego. For Levinas, the same is the

ego. Negating itself and being negated by others is the very work of self-identification by which the ego constitutes its egoity, the products it makes through its labor, and its history. Indeed, Derrida points out that labor is not a straightforward encounter with alterity and resistance for Levinas. It is an encounter with an other that the same *gives itself*, encompassing the other through an immanent dialectic of negation. Through negation, the same (the ego) meets resistance and predicates others—other material goods, other ideas, other human existents, etc.—of itself, or recognizes itself in otherness (e.g., in love, in solidarity, through works, etc.). In its everyday concerns and conduct, the same identifies the world with itself. Derrida often refers to the same (or ego) as a “totality” (ED 158, WD 107). In keeping with the interpretative framework of choice that the closure involves, Derrida comments, further, that totality always means a “finite totality” by an “initial decision of [Levinas’] discourse”. It is because a totality relates to the other through negation, conceptual mediation, and limitation that Derrida thinks finitude belongs to it. Totality as finite functions as a “silent axiom” of Levinas’ thought. Derrida will counter by withholding a decision concerning the infinity or finitude of totality with his notion of structural totality. I will show this in due course.

If history is history of the same (or ego), then it, too, is a finite totality. History is not the outcome of an encounter with another human existent as an origin of the world and of meaning, or an originary difference, but of the same (e.g., a human existent, an institution, a government, etc.) recognizing itself in otherness through the dialectical operation of negation. The “laborious procession of the same” is “blindness to the other [translation modified]” (ED 139, WD 94). Necessarily blind to the other to constitute

itself, history is essentially violent and an empirical record of violence. This is Levinas' conception of history, as Derrida presents it. His discussion offers three takeaways.

First, Levinas equates the ego and the same through negation (ED 140, WD 94). Negation, consequently, does not belong to the other. Second, Levinas will not conceive separation of same and other and transcendence through the negation of the same. Finally, if history belongs to the same, then the same does not have time because time comes from the other for Levinas. The ego cannot "...engender alterity within itself without encountering the Other", Derrida says. Levinas in subsequent works, particularly in *Otherwise than Being*, will show how the same has *already* engendered the other in itself with the structure the-other-in-the-same, or what he calls substitution. He already prefigures this structure, the trace, with the "idea of Infinity in us" that, better than the opposition between same-history, on the one hand, and other-transcendence, on the other hand, gives structure to *Totality and Infinity*, and he expands it concretely to other relations (e.g., fecundity) elsewhere in the text (TI 52, TaI 79). Nonetheless, following on the third takeaway, one can draw the conclusion from Derrida's reading that Levinas detaches temporality (which comes from the other) from history (which comes from the same).

Thus Levinas, on Derrida's construal, renounces history and develops a philosophy arising from the nonphilosophical experience of the other in order to reach what he takes to be the desideratum of philosophy—even if philosophy has neglected, forgotten, or looked for it in the wrong place—transcendence. To see the consequences of this renunciation of history, one must see the link, as Derrida does, between history and language. Abrogating history to the side of the same, one renounces language. Not only is

there no history without language; language, being irreducibly conceptual, neutralizes, encompasses, and so violently apprehends the other (ED 219, WD 148). Once she is spoken (or written) of, the other is no longer infinitely other. With what kind of language is Levinas left after he abrogates history because it has always been essentially and empirically the violent apprehension of the other? One is left, on Derrida's reading, with the originary dimension of language (the dative or vocative), ethical saying. He takes it that saying or the other's speech is, as I explained in 2. C. above, pure, that is, without ambiguity, equivocation, the unadulterated call or appeal for help. It is without even the "interlacing of nouns and verbs", or predication (ED 219, WD 147). Thus the other's speech does not, Derrida continues, issue in a "phrase", without which there is no logos.⁸² If there is no logos, there is no violence. Hence speech is "non-violence and gift" (ED 220, WD 148). Derrida's argument is that Levinas chooses the speech of the other, reserving it as the origin of language that language, conceived as discourse or predication, cannot enclose. He draws this consequence for Levinas' understanding of language early on: "Language, therefore, cannot make its own possibility a totality and *include* [*comprendre*] within itself its own origin or its own end" (ED 141, WD 95).

Opening the concluding remarks, he states, similarly:

By making the origin of language, meaning, and difference the relation to the infinitely other, without relation to the same, Levinas is resigned to betraying his own intentions in his philosophical discourse (ED 224, WD 151).⁸³

If language does not "*include*" its own origin (or end), if the origin of language is in the "...relation to the infinitely other, without relation to the same...", then Derrida's claim is that there are two exclusive enclosures in Levinas, same-history-*language* and other-

⁸² Derrida means *phase* in the etymological sense (Greek: *phrazein*): a division, which, with the mediation of a concept, sets up a limitation.

⁸³ I quoted this important passage above in part.

transcendence-*speech*.⁸⁴ One sees how one of the main thrusts of Derrida's argument in "Violence and Metaphysics", playing two hands at once, gears itself toward building up this powerful binary conceptual architecture, adding terms gradually through a close exposition of Levinas' works to press a persuasive interpretive framework. What should reconcile, or better, should inscribe these two enclosures into a system is Levinas' notion of transcendence. By *system*, a term he employs at key moments in his exposition of Husserl (see Part Two below), Derrida means the thinking of an impossibility in possible experience, or what is excluded from the metaphysics of presence in the concepts it values, and the like contradictions with which texts at the closure play.⁸⁵ Transcendence, as I will show shortly, fails because it does not think *systematically*. Derrida claims that history, renounced because it violently apprehends the other, must supplement transcendence.

2. D. (ii.) History and the "Idea of Peace": The Question of End. Is Levinas' Discourse an Irresponsible Discourse?

Before I move to present Derrida's conception of history through the model of a structural totality, I want first to develop further Derrida's claim that language, in its originary dimension, is "non-violence and gift", i.e., that the other's saying or speech is peace. One may question whether what Levinas calls discourse or speech is in fact "non-violence and gift", and whether Levinas conceives a *singular* origin of language.⁸⁶ This notwithstanding, it is surely the case that Derrida's framework exercised a powerful grip

⁸⁴ Bernasconi develops a response primarily from Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* to this charge of one exclusive origin of language in his "Levinas and Derrida: The Question of the Closure of Metaphysics" in *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 189-92.

⁸⁵ Cf. Lawlor *Derrida and Husserl* 157.

⁸⁶ For insightful discussion, see Bernasconi's "Levinas and Derrida: The Question of the Closure of Metaphysics" 188-89.

on Levinas, as I will discuss further below. A conception of language as Derrida construes it in Levinas, i.e., one enclosed, on the one hand, in its originary dimension (other or transcendence) and enclosed, on the other hand, in the violence of a finite totality (ego or history), runs a dramatic risk. He calls this risk the “worst violence” (ED 191, WD 130). Derrida suggests that Levinas is on the knife’s edge of this risk, and he shows why and how Levinas ultimately is able to avoid it. His greater indictment is to *intimate* that Levinas’ thought of flirts dangerously with irresponsibility for what it wants to say about transcendence and the infinitely other. This striking claim could not have been lost on Levinas.

The argument that leads to the notion of the worst violence starts with the following premise. Discourse (logos) is essentially and empirically violent and can only do itself violence, negating itself in order to affirm itself (ED 191, WD 130). It can never fully reappropriate this negativity, in fact, *for the sake of peace*. Peace, on Derrida’s presentation, is the valued idea or end in Levinas’ thought of the other. Peace and nonviolence form his eschatology. However, without violence, which can keep the peace, the horizon of peace (i.e., as *idea* or *end*) would vanish. As Derrida says later, “Peace is made only in a *certain silence*, which is determined and protected by the violence of speech” (ED 220, WD 148). By a “*certain silence*” Derrida means discourse as the “least possible violence”, which holds reserves in store to combat greater violence.⁸⁷ Derrida conceives violence as an “*economy*” (ED 188, WD 129; see also ED 172, WD 117 and ED 218, WD 146). He develops this reading of violence as economy through Husserl’s

⁸⁷ The “indestructible and unforeseeable resource of the Greek logos” Derrida has in mind is writing (and *différance*), which absents itself from the order of presence better than Levinas’ notion of speech. If we put this together with the passages on the worst violence, then it is probable that one aim of writing is to combat the worst violence.

analogical appresentation. I will explain how in Part Two below. For now, the takeaway is that the relation to the other, at the level of the transcendental ego (i.e., what opens or makes possible an encounter with the other), has its condition in an admixture of violence *and* nonviolence, or in an economy. Derrida's peace, made only in a "*certain silence*", is in stark contrast to the silence he reads Levinas advocating, namely, the peace that silences discourse altogether (for one must renounce violence at all costs). It silences discourse altogether because Derrida reads Levinas, once again, as unable to reconcile the enclosures upon which his thought is tacitly predicated, in this case, peace or nonviolence (i.e., renunciation of discourse) and war or violence. What he wants to show Levinas is that, when discourse falls silent, the horizon that keeps his "*idea of peace*" disappears. In other words, Levinas' "*idea of peace*" is predicated on a play of violence and nonviolence, or better, violence, the term Levinas attempts to expunge from his thought of the infinitely other, comes to supplement his originary language and end, peace. This play and its logic of the supplement (in the sense Derrida gives it elsewhere)⁸⁸ is what Derrida calls "economy of violence" or, what is the same, the "system of war" (ED 172, WD 117 and ED 220, WD 148). He suggests that discourse does not in fact remain silent because the "worst violence" would in that case "silently cohabit the *idea of peace*", i.e., the idea of an end that Levinas champions (ED 220, WD 148). Discourse takes up arms against itself in order to keep the worst violence at bay. This is the silence that threatens to suffocate discourse, "nothingness or pure non-sense" (ED 191, WD 130).⁸⁹ Levinas' "*idea of peace*" and the terms he aligns with it—the other, saying or speech, and transcendence—would unwittingly invite the worst violence were it to

⁸⁸ See DG 203-34, OG 141-64.

⁸⁹ To put flesh on this rather abstract idea of discourse and the worst violence, note that Derrida calls this the effort in philosophy against "nihilism" (ED 191, WD 130).

succeed in (violently, in fact) suppressing discourse. It does not, however, precisely because the other, speech, and transcendence, are betrayed by necessity. They must enter into the language of the same.

The philosopher has a responsibility to discursive engagement in order to keep the horizon of peace open and the worst violence at bay. She also has a responsibility to discursive engagement because of the historical situation that presses, the time of the closure. For Derrida, Levinas' "*idea* of peace" can only be thought, as one can infer from the argument I reconstruct above, *in* history, and not beyond. History is the "infinite passage through violence" (ED 191, WD 130). On my reading, one has to refer the question of history back to the "unbreachable responsibility" of the community of philosophers today to which Derrida cryptically alludes in the opening remarks of "Violence and Metaphysics" (ED 118, WD 80). Philosophy at the closure responds to *its own* history or finitude as other and finds itself in a double bind: the need to escape from the metaphysical concepts of the tradition and the impossibility of succeeding. Nonetheless, this series of "...questions *should* be the only questions today capable of founding the community...of those who are still called philosophers...[my emphasis—PJG]" (ED 118, WD 79). In the face of these questions of history as the object of philosophy, the "*duty* of decision [my emphasis—PJG]" that binds the community is an "unbreachable *responsibility* [my emphasis—PJG]" (ED 118, WD 80). The normative injunctions or language of the opening remarks should now be related to history as the "infinite passage through violence". Not all philosophers have decided on Athens to secure the origin that essentially determines the question of history and thereby the response to the problem of the closure. Levinas, on Derrida's construal, secures another

origin, Jerusalem, and by doing so rejects Athens because of its violent history of prioritizing the same and ontology over the other and ethics.

Given, however, that one must always philosophize, even when one refuses to philosophize, to borrow once again from Derrida's closing remarks, the question arises as to whether Levinas' thought is responsible for what it wants to say, that is, for rejecting the history of the finite totality. Derrida *insinuates* as much in saying that to "overlook" history as the "infinite passage through violence" *abrogates the responsibility of the philosopher* (ED 191, WD 130). This is not a question of whether Levinas raises the question of responsibility to the other, which he surely does, but rather of whether his discourse itself speaks responsibly at the time of the closure. Derrida continues that, if a philosophy, in this case, is to maintain itself as a discursive practice—which it must, following the lesson above, if it wants to avoid risking the "*worst violence*"—it reverts to an "...infinatist dogmatism in a pre-Kantian style, one which does not pose *the question of responsibility for its own finite philosophical discourse* [my emphasis—PJG]". If we follow rightly how Derrida frames Levinas, i.e., aligns the tacit decisions that underwrite Levinas' thought into an irreconcilable binary architecture, then what Levinas has in common with an infinitist dogmatism is the exclusive and oppositional nature of his concepts, like finite totality (same or ego) and positive infinity (the other). The thought would be that, deciding on a philosophy whose origin is in the latter encloses a *new* totality over against finite totality. Further, the question of responsibility gains its gravity only once philosophy reflects on human finitude without or abandoned by the infinite (God). Since history is not the central problem of an infinitist dogmatism, it cannot feel the full weight of the question of responsibility for what it says in its philosophical

discourse. Thus it never needs to develop the conceptual, chiefly temporal, tools to bridge the chasm between the infinite and the finite. Hegel is able to reconcile such dilemmas through speculative dialectic; Husserl conceives them systematically in the transcendental ego; and Heidegger can show their place from out of the hermeneutic of the history of Being. Levinas, having renounced language and history because they betray the other, doggedly reinstalls the chasm between finite totality and positive infinity (in fact, *two* totalities), but is left without the conceptual resources to conceive the relations between “*belonging and breakthrough*”.

In the final analysis, Derrida does not accuse Levinas’ thought of irresponsibility for what it wants to say about transcendence and the infinitely other. Nonetheless, the mere insinuation could not have been lost on Levinas. Levinas’ philosophy does not rejoin an infinitist dogmatism, even as it displays some of its deep traits. It is rather, on Derrida’s interpretation, a philosophy of finitude, i.e., reflects upon the historical nature of philosophy through the finite nature of the human existent. Levinas has resources, particularly in his notion of the ego’s ipseity, that save him from the charge of irresponsibility. Derrida notes these. He concludes, “No philosophy *responsible for its language* can renounce ipseity in general...[my emphasis—PJG]” (ED 192, WD 131). This fits into one of the larger points of Derrida’s essay, to which I have already referred twice: since one always has to do philosophy, it is doing philosophy that saves Levinas’ thought from irresponsibility, on the one hand, and from risking the worst violence, on the other hand. While Levinas *wants* to enclose two totalities, same and other, the ego’s ipseity (the discourse of the same) *proves to supplement* Levinas’ notion of the infinitely other. Derrida’s claim is that *history is more transcendence than transcendence*. It

because he understands history more systematically, or, to use his term of art, as a structural totality, that Derrida claims that history is the “...*very movement of transcendence*, of excess over the totality without which no totality would appear as such [my emphasis—PJG]”, and, similarly from the same passage, that history “*is transcendence itself* [my emphasis—PJG]” (ED 173, WD 117). In response, Levinas will stake his claim concerning the ethical sense of transcendence in the very structure of the *I’s ipseity* in *Otherwise than Being*.

2. D. (iii.) Transcendence, “Structural Totality”, and Writing: Derrida’s Conception of History in “Violence and Metaphysics”

Before he presents the “fundamental disagreement” between Levinas and Husserl, the notion of the other, Derrida elevates a footnote concerning history from the 1964 publication to the text proper. The three new sentences he appends to this passage give insight into how his conception of history differs from Levinas’ and how he thinks it makes an advance over transcendence to respond to the problem of the closure. To briefly review, Derrida takes Levinas to make a consequential choice when he claims that the “origin of history” lies beyond history in the nonphilosophical experience of the infinitely other (ED 173, WD 117). This choice pits finite totality, one enclosure, against positive infinity, another enclosure or (in fact) another totality. As the faithful commentary in “Violence and Metaphysics” gives way to blind spots in Levinas’ texts, the double reading aligns these oppositions into a binary conceptual architecture. Levinas, having renounced the discourse of the same (logos), is without an ontological category like limitation or a concept like mediation. Transcendence, the structure that, as Levinas puts it, drawing inspiration from Plato’s formula of the Good beyond being, claims the human

existent's "...departure [*sortie*] from being and from the categories which describe it" while maintaining a "foothold in being", *should* be able to conceive the difference that maintains the oppositions that play out in his discourse (DEE 9,EE xxvii). This is because transcendence, above any other notion in Levinas, poses for Derrida the problem of the "*relations between belonging and breakthrough*" *par excellence* (quoted in ED 127,WD 85). When Derrida puts it to the test, however, it fails, even as it succeeds in provoking philosophy at the closure qua problem. The nonphilosophical experience of the infinitely other depends on the language of ontology; reduction of the other to the same is inevitable. In 2. C. above I argued that Derrida himself recognizes the trace as a resource to respond to, not merely to pose, the problem of the closure. That he does not integrate it with Levinas' notion of transcendence to conceive, as Levinas puts it in *Totality and Infinity*, infinity "...reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience" evinces his double reading strategy (TI xi,TaI 23). This notwithstanding, Derrida's claim is that history, conceived more systematically through the notion of structural totality, better fulfills the criteria Levinas lays down for transcendence. This is where, from Levinas' perspective, the axe of Derrida's reading falls.

The test to which Derrida puts Levinas' transcendence is predicated on the belief that Levinas' thought searches for an origin or an end, and more generally, that it everywhere locks two alternatives or sides into an irreconcilable duality. This is plain in how Derrida treats Levinas' conceptions of history and language. For instance, he says that it is "...difficult to think the *origin* of history in a perfectly finite totality (the Same), as well as, moreover, in a perfectly positive infinity [my emphasis—PJG]" (ED 173,WD

117).⁹⁰ Further, the decision to enclose finite totality on one side and the infinitely other on the other side without relation would lead to a conception of history, like we saw with language, which cannot make itself into a totality *and* “...include within itself its own origin or end” (ED 141,WD 95). But Derrida argues that the “*idea* of peace”, Levinas’ eschatology, depends on history even as Levinas maintains that peace is beyond history. So, if Levinas’ position is that history *is kept open* by the horizon of peace, Derrida counters that, conversely, history *keeps open* the horizon of peace, or that peace is always mixed with war. Derrida effectively multiplies Levinas’ eschatology: his point is to show Levinas that there is not one end (peace): there must be two (peace and war).⁹¹

The upshot is that the notions that structure Levinas’ thought, finite totality and positive infinity, do not in fact stand in rigid opposition; his thought must mobilize them into a *play* in order to conceive transcendence. History is this play of finite totality and positive infinity that keeps open the face of the infinitely other (ED 158,WD 107).

Derrida’s argument is that Levinas does not see this. History, which he renounces for its violent betrayal of the other, supplements transcendence. Above in 2. C. I mentioned that Derrida captures Levinas in the closure framework without resources to respond to it:

“Levinas’ thought *is maintained* [*se tient*; my emphasis—PJG]” between the relations of the “*true order*”, i.e., the system of presence and the truth of ontology (belonging) and of the “*order of truth*”, i.e., transcendence and the infinitely other (breakthrough) (ED

⁹⁰ In English and French, *perfect* (*parfait*) and its adverbial form can mean, following the Latin *perficio*, to be at an end or to be finished. This is the sense of “perfectly [*parfaitement*]” Derrida intends, namely, a finite totality or a positive infinity that is *completed*, as if Levinas hermetically seals off one from the other.

⁹¹ Derrida makes the same point, effectively, this time concerning origins, by mobilizing Husserl’s form of the transcendental ego. The formal analysis institutes a transcendental symmetry between egos prior to the dissymmetry of the face of which Levinas speaks. Derrida comments, “It is difficult to see how the notion of violence...could be determined rigorously on a purely ethical level, without prior eidetic-transcendental analysis of the relations between ego and alter-ego in general, between [*sic*] *several origins* of the world in general [my emphasis—PJG]” (ED 189,WD 129). I explain this further below.

160,WD 108). In a footnote to the 1964 publication now elevated to the text proper, Derrida comments that history “...*maintains itself* [*se tient*] *in the difference* between totality and infinity, and...*history is precisely what Levinas calls transcendence and eschatology* [translation modified; my emphasis—PJG]” (ED 180,WD 123). If history “maintains itself” (or “is maintained”) in the difference between belonging and breakthrough, then it poses the problem of the closure. How must one conceive history, however, in order to see it as “precisely what Levinas calls transcendence and eschatology”? At this point in the text, Derrida appends three sentences to the 1967 publication that shed some light on an answer:

A *system* is neither finite nor infinite [original emphasis]. A structural totality escapes this alternative in its play. It escapes the archaeological and the eschatological, and *inscribes* them in itself [translation modified; my emphasis—PJG].

One should take “structural totality” as the philosophical resource that Derrida sees more clearly by the publication of *Writing and Difference* to support the statement on history that occurs prior in the text.⁹² A structural totality is the formal model for Derrida’s conception of history. Conceiving history through this model promises to escape the quagmire in which he frames Levinas’ thought, i.e., as a matter of choice between finite totality and positive infinity in order to find the origin or end of history (or language). *Transcendence fails because it does not, in Derrida’s estimation, account for and ultimately displace this quagmire.* Levinas finds himself, according to Derrida’s framework, all in on a thought that aims to develop the ethical sense of the infinitely other without the chance to avail himself of the resources of philosophical language. On this reading, Levinas has the right model with transcendence in that it poses the problem

⁹² For another analysis of structural totality and a suggestive reading on how it connects with Derrida’s notions of *différance* and *contamination*, see Lawlor’s *Derrida and Husserl* 154-56.

of the closure but undermines himself with the typical tropes of transcendental philosophy, archaeology or eschatology. Not only must transcendence *both* belong *and* breakthrough at once, as Levinas rightly claims; it must also be *neither* one *nor* the other, avoiding the dilemma of choice between finite totality and positive infinity, and it must avoid also the tropes of transcendental philosophy, archaeology and eschatology. His choice—alternately an archaeology or an eschatology of breakthrough—closes off other possible understandings of history and language. The implication is that conceiving history or language as a structural totality is the resource that Levinas needs to substantiate his claim about transcendence.

A “structural totality” escapes the dilemma of choice between the alternatives finite and infinite because of its “play”. Play refers to how a structural totality like history or language maintains itself (or is maintained) in the difference between these alternatives.⁹³ What maintains these alternatives (no less than it is itself maintained by them) is writing (as *différance*).⁹⁴ A structural totality escapes the choice between,

⁹³ The model here is Heidegger’s ontological difference. Briefly, this means that Being essentially dissimulates itself. Even as there is always a historically determinate vague sense of Being and even as Being is unthinkable outside of beings, Being conceals itself as beings appear or as one tries to speak of it. Thus for Heidegger the truth of Being is maintained in the difference between beings and Being, or the ontological difference. Derrida understands the ontological difference as violence or war. He finds support for this in Heidegger’s *Brief über den Humanismus*, quoting the German (here reproduced in English): “Being itself is strife”. (Derrida’s “*Das Sein selber das Strittige ist*” is actually a partial quotation whose significant context sheds light on its meaning. The full passage is, “With healing, evil [*das Böse*] appears all the more in the clearing. The essence of evil does not consist in the mere baseness of human actions, but rather in the malice of rage [*Bösartigen des Grimmes*]. Both of these, however, healing and raging, occur only insofar as *being itself is in strife* [*das Sein selber das Strittige ist*; my emphasis—PJG]”. See *Brief über den Humanismus* in *Wegmarken* 355; “Letter on ‘Humanism’” in *Pathmarks* 272.) The reason that this is significant for Derrida’s conception of history is that with Heidegger’s history of Being he finds a model for history that is not the negative (as in Hegel) but war (without negativity), Being’s strife with itself, unveiling (beings) and concealing (Being’s recession from ontic determinateness). Thus Heidegger’s truth of Being, maintained in the thought of the ontological difference, is an important source for Derrida’s notion of language as an “economy of violence” or “economy of war” and his notion of history as “the infinite passage through violence” (ED 172, WD 117; ED 220, WD 148; and ED 191, WD 130, respectively).

⁹⁴ The reason that this goes both ways—i.e., writing *is maintained (se tenir) and maintains itself (se tenir)* in the alternatives of belonging and breakthrough—is to avoid settling on an origin (or end)—e.g., *either* finite *or* infinite—as transcendental philosophy would. My thought is that the ambiguity or equivocation of

further, the archaeological (the search for an origin) and the eschatological (the positing of an end). The archaeological and eschatological characterize western metaphysics (as ontotheology) and transcendental philosophy, but they are often of a piece: the metaphysics of presence. I showed above how Levinas' notion of the trace is the chief reason he escapes this charge even while Derrida refers to many passages—e.g., the speech of the other must be *present* or the face-to-face depends on the *presence* of an empirical encounter—that tie Levinas back into it. That is all part of Derrida's strategy to respond to the closure, double reading. On the model of a structural totality, history displaces the choice between origin and end. Further, it renders the choice between belonging and breakthrough undecideable.⁹⁵ To say that history "...maintains itself [or is maintained; *se tient*] in the difference between totality and infinity..." means that history cannot be captured in either alternative, even as it poses them simultaneously. This would make it impossible to choose between them. The ambiguity of the reflexive verb *se tenir* indicates this: neither is it correct to say, on the one hand, that the difference between totality and infinity has its origin in history (read: history does not maintain this difference) nor is it correct to say, on the other hand, that history has its origin in the difference between totality and infinity (read: history is not maintained in this difference). The difference that structures these sides is itself neither belonging nor is it breakthrough.

the voice of the reflexive verb in French multiplies origins, as I explain shortly. So I see the usage as deliberate on Derrida's part, even if he is constrained by the French language to do so.

⁹⁵ Derrida does not write the word *undecideable* or refer to his near contemporaneous notion of *undecideability* in "Violence and Metaphysics". Nonetheless, it is part of the strategy of the double reading to displace the choice between belonging and breakthrough, since a choice would create for the text precisely those problems of enclosure or totality, origin or end, that it draws out of Levinas' texts. As I argue above, ambiguity or equivocation is fundamentally important to displacing this decision (cf. Lawlor's *Derrida and Husserl* 155). This is nowhere more apparent than in the closing remarks of the essay, when Derrida asks, "Are we Jews? Are we Greeks?" and shortly after, "Are we Greeks? Are we Jews?" (ED 227, WD 153). For Derrida undecideability *does not* mean that one is absolved from choice. The aim of undecideability is not *epoché* in the sense of the Hellenistic schools of Greek philosophy. One is still obliged to respond. This is why Derrida's response to the closure, *writing*, writes with two hands.

It exceeds these alternatives even as it poses both at once. Derrida's writing is making a conscious effort to avoid archaeology or eschatology. In order to "...attempt to achieve a breakthrough toward the beyond of philosophical discourse...*within language*...", philosophy at the closure poses belonging and breakthrough simultaneously, neither disowning the logos nor continuing to follow it blindly (ED 163, WD 110). A structural totality, the formal model for Derrida's conception of history, does so because it "inscribes" archaeology and eschatology in itself. As *history*, a structural totality writes these figures, *origin* and *end*, into itself as no more than functions where a text must call upon one to supplement the other.

What structures a text is not in fact the rigid oppositions found in it, like those in Levinas that Derrida assembles into a binary conceptual architecture (finite totality or positive infinity, history or transcendence, the discourse of the same or the face's speech, etc.). Were this the case for double reading, one would be led to the misguided conclusion that its aim is criticism. What structures a text is how these oppositions must be mobilized into a play because of the tacit choice to value one over the other. The term neglected or demoted to a secondary status supplements the term prioritized. Levinas' claims, on Derrida's reading, that the origin of history is the empirical encounter with the other beyond history or that the origin of language is the face's nonviolent speech beyond what it says depend on the support of a speaker who is absent. He nonetheless can make these claims about the nonphilosophical experience of the face by writing them down. Because writing absents the author, its effects do not depend on the presence of a speaker; at the same time, its marks maintain an enduring presence (ED 151, WD 102).

Without writing, there is no history, and without history (on the model of a structural totality), no transcendence.

One of the effects of writing for Derrida is a series of supplements that come to the aid of what the text intends. Levinas must utilize the discourse of the same to speak of transcendence. Consequently, the infinitely other is neither a simple and pure presence nor a simple and pure nonpresence. The ethical sense of the infinitely other cannot be captured in the traditional language of origin or end: it must be mobilized into a network of indefinite meanings, each positioned in a differential play of absence and presence with the others. The sense of the infinitely other differs from itself and is indefinitely deferred in this network. Any meaning Levinas may allege is only an effect of writing (as *différance*). Thus the alleged enclosures at the base of Levinas' thought, finite totality and positive infinity, are porous and impure. Because he writes, he cannot rigorously maintain an absolute difference between them. History, the same, and writing, must supplement transcendence, the other, and the face's speech. The thought is that writing (as *différance*), responds to the problem of philosophy at the closure better than transcendence because it self-consciously interweaves belonging and breakthrough, marshaling them simultaneously into a binary conceptual architecture while refraining from a choice between either. This is the responsibility of the philosopher today, on Derrida's interpretation: one is obliged, in the face of an impossible decision (*either...or*), to write with two hands. Thus the breakthrough that writing attempts remains "*within language*" because it does not close off unforeseeable resources within language (ED 165, WD 111-12). This where Levinas' transcendence fails, on Derrida's

reading, namely, when he encloses language and history in the same and speech (or saying) and eschatology in the other.

A full discussion of writing (as *différance*) exceeds my purposes here. I only wanted to sketch out why writing—alongside a string of notions from which it is inseparable in this essay, like system, economy, and structural totality—is Derrida’s ultimate response to philosophy at the time of the closure. He sees this more clearly in the 1967 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics”. Writing allows Derrida to describe the formal model of a structural totality. It is this model that substantiates his claim in the 1964 publication that history fulfills what Levinas calls transcendence better than transcendence itself. History poses the “*relations between belonging and breakthrough*” at once. It also refrains from either, maintaining itself rather in the “difference” that gives them structure. This difference is writing (as *différance*). Writing, and not transcendence, is thus the “thought of originary difference”, to deploy Derrida’s phrase differently from the context of my analysis above, that Levinas should have sought (ED 134, WD 90). Through writing, history (or language) escapes the dilemma of choosing between an origin or end of history (or language). This is where transcendence fails. Derrida thus aligns Levinas’ notion of transcendence with the archaeology or the eschatology characteristic of transcendental philosophy. But it is not clear that Levinas fits into this alignment. Part of the effort in *Otherwise than Being*, an effort to which I will refer in Chapter 4, is to respond to the indictment of transcendence by upsetting any transcendental reading of that work. The notion of the trace at the heart of experience will be key to this response.

Allow me to sum up my main claims in Part One of this chapter. I showed that Derrida reads transcendence as animating the double bind in which philosophy today finds itself, the closure of metaphysics. Transcendence proposes that which is excluded from philosophical discourse (the infinitely other) in the language of philosophical discourse. Does transcendence succeed in piercing through to the beyond of philosophical discourse while remaining within language? Derrida puts it to a test of his own design to answer this. He finds that it fails. Where transcendence fails, Derrida proposes writing. I take it that “Violence and Metaphysics” is less a work of criticism than a work that writes with two hands. Therein Levinas gains a voice to pose certain questions “to *us*”. But if “Violence and Metaphysics” writes with two hands, it also plays two hands at once. Derrida acknowledges that the trace responds to the closure. But transcendence fails because Derrida sufficiently isolates it from the trace, not out of a desire to win an argument, but in order to respond to the closure framework with a double reading of Levinas’ texts. Conceiving trace through transcendence holds the key to releasing the latter from the quagmire of a choice in which Derrida frames Levinas’ thought, as I show beginning in Chapter 4.

If transcendence fails to explain Levinas’ “thought of originary difference”, namely, the ethical sense of the other human existent, then what grounds does he have to speak of an infinitely other? This is the second major challenge with which “Violence and Metaphysics” leaves Levinas. From this challenge, several more issues follow to which Levinas will respond in *Otherwise than Being* and other works.

PART TWO. THE PROBLEM OF THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OF THE INFINITELY OTHER

Part of Derrida's strategy in the third part of "Violence and Metaphysics", "Difference and Eschatology", is to adopt different philosophical voices to investigate Levinas' claims concerning the face of the infinitely other and its structure, transcendence. Each of these voices serves the strategy of double reading as a textual practice: the repetition of main propositions of Levinas' texts (the long passages of commentary in the first two parts of "Violence and Metaphysics") now run up against other dominant philosophical readings of history and the other. The aim is not to criticize the blind spots that open up in Levinas' thought but, as I showed above, to draw out of these blind spots the questions Levinas poses "to us", like the challenge of philosophy at the time of the closure. In this regard, the concluding remarks of "The Ends of Man" imply that it is impossible to decide between the internalist deconstructive strategy (Heidegger) and the externalist (Levinas). The strategy of adopting different philosophical voices aims at the same upshot, undecideability, in "Difference and Eschatology".⁹⁶ In Part Two of this chapter, I cover how Derrida adopts a Husserlian voice to converse with Levinas on the question of grounding the authority to speak of the infinitely other. This strategy intertwines belonging and breakthrough within the same writing to respond to the closure.

In the first section of "Difference and Eschatology", *Of the Originary Polemic*, Derrida adopts a Hegelian voice. One upshot from *Of the Originary Polemic* is the problem history poses to Levinas' notion of transcendence. I presented this above. In *Of Transcendental Violence*, the second section, to which I turn presently, Derrida largely,

⁹⁶ Bernasconi's "The Trace of Levinas in Derrida" 16-17.

but not exclusively, adopts a Husserlian voice. He also mixes in a Hegelian and a Parmenidean voice as well as the voice of the Eleatic Stranger of Plato's *Sophist* at key junctures in his analysis. In the essay's final section, *Of Ontological Violence*, Derrida adopts a Heideggerean voice. I do not discuss this section at any great length but make reference to it where it follows or advances the main takeaways from *Of Transcendental Violence*. Regardless, the upshot in each of these sections is that Husserl and Heidegger, each in his own way, gives grounds that authorize speaking of the other. For Husserl, it takes the form of a phenomenological transcendental legitimation of the alter ego. For Heidegger, it takes the form of the question of Being (early Heidegger) or the truth of Being (later Heidegger), particularly through the notion of letting-be. I organize this upshot around the problem, given philosophy at the time of the closure (which, following my analysis above, we can now also characterize as undecideability), How does Levinas justify the right to speak of an infinitely other?

2. E. How Husserl's Transcendental Legitimation of the Alter Ego Justifies the Right to Speak of an Infinitely Other

The opening sentence of "*Of Transcendental Violence*" provides a bridge from "*Of the Originary Polemic*" with the claim that language is war itself. Derrida now says,

In addition, metaphysics, unable to escape its ancestry in light, always supposes a phenomenology in its very critique of phenomenology, and especially if, like Levinas' metaphysics, it seeks to be discourse and teaching [*enseignement*; translation modified] (ED 173, WD 118).

What unites the different voices Derrida adopts in "*Of Transcendental Violence*" is that Levinas' metaphysics presupposes the transcendental philosophy, particularly the transcendental phenomenology that it seeks to put into question.⁹⁷ The other must, in

⁹⁷ The same basic claim organizes the Heideggerean responses in *Of Ontological Violence*. In effect, Derrida claims that Levinas is unable to twist free of an understanding of being (ED 196, WD 134). In fact

some sense, appear. If this is the case, it is difficult to maintain a discourse against light, Derrida says. In doing so, Levinas deprives himself of language, for the day-night structure, like the inside-outside structure, belongs to language congenitally. Otherwise, Derrida adds, a language would flirt with nonsense. Thus, Derrida will ceaselessly pose this question of authority or justification in several forms: What right does Levinas have to speak of the absolutely or infinitely other? Speaking largely through a Husserlian voice in “*Of Transcendental Violence*”, Derrida’s challenge to Levinas is to legitimate, as Husserl does through transcendental phenomenology while avoiding archaeology and eschatology, his basic premise that the other is an absolute origin of the world and of meaning in it who does not enter into relation with the same. Chiefly with the resources of transcendental phenomenology, Derrida will argue that one can only rightly speak of an infinitely other *on the basis of the same*. This last proposition rules the day also in “*Of Ontological Violence*”, if we only replace the term *same* with *Being*.

Derrida’s examination of Levinas’ reading of Husserl is a display of just how powerful not only a rejoinder from a Husserlian perspective can be but also how powerful an effect the deconstructive reading, carved in part from out of Husserl’s and Levinas’ respective philosophies, will be for Levinas’ subsequent philosophy. The thrust of Derrida’s rejoinder falls on a preethical, transcendental violence that one must acknowledge in order to speak rightfully—i.e., to legitimate one’s own language, or, to speak responsibly—of the infinitely other. The basic problem is that Levinas, in seeking to avoid the violence that he detects, on Derrida’s reading, is inherent to philosophical

his discourse confirms Heidegger at every turn (ED 209, WD 142). It is a variation on a main theme of “Violence and Metaphysics”, namely, that anyone who seeks to oppose himself to the language of philosophy is, by necessity, already caught up in the language he wishes to escape: “Just as he implicitly had to appeal to phenomenological self-evidences against phenomenology, Levinas must ceaselessly suppose and practice the thought of precomprehension of Being in his discourse, even when he directs it against [Heidegger’s] ‘ontology’” (ED 208, WD 141).

language deprives himself of this right. Derrida organizes his rejoinder from a Husserlian perspective around four classical phenomenological thematics: [1] the phenomenological method (ED 173-74, WD 118); [2] intentionality (ED 173-74, WD 118-21); [3] the noema in transcendental phenomenology (ED 178-80, WD 121-22); and [4] intersubjectivity, particularly alterity (ED 180ff, WD 122ff.). I focus my analysis straightaway on the heart of the matter, Levinas' reading of Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity and the resources Derrida develops for a rejoinder. I detail additionally where Derrida speaks in his own voice from out of this Husserlian perspective, that is, I present the positive impact it makes on Derrida's own philosophy as well as the challenge it poses for Levinas. Briefly, Derrida's basic intention is to show that in each case Levinas' metaphysics must presuppose the very transcendental phenomenology he wants to put into question (ED 195, WD 133).

But this is only Derrida's *stated* intention. Between the lines, one must keep in mind the problem that Derrida puts explicitly only in the 1967 publication of "Violence and Metaphysics", namely, the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics. As I will show in my analysis of the three arguments he formulates around the thematic of intersubjectivity, Derrida believes that in each case that Husserl's texts pose, formally, if not always thematically, the problem of the relations between belonging and breakthrough, the problem of the closure that characterizes philosophy today. To be sure, Husserl's phenomenology "...remains dominated by a metaphysics of presence", as Derrida adds to the essay in *Writing and Difference* (ED 197, WD 134). This notwithstanding, his phenomenology attempts, particularly with the themes of alterity and temporality, to achieve a breakthrough toward the beyond of philosophical

discourse. This attempt at breakthrough while intentionally maintaining continuity with logocentric concepts *animates* (although it does not *respond to*) the problem of the closure. Levinas, on the other hand, poses the problem of the relation between belonging and breakthrough thematically (at least, for how Derrida reads him) insofar as he explicitly wants to achieve a breakthrough toward the beyond of philosophical discourse with his notion of transcendence. Not only does his effort depend on ontological language, so that transcendence fails; it also lacks the formal sophistication. From this shortcoming and in consultation with Husserl's advances, Derrida will sketch out some resources for his own response to the problem of philosophy at the closure, system and structural totality, which I examined above. I also explained above that the primary resource for conceiving structural totality, a formal model for history or language, is writing. In his presentation of the transcendental ego in "Violence and Metaphysics", Derrida takes Husserl to be thinking systematically, i.e., to include in his analysis of the ego what the concepts of the metaphysics of presence exclude.

In addition to analyzing how Derrida develops, in consultation with each of the three Husserlian arguments, new philosophical responses at the closure, I will also specify how Derrida understands each argument. Derrida understands alterity in Husserl through the moral language of *respect* for the other. It is through an "immediate respect for the other himself" that he then understands the encounter with the face that summons and commands me in Levinas (ED 142, WD 96). He formulates this on analogy with the rational sentiment of respect in Kant.⁹⁸ Derrida is correct to say, in the texts he had available to him, that, "Metaphysical transcendence is desire" in Levinas (ED 137, WD

⁹⁸ This analogy comes with the important qualification that respect is not mediated through the moral law for Levinas. Hence, Derrida calls the respect "for the other himself", i.e., for the face, "immediate" (ED 142, WD 96).

92). However, he then goes on to characterize desire as the “...respect and knowledge [*connaissance*] of the other as other...” (ED 138,WD 92). Excepting the problematic term “knowledge” as a slip of the tongue,⁹⁹ what one might find questionable is “respect” to characterize desire. Is it correct to characterize the encounter with the other as a pacific and conciliatory movement of respect? And is it correct to approach what Levinas calls desire through *other* resources in the philosophical tradition on the moral theme of respect, where it is always found mediated through a third term (e.g., the moral law) and involves a reciprocity or economic exchange between two already constituted egos?

If this is questionable to set this framework, then it throws off Derrida’s subsequent analysis of desire in “Violence and Metaphysics”. Derrida is correct to say that desire is insatiable and equal only to “excess”, that no totality “will ever encompass [*se fermer*] it” (ED 138,WD 93). And, on this basis, he is also right to conclude, “The metaphysics of desire is thus a desire of infinite separation”, for desire never reaches its object. The unbridgeable gap between it and its object means that desire follows a logic of increase and superabundance. But there is a dissonance between this account and saying that “Respect...can only be as desire” (ED 147,WD 99).¹⁰⁰ Later in the essay, Derrida will wonder, “Can one respect the Other [*Autre*] as Other [*Autre*], and expel negativity—labor—from transcendence, as Levinas seeks to?” (ED 168,WD 114) Here he understands desire qua the movement of respect through a Hegelian lens as a

⁹⁹ Derrida elsewhere in the essay recognizes that the encounter with the other who commands me is not a “theoretical interrogation” (ED 142,WD 96). The face does not belong to the theoretical attitude that dominates Husserl’s phenomenology.

¹⁰⁰ The context of this passage is a discussion of the ideality of sight and hearing in Levinas and Hegel. Derrida introduces it in the 1967 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics”.

dialectical movement between two egos, yet again reading the encounter with the other as a movement of exchange and reciprocity that happens in the empirical present.¹⁰¹

In each of these discussions of desire, Derrida looks for other resources in the philosophical tradition and finds, in Kant and in Hegel, how the encounter with the infinitely other *should* cash itself out, so to speak. He then looks for this in Levinas. But this presumes that Levinas looks to align his notion of desire with Kant's transcendental account of respect or with Hegel's dialectical account of recognition. It is questionable to think that he aims to follow closely on the heels of their philosophical views. One finds the same search and the same resource—respect—in each of the three arguments from Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity, which I will highlight and explain in the analysis of them that follows.

To foreshadow what I will say in Chapter 4, Levinas will respond to the variety of voices Derrida takes on to read desire through respect through a change in tone and point of emphasis in his argument concerning subjectivity. The ego is already dispossessed prior to the empirical encounter with the other. Desire will be *internalized*, an ipseic movement of anarchy, disturbance, and obsession, even to the point of becoming desire for the undesirable other. The desire produced in the ethical relation will not follow the

¹⁰¹ Derrida uses Heidegger's *letting-be*, an understanding (in Heidegger's sense of *verstehen*) of Being that is requisite to respect the other, to the same effect. "Without this acknowledgment...or let us say without this 'letting-be' be' [*laisser-être*] of an existent (Other) as something outside of me in the essence of what it is (first in its alterity), no ethics would be possible" (ED 202, WD 138). An understanding of Being "conditions...the *recognition* of the existent" as someone, as another ego, as a human being, etc. (ED 202, WD 138) Derrida continues, in a manner that will echo the motif of respect for alterity in Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity, the thought or understanding of Being "...conditions the *respect* for the other [*autre*] as *what it is*: other [*autre*]". Derrida argues, further, that even responsibility is predicated on an understanding of Being: "Every determination, in effect, presupposes the thought of Being. Without it, how can one give meaning to Being as other, as other self, to the irreducibility of the existence and the essence of the other, and to the consequent responsibility?" (ED 207, WD 140)

other's ethical imperative, "...only incarnated nonviolence in that it is respect for the other", as Derrida has it (ED 142,WD 96).

2. F. Derrida's Three Counter-Arguments to Levinas' Reading of Husserl's Theory of Intersubjectivity and the Resources Derrida Develops for Responding to the Problem of Philosophy at the Time of the Closure

The basic question that organizes each of the following arguments is, By what right or authority can I (an ego, the same) say other absolutely or infinitely other (taken as a difference that does not originate in the same, or an originary difference)? This question is a variation on the problem of the closure, and I will detail how each argument articulates it slightly differently. The rejoinder to Levinas in each case is that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, posing the problem of the closure formally, if not thematically, with intersubjectivity, justifies a language that can speak of the infinitely other of whom Levinas in fact claims to speak.¹⁰² Finally, the broader context that motivates this question is that Levinas' thought, according to Derrida, must presuppose the very transcendental philosophy it seeks to put into question, a conviction that will also motivate the rejoinder to Levinas that Derrida mounts from Heidegger's perspective.

2. F. (i.) First Argument: from Husserl's Notion of "Originary Nonpresence"

The first response to Levinas' reading of Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity is the argument that Husserl "takes pains to respect" the other, in contrast to how Levinas interprets him. He does so by reserving a specific kind of evidence for the other that Derrida calls an "originary nonpresence" (ED 181,WD 123). Already it is clear that Derrida believes that the relation to the infinitely other, which he takes to be primarily the

¹⁰² With the theme of temporality Husserl also poses the closure formally if not thematically, that is, thinks systematically. I do not discuss this at any length, as it deserves its own analysis. See ED 194-95,WD 132-33.

encounter with the face in Levinas, should be understood through the moral sentiment of respect. He reads the encounter with the other in Levinas as respect on analogy with or through different perspectives in the philosophical tradition. He reads it on an analogy with, *mutatis mutandis*, a transcendental account of respect from a Kantian perspective (ED 142, WD 96); through a Hegelian dialectical account between two egos (ED 168, WD 114); and from the perspective of Heidegger's letting-be (*laisser-être*), which exceeds any transcendental or dialectical account (ED 202, WD 138 and ED 211-12, WD 143). I have already discussed the first two and only make reference to respect and Heidegger's letting-be. In each of the three arguments he formulates from Husserl's intersubjectivity, Derrida expects to read the encounter with the infinitely other as one that *should* issue in a movement of respect. With the philosophical framework of transcendental phenomenology, he presupposes what ought to be found in order that Levinas can claim to speak rightfully of the infinitely other. We see this already in the way he begins his first argument, namely, that Husserl "takes pains to respect" the other.

The presentation of the other as *originary nonpresence* means that some aspect of the other, which is only his own, is entirely hidden from my view. The ego cannot reduce the nonpresence and non-phenomenality of the other: her interior life and experience always remains barred from me. But in order that the other appear as an alter ego, another irreducible perspective on the world, she must appear in some sense within my experience. Thus the phenomenon of the "totally other" must appear in a certain, nonphenomenal sense, otherwise one would have no sense of, and so could not speak of (as Levinas does) the totally other (ED 181, WD 123). It is this sense of an apparent nonphenomenality that constitutes a distinct kind of evidence for Husserl, Derrida

emphasizes. This is the presentation of the other's originary nonpresence. This unique transcendental evidence legitimates Husserl's right to speak of an other who is infinitely other.

For Derrida, with the evidence of this originary nonpresence, Husserl's texts on the theme of intersubjectivity pose the problem of the closure formally, if not thematically. Again, Husserl is not offering a philosophy *at* the closure, which I take to mean a self-aware philosophical *response* to the subterranean necessities that govern a text's belonging to metaphysics and breaking through it (undecideability); that he at once joins the logocentric tradition and develops breakthroughs is enough to *pose* the problem facing philosophical thought today.

In order to sharpen the contrast between *posing* and *responding to*, recall how, on Derrida's reading, Levinas' texts pose the closure, as I explained in 2. C. above: Levinas claims to speak of an infinity beyond being and logos in the ethical relation with another human being. The formal structure guiding this is his notion of transcendence. Put to a test of his own design in "Violence and Metaphysics", transcendence fails: an infinity beyond being, which transcendence must involve, is "impossible, unthinkable, unutterable" in the language of philosophy, ontology (ED 168, WD 114). Characteristic of philosophy at the closure is that every metaphysical text by necessity transgresses metaphysics and, by this very transgression, is recaptured by metaphysics. But one must not stop at the *failure* of transcendence, for then one reduces Derrida's reading of Levinas' texts in "Violence and Metaphysics" to a critique. *Formally* (and not only thematically), Levinas' notion of a trace at the heart of experience responds to the problem of the relations between "*belonging and breakthrough*" (ED 163, WD 110). *That*

he writes, with one hand, of the failure of transcendence and, with the other hand, of the resource of the trace, testifies to Derrida's double reading of Levinas' texts. He may have come to understand the significance of the trace only lately, that is, just as the 1964 version of "Violence and Metaphysics" was in press. But what is unmistakable is how the later additions on the trace bring the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure into sharp relief for Derrida.

To return to Derrida's first argument from Husserl, to pose the problem of the closure formally but not thematically is to think systematically. The bedrock principle of originary self-evidence, where Husserl's philosophy is most attached to the value of presence, does not determine evidence of alterity of the other alone. Originary *nonpresence*, a supplement to presence, does. Thus the relations between two orders conventionally thought to be mutually exclusive, presence and nonpresence, are thought in a way that they belong together through an originary difference, the apparent nonphenomenality of the totally other. The totally other cannot be entirely conceptualized exclusively within this belonging together.

That Husserl, on Derrida's score, is posing the problem of the closure with the unique evidence of the totally other's originary nonpresence is indisputable when one notes that for *Writing and Difference* Derrida adds his own term of art, *system*, to this argument otherwise unchanged from the 1964 publication of "Violence and Metaphysics". He writes that Husserl "speaks of this *system*" as what permits him to think the other's "appearance and the "impossibility" of making him into a theme (ED 181, WD 123). The other appears to me, yet he cannot be a theme *of my* ego. Husserl conceives the other as *my* appearance and *impossibility* of being *my* appearance as,

according to Derrida, “system”. In Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity, Derrida sees resources for what he calls a system, that which would include nonphenomenality in phenomenality, nonpresence in presence, as inscriptions.

I presented at length above the resource Derrida comes to recognize in Levinas for responding to the problem of philosophy at the closure, the trace. He makes no mention of it in the context of his discussion of how Husserl’s originary nonpresence animates the problem of the closure. I read it at work already in the phenomenological descriptions of the struggle between the I (*moi*) and self (*soi*) in Levinas’ book from 1947, *From Existence to the Existent*. This is the primary relation for what he calls in the 1968 essay “Substitution” the identity of ipseity. Conceiving human identity through what it means to be a *self* is key to Levinas’ notion of substitution. In Chapter 4, I develop the identity of ipseity and ask whether it does not in fact resemble precisely what Derrida looks for elsewhere (e.g., in Husserl, with Levinas as a foil) for philosophy at the time of the closure.

2. F. (ii.) Second Argument: from Husserl’s Notion of Analogical Appresentation

Derrida mounts a second response to Levinas’ reading of intersubjectivity in Husserl on the basis that the other, zero point and orientation in the world, can only be given to the ego through analogical appresentation. This does not reduce the other or assimilate the other, as Levinas would have it, because the other is not a concept that would be subsumed under the same. Rather it “confirms and respects separation”, the necessity that the same knows the other only in a mediated way (ED 183, WD 124). Further, “analogical transposition” recognizes a “radical separation of [two] absolute origins”, ego and other, establishing a relation of “...absolved absolutes and nonviolent

respect for the secret...”, namely, the secret that, contrary to appearances, I can only be given the other in a mediated, analogical way, that she is neither rightly conceived as a construction of my mind nor as in opposition to me. In analogical appresentation, Husserl provides the basis for what a philosophy of the encounter with the other should look for, on Derrida’s score, namely, a respect for the radical separation of another absolute origin of the world and meaning.

Husserl provides an even deeper account of the radical separation of ego and other, Derrida explains, in distinguishing two levels of otherness in analogical appresentation. Whereas Levinas sees infinite or absolute otherness in the human existent alone, Husserl’s theory of alterity applies to any other, including to non-human others. For Derrida, this distinction makes for a broader concept of alterity, which he sees as an advantage over Levinas’ narrower rendering. On the one hand, analogical appresentation extends to every perception, Derrida notes, due to the incompleteness of perception. This first foundation of alterity establishes the alterity of extended bodies. It applies to the other, non-human existent in the world no less than to the other, human existent, for the human existent is surely also a spatial body. In arguing that face and exteriority are not spatial notions, that they must somehow (as Derrida presents things) erase the inside-outside structure characteristic of language as he wrote them, Levinas would have dismissed this level of alterity, the alterity of extended bodies. Does he have the right to narrow his talk of the infinitely other, to limit this infinity to the encounter with the human face, when he does not recognize infinite otherness, as Husserl does, in the finite, perspectival, and contextualized experience of perception generally?¹⁰³ In the case of the

¹⁰³ This is the right place to add a discussion of Derrida’s long passage on the word *Autrui*, a suggestive reading in which he breaks down its meaning grammatically and etymologically, considers its relation to

other as human existent, further, Husserl recognizes an extra layer or level of alterity, the “...radical impossibility of going around to see things from the other side” (ED 183, WD 124). I can never just *try on* the other’s embodied perspective in the world. This is forever hidden from my view. Thus, in Husserl’s analogical appresentation, Derrida sees resources not only for thinking an absolutely other, but also for thinking otherness at two distinct levels: first, at the level of the other, non-human existent (*autre*) and, second, at the level of the other, human existent (which Levinas *often*, but by no means *exclusively*, reserves for *Autrui* or *autrui*). The latter, he argues, has its ground in the former: the other as face must first be a body, an extended thing, whose aspects or profiles adumbrate others, each of which is embedded in an indefinite number of horizons. Analogical appresentation distinguishes two levels of alterity and shows how one—the level of the infinitely other human existent—has its legitimacy transcendently in the other—the level of the infinitely other as extended thing. It is precisely the latter, deeper ground, that Levinas neglects to acknowledge, as Derrida has it. This puts into question his right to speak of the infinitely other. Husserl, by contrast, further solidifies his right to speak of an other who is infinitely other with this dual level transcendental account.

The distinction in the account of two levels of alterity is important to the positive development of Derrida’s own argument. He sees it as a shortcoming in Levinas that he limits infinite or absolute otherness to the human existent.¹⁰⁴ But it is not merely that the story would end with the criticism it invites. There are two reasons for this, one that

the Greek *heteron*, and urges *autre* to be thought anterior to both *heteron* and *Autrui*. But I will not pursue this here, as it exceeds my aims. See Kas Saghafi’s detailed exposition of this passage in his *Apparitions—Of Derrida’s Other* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 16-19.

¹⁰⁴ One possible upshot of ridding the account of this restriction is to extend infinite otherness, respect, and responsibility to animals. This is merely a suggestion that speculates on what Derrida might have had in mind when he confers greater importance to Husserl’s dual level transcendental account of alterity in analogical appresentation. Derrida indicates this nowhere in the text itself.

belongs to the immediate context and the other that foreshadows another problem that Derrida's reading bequeaths to Levinas.

First, the discussion of two levels of alterity in analogical appresentation is important because it provides Derrida an opportunity to develop his own notion of a system or a structural totality through writing and its effects. Derrida insists on recognizing, as Husserl does, the infinitely other "*as such* (appearing as such)", that is, the infinitely other as an extended body who exists as an intentional modification of my ego (ED 183, WD 125). This gives him the resources for making a distinction Levinas does not between the infinite otherness of perceived bodies and the infinite otherness of human existents. This distinction—which, to reiterate, *roughly* breaks in Levinas' thought along the lines of *autre*, on the one hand, and *Autrui* or *autrui*, on the other hand¹⁰⁵—of two alterities permits an expanded conception of what constitutes the infinitely other. Levinas would have unduly restricted the infinitely other to *human* others. He *encloses* the infinitely other, i.e., tacitly presupposes its definition. In Husserl, analogical appresentation permits him to think these two alterities; in Derrida, it is (in this passage) a "system". Derrida indicates how analogical appresentation formally, if not thematically, poses the problem of the closure in the only sentence he adds to this discussion for the 1967 publication. He remarks, "The *system* of these two alterities, the one inscribed in the other, must be thought together [my emphasis—PJG]". For Husserl, these two alterities—on the one hand, the infinity in perception, or that experience is always, as is often remarked, *in the making*; and, on the other hand, the infinity of the

¹⁰⁵ Although one must emphasize that this distinction *itself* breaks down in Levinas' texts, i.e., he is by no means uniform in designating the general other (e.g., an extended thing) as *l'autre* and the human existent as *Autrui* or *autrui*. Even as he clearly privileges *Autrui* and *autrui* in his texts, he nonetheless often uses *autre*, in fact, to designate the human existent, and hence with the same value he endows *Autrui* and *autrui*.

alter ego, or the radical impossibility, as Derrida puts it, of “...going around to see things from the other side” (ED 183,WD 124)—belong together. What Derrida is driving at is that the system of two alterities is able to conceive infinity (a breakthrough) *in* the finite lived experience of perception (a belonging), where the former, a non-present or absent infinity, supplements the latter.¹⁰⁶ But the system of two alterities does not explicitly pose the difference in these relations, how non-presence (the infinite idea, or the idea in the Kantian sense) plays with the presence of lived experience. Husserl poses the closure problem formally, but not thematically. An inscription, or writing, is for Derrida the production of this difference. The implication for Levinas, if we follow how the two levels of alterity in analogical appresentation present the problem of the closure rightly, would be that this difference does *not* come down solely to the *face of the human existent* (or any of the spatial metaphors for the other that Levinas employs, all of which are, according to Derrida, contrary to our thought, non-spatial and non-metaphorical: exteriority, most high, and nudity) but to a play of another term that supplements the face (e.g., God, whom the face resembles). As a system, writing can accommodate the two alterities in itself: it poses the problem of philosophy at the closure, i.e., the problem of their belonging (in this case, finitude) and breakthrough (infinity) “*formally and thematically*” (ED 163,WD 110). This would mean to render a choice between these alternatives undecidable.

What is the upshot of the discussion of the system of two alterities? I want to offer this before I move on to discuss the second reason that this discussion is important from

¹⁰⁶ Is this not present in the Preface to *Totality and Infinity* where Levinas says that infinity “...is reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience”? (TI xi,TaI 23) I have already mentioned that it leads Levinas to the notion of the trace, which operates only implicitly in his first major work in 1961. Derrida does not integrate it with the thought of transcendence, however, even as he sees its significance already in the 1964 (ED 142,WD 95). See my Conclusion to Chapter 1 and footnote 52 above.

the perspective of positively developing Derrida's own argument. The reason that the system of two alterities "must [*Il faut*]" be thought together is, as I read it, to do justice to the other, that is, to authorize the right to speak of the other *as* infinitely other, whereas Levinas speaks only of the other as infinitely other human existent, or face, and of this only *in fact* (ED 183, WD 124). Analogical appresentation, by contrast, gives Husserl the "*right to speak*" of the infinitely other because it finds, as the ego's own modification, a radical separation and infinity in the perception of an extended body together with a radical separation and infinity of another kind in the lived experience of another human existent (ED 183, WD 125). These levels give structure to speaking of an infinitely other. Having said this, Derrida moves beyond the confines of the immediate context on analogical appresentation and two alterities to argue, more generally, for a sense of violence that one finds at the level of the transcendental in Husserl's thought. This is familiar to us from my presentation of history, language, and violence above in 2. D. Derrida is arguing that Husserl's right to speak of the infinitely other hinges ultimately on what he calls a transcendental violence. To wit, in perceiving the alter ego, there is a minimal violence at the level of the transcendental ego (modification by analogy and mediation, although not opposition). The nonphenomenality and nonpresence of the other could not appear as such without this violence, however. An "originary, transcendental violence" "...tied to phenomenality itself, and to the possibility of language..." and moreover "...embedded in the root of meaning and logos..." justifies Husserl's right to speak of the infinitely other because it shows how these binary concepts—same and other, appearance and nonappearance, presence and nonpresence, etc.—can be thought together, or better, in a system in which they play off one another (*ibid.*). To account for

how the two orders belong together, to show how each side is inscribed in a system or a structural totality that accounts for it, and produce through writing (as *différance*) effects that would displace the rigidity, exclusivity, and oppositional frame through which these sides have always been thought is philosophize at the closure. Everything in “Violence and Metaphysics” depends on seeing the double reading of Levinas’ texts whereby, *on the one hand*, how he conceives these two rigid, mutually exclusive, and oppositional orders, choosing to develop one as the experience that philosophy has long suppressed, and, *on the other hand*, how the development of this nonphilosophical experience of the infinitely other, through transcendence and trace, responds to the closure. To develop the *first* of these alternatives (part of the very strategy of double reading), Derrida alleges that, in attempting to circumvent the violence of the transcendental ego, Levinas neglects to give us a way to conceive the relations by which the same and other belong together: Husserl gives us, for example, analogical appresentation and a system of two alterities; and Derrida suggests a structural totality, history or language, through the notion of writing. What is more, Levinas chooses to endow one order with value over the other. But he cannot avail himself of language to speak of the infinitely other because he has renounced it. Language does violence to alterity: the structures inside-outside, day-night, presence-nonpresence, etc., are congenital to it. This is what Derrida means later when, opening his concluding remarks to the essay, he says that in the relation to the infinitely other “without relation to the same”¹⁰⁷ Levinas “...is resigned to betraying his own intentions in his philosophical discourse” (ED 219, WD 151). No metaphysical text, no matter its intention, can maintain itself having disavowed language. It is recaptured in metaphysics as it attempts to transgress metaphysics. While he speaks of the infinitely

¹⁰⁷ Lawlor points out that the English translation omits this important phrase (*Derrida and Husserl* 149).

other abundantly *in fact*, Levinas deprives himself of the *right* to speak of the infinitely other. If he does not have the right to speak of alterity, then this puts the desideratum of Levinas' philosophy, transcendence, into question. For it is transcendence that, at least if we follow Derrida's suggestive presentation of the problem of the closure, should take up the problem of how to reach the "beyond" of philosophical discourse "*within language*" by posing how the human existent belongs to being and its categories and departs from them toward an infinitely other (ED 162, WD 110).

The second reason that the distinction and transcendental account of two levels of alterity is important to developing Derrida's own argument positively is that it foreshadows another problem for Levinas that comes out of "Violence and Metaphysics", that of ontotheology. I will only sketch this problem here. Derrida himself does not present this in his discussion of Husserl's two alterities, but it is helpful to see how the argument proceeds when later in the essay Derrida adopts a Heideggerean voice to respond to Levinas' previous readings of Heidegger. The thought is that, in restricting the infinitely other to the human existent, Levinas is resurrecting a classical trope of humanism. Humanism is based on a human exceptionalism, and Levinas' thought seems guilty of this, if we read Derrida's tone rightly, by more than just association. It grounds this exceptionalism in theology, specifically Judeo-Christian theology. Derrida believes, following Heidegger, that the complicity of humanism and theology is characteristic of western metaphysics. This is part of the reason that Heidegger calls metaphysics "onto-theology".¹⁰⁸ He notes several times in "Violence and Metaphysics" that Levinas subscribes to this complicity. The face is neither the human face nor the face of God, but the *resemblance* between the two (paraphrased in, inter al., ED 159, WD 108). Thus,

¹⁰⁸ See my footnote 39 above.

every mention of the infinitely other, because it is a *face*, raises the suspicion of ontotheology. Levinas' account of transcendence would not, after all, escape the history of Being of which ontotheology is an epoch.

2. F. (iii.) Third Argument: from Husserl's Notion of the Form of the Ego

In the third and final response to Levinas' reading of Husserl's intersubjectivity, Derrida develops Husserl's transcendental account of the form of the ego. The form of the transcendental ego institutes a transcendental symmetry between egos prior to the dissymmetry of the face as exteriority or most high. The ego qua form is not just another thing in the world and is not known to the same through an intentional modification of feeling (e.g., sympathy), as Levinas reads it. Transcendentally prior to the dissymmetry and commandment of the other is a symmetry: not only is the other an other for me by virtue of being an ego, but, further, I am an other for the other by virtue of being an ego. The *form itself* of the ego includes an originary difference—its own alterity—within sameness. What it means to identify oneself as ego is to be in a relation of difference with oneself and in a relation of difference with another ego: formally, I am not only an ego, but an other for another, as she is for me. Derrida is arguing that Levinas' discourse of the infinitely other must presuppose this “transcendental symmetry” (ED 185, WD 126). Only on the basis of an economy of transcendental symmetry between egos can there be dissymmetry, the glance and command of the face of which Levinas speaks (in fact). Economy establishes, if one might put it this way, a transcendental recognition of the other on account of the form of the ego alone. The reason that Derrida thinks this is important is that he understands, as I have been arguing, the encounter with the other in Levinas as respect for the face. Respect, as I quoted from Derrida above, “can only be as

desire” (ED 147, WD 99). Because he takes Levinas’ philosophy as one of peace and nonviolence, the encounter with the other fuels metaphysical desire that Derrida takes as the pacific and conciliatory movement of respect. In order to get there, however, he thinks that Levinas requires a deeper sense of economy.

Derrida wants to redefine “economy” distinctly from how Levinas has it in *Totality and Infinity*. His presentation is concise and must be unpacked carefully. That the term itself appears already in the 1964 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics” and that Derrida retains it in key insertions to the 1967 publication, one of which I will cover in relation to Husserl’s formal account of the ego below, tells of the significance he attached to it. It belongs to the constellation of terms I have been discussing, system, structural totality, and writing. As these notions come into greater relief by the publication of *Writing and Difference*, so does economy.

This “economy” is not exchange and reciprocity, which takes place for egos interacting in the world. The other is not a moment “*in my real economy*”, i.e., “economy” taken in Levinas’ sense of ego as finite totality relating to a world of things, ideas, and other egos through a negative self- and other-relation at the *empirical* level (ED 184, WD 125). How does Derrida establish a different sense of this term, economy? He takes his cue from Husserl. If the ego in Husserl is a negative self- and other-relation, it is at the *formal-transcendental* level, for only this can justify speaking of the ego and the alter ego as absolutely separated origins of the world and of meaning. It is the *formal* account for Derrida that makes a philosophical response to the closure meaningful, in contrast to how Levinas takes the relation between formal-transcendental structures and

empirical-existential structures, or the “*concretization*” of the transcendental.¹⁰⁹ This is what attracts him to the transcendental ego in Husserl. The terms of Derrida’s economy thus are not empirical egos. Nor, however, is it the form of the ego, merely, if one understands *form* without an originary, internal difference. There is no need to speak of an economy if one takes transcendental symmetry as another word describing the relation between two entirely equal, internally undifferentiated egos. Rather, we must read form in the more nuanced way Husserl intends: the ego is at once ego and other for itself and another, at once transcendentially symmetrical and empirically asymmetrical, just as the other is at once ego and other for it. Thus in the very transcendental symmetry Derrida reads an empirical asymmetry of the terms, two egos, each other, involved in economy. The empirical, concrete asymmetry has its ground and meaning in the formal-transcendental account. This is a true economy, not an empty symmetry between the sides, but an immobile dissymmetry, in which one term is *both* ego *and* other *at once* for itself and another, and vice versa. This *both...and...at once*, a symmetry in which dissymmetry is inscribed, is what Derrida extracts from Husserl’s form of the ego. Or, one might also say, adapting Derrida’s upshot from his discussion of Husserl’s analogical appresentation, economy is violence at the transcendental level. It is for this reason that Derrida adds to the 1967 publication of “Violence and Metaphysics” that this dissymmetry—i.e., between one absolute ego that is, on one side, both ego and other for itself and for another, and, on the other side, another absolute ego, both ego and other for itself and for another—is an “*economy* in a new sense” (ED 185, WD 126). It is quite a different rendering from Levinas’. The argument is that only economy in this sense, or a

¹⁰⁹ See the important remark on the method Levinas practices in *Totality and Infinity* (TI 148, TaI 173).

transcendental account of violence, makes it possible for the other to command me. Only economy in this sense, then, justifies Levinas' right to speak of an infinitely other.

If economy "in a new sense" is Derrida's upshot from this third argument from Husserl's intersubjectivity, it is because he sees resources in Husserl's texts on intersubjectivity that pose the problem of the closure formally, if not thematically. As I mentioned above, economy belongs to that important constellation of terms that includes system, structural totality, and writing. It shares certain features with these terms in the sense that it proposes the problem of the relations between the belonging and breakthrough of two orders, that of the transcendental (ego symmetry) and the empirical (ego asymmetry). What accounts for the relations of belonging and breakthrough? In Derrida's reading of Husserl, it is the same, the ego: the "...other is absolutely other only if he is an ego [*ego*], that is, in a certain way, if he is the same as I [*moi*]" (ED 187, WD 127). In the *formal account* of the ego, i.e., of sameness, is an originary difference, the ego's own alterity. Alterity supplements the formal account of the transcendental ego. Once again, Husserl thinks this relation as a system, even as it does not bring him up against undecideability. This is why Husserl's account of the form of the ego, an originary difference within sameness, formally, if not thematically, poses the problem of the closure for Derrida. Economy, the upshot of the discussion for Derrida's purposes, meanwhile, aims to pose the problem more explicitly by showing that the choice between the transcendental-empirical or same-other alternative is undecideable. This choice, belonging or breakthrough, is impossible today. Yet there is no less a normative injunction in the face of undecideability. Through his reading of the infinitely other of whom Levinas speaks in fact side by side with Husserl's transcendental legitimation,

Derrida in part carves out a responsible response, writing. He takes from his reading of Husserl system and economy, the key terms that allow Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity (and his theory of temporality) to avoid the classical tropes of transcendental philosophy, archaeology and eschatology.

What I have chiefly sought in Part Two of this chapter is to show how Derrida's double reading opens up the problem of the right to speak of the infinitely other. This unfolds in three arguments that Derrida constructs to respond to Levinas' reading of Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity and particularly the other. These arguments have their basis in Husserl's notions of originary nonpresence, analogical appresentation, and the form of the ego, respectively. In each argument, the basic claim is that Husserl legitimates his language concerning the infinitely other through a transcendental argument that grounds the other as an absolute origin of the world and meaning. The transcendental arguments do not just hook up again with the metaphysics of presence, nor do they descend into a straightforward archaeology or eschatology; in fact, Derrida points out how in each case Husserl conceives an originary difference within the same that supplements presence, perception, or the form of the ego. The charge to Levinas would be to do the same without reverting to the typical tropes of transcendental philosophy, archaeology or eschatology. He subscribes to the view that the other is an absolute origin, but he disavows the language that makes this comprehensible (the philosophical logos, the language of the same, or ontology). Further, although there is no question that Husserl's phenomenology remains tied to a metaphysics of presence, Derrida nonetheless sees flashes of insight into the organizing problem of "Violence and Metaphysics", the

problem of the closure, by means of the double reading he practices using Levinas' and Husserl's texts. Husserl's texts formally, if not thematically, pose this problem in the three themes of intersubjectivity Derrida presents. This helps Derrida to develop his own philosophical tools to respond to philosophy at the closure, like system, violence, and economy. Finally, I highlighted how each argument is geared toward how Derrida thinks one *should* understand a philosophy of the other, namely, according to the moral sentiment of respect for the other. We may question the framework of this normative injunction through which Derrida reads Levinas' desire; I do so in 5. C. (i.) below when, conceiving transcendence through the structure of the trace, I describe desire for the other human being in *Totality and Infinity* as an experience of infinity of a *certain sort*. Derrida's passing remark in the 1964 version of "Violence and Metaphysics" that the "*trace*" is present at the "heart of *experience* [my emphasis—PJG]" is more perceptive than he perhaps understood at the time. Partially in response to the normative injunction to cast desire through a traditional term in moral philosophy, Levinas will develop the identity of ipseity whereby the self's desire for the other will resemble anything but the pacific and nonviolent movement of respect for the face.

Conclusion

To close, I should like to reinforce a claim from Part One of this chapter that I made to correct the interpretation of certain commentators concerning Derrida's aims in "Violence and Metaphysics". Given its complexity, the revisions and additions made in its publications, and its numerous points of connection with Derrida's other contemporaneous works, one may readily be led to the conclusion that, as it pertains to Levinas' thought, the essay is chiefly critical. This misguided interpretation does not

account for the influence his reading of Levinas had in crystallizing the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, which I have tried to demonstrate. Already in the opening remarks of the 1964 version of “Violence and Metaphysics”, Derrida says that, if his commentary on Levinas’ texts finds success, he would attempt several questions that will be “*everything but [ne seront rien moins que] objections* [my emphasis—PJG]”; rather, they will be questions put “to *us*” by Levinas (ED 124-25, WD 84). What comes into sharper relief by the 1967 republication is the problem of philosophy at the closure: every metaphysical text by necessity transgresses metaphysics and, by this very transgression, is recaptured by metaphysics. Levinas’ texts not only pose the “...*problem of the relations between belonging and breakthrough...*” with the notion of the existent’s transcendence toward an infinitely other in the ethical relation (ED 163, WD 110). They “*formally and thematically*” respond to it with a resource from “*within* language”. This resource is “*present*” at the “heart of experience”, not as a “total presence” but as a “*trace*” (ED 142, WD 95). If he already acknowledges this in 1964, then why would Derrida ask the following questions of Levinas in the essay’s concluding remarks in 1967?

But can one speak of an *experience* of the other or of difference? Has not the concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence? Is not experience always an encountering of an irreducible presence, the perception of a phenomenality? (ED 225, WD 152)

These are not, in fact, questions to *Levinas*. To take them this way is to presuppose that “Violence and Metaphysics”, as it pertains Levinas’ thought, is a critical reading. These are rather questions Levinas puts “to *us*”. This is demonstrative of the double reading: with one hand, Derrida writes of how metaphysics recaptures the brazen claim of transcendence toward infinity while with the other hand he writes of an “*impossible-*

unthinkable-unsayable [translation slightly modified]” trace that could not be thought in the form of a present but toward which Levinas’ thought nonetheless calls us (ED 194, WD 132). Derrida’s influential reading will, in part, account for the conceptual thrusts of *Otherwise than Being* and several essays leading up to its publication in 1974 to describe the trace of a past in the I’s identity that never traverses a present experience. To explicate this, Levinas retrieves and develops descriptions from earlier works.

The description and analysis of human identity in Levinas’ philosophy is the central focus of the next three chapters of this work. In Chapter 3, I shift from not only from a discussion of Derrida’s philosophy in the mid- to late 1960s and its relevance for Levinas but also to an earlier period in Levinas’ thought well before Derrida enters the French philosophical scene. In the 1930s and 1940s, Levinas engages the philosophical underpinnings of anti-Semitic racism. Many commentators have neglected his early critique of the failed political responses of liberalism and Marxist communitarianism to Hitlerism. From these critiques identity emerges as the problem and key that drives his ethics. It is therefore integral to understanding and developing Levinas’ notion of justice. The present work culminates by bringing the relation of ethics and justice in Levinas into view.

I have already sketched how Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” in no small measure drives a change in Levinas’ methods and ethical notions from his first to his second major work. The vast secondary literature on *Totality and Infinity* largely rests on a narrative of the empirical encounter with the face of the other who disarms me of my egoism. This narrative is entirely absent from *Otherwise than Being*. What accounts for its absence is the trace, the very resource Derrida identifies for philosophy at the time of the

closure in his review of Levinas' texts. The consequence of the ready to hand reading of *Totality and Infinity* that has grown up in the secondary literature is to isolate *Otherwise than Being*. In Chapter 5 I show how the trace operates implicitly in *Totality and Infinity*, particularly in the concrete structure of fecundity *beyond* the face to face relation on which commentators tend to focus. Fecundity describes the I's identity as self for another. Conceiving it through the structure of the trace integrates *Totality and Infinity* with the central notion of *Otherwise than Being*, substitution. The task is to show how Levinas retrieves his earlier concerns about racism (Chapter 3) and the I's identity (Chapter 4) and adapts them to reply to Derrida in *Otherwise than Being*.

CHAPTER 3.

IS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE A PROJECT FOR RACIAL EUGENICS?

HOW LEVINAS' EARLY POLITICAL COMMENTARIES SHAPE HUMAN IDENTITY AS THE PROBLEM AND KEY DRIVING HIS SUBSEQUENT THOUGHT

Recently, commentators have taken up the task of constructing a political philosophy on the grounds of Levinas' thought. The assessments have been critical. Whereas his ethics offers a philosophically rich conceptual language to describe how social relations with human others are normative through and through, even sympathetic commentators confront problems when reflecting on his politics.¹¹⁰ My intention in this chapter is not to enter into this debate by offering an alternative construction of Levinas' political philosophy. Rather, I want to focus on what commentators routinely neglect in their presentations. This is how Levinas' political concerns, beginning in the 1930s, over Hitlerism and the spread racial eugenics shape human identity as the problem and key to fulfilling the desideratum of his philosophy, transcendence. Any thorough assessment of Levinas' political philosophy should reckon with the notion of identity that he mobilizes in his mature thought in order to respond to Hitlerian racism's brutal reduction of a human being's identity to her biological body.

¹¹⁰ Each of the following admirable efforts to construct a political philosophy on Levinas' terms follows this pattern: Howard Caygill's *Levinas and the Political* (2002), Simon Critchley's "Five Problems in Levinas's View of Politics and a Sketch of a Solution to Them" (2004), and Michael Morgan's *Levinas' Ethical Politics* (2016).

Levinas' 1934 article "*Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l'hitlérisme*" ("Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism") sets this trajectory. In his evaluation, liberalism, on the one hand, and Marxist communitarianism, on the other hand, each fail to combat Hitlerism because they do not take seriously its grounding identity proposition, *I is body*. After I present why they fail in section 3. A., I show how Levinas understands racism as an existential structure solidified by agents' practices and institutional arrangements rather than as an ideology. In 3. B., I develop the central theme of Levinas' 1935 essay "On Escape", the need for escape from one's being, as an ontologico-existential structure. This takes seriously Hitlerian racism's brutal fact of being and outlines how Levinas will define transcendence twelve years later in his book *From Existence to the Existent*. The question that drives "On Escape" is whether social and political life has become a project for the application of racial eugenics.

That this continues to be a live, undecided question for Levinas for years is clear from his recently published *Carnets de captivité (Prison Notebooks)*, which he wrote during his Nazi interment as a member of the French resistance from 1940-45.¹¹¹ No commentator, to my knowledge, has integrated these with Levinas' published philosophy. In 3. C., I reconstruct from his review of the eugenicist Alexis Carrel's book *L'Homme, cet inconnu (Man, The Unknown)* in the *Carnets* how racism, Christianity, Judaism, and democracy respond to the need for escape from the fact of being. While preserving a robust place for the influence of Judaic religious thought on Levinas, I caution commentators that pressing too hard on this tradition to explain his philosophy risks neglecting the social-political context in which Levinas lived, Hitlerian anti-Semitic racism and the sociobiological organization of society that Carrel advocates.

¹¹¹ One finds the *Carnets de captivité* in Levinas' *Œuvres complètes*, volume 1. Henceforth, "*Carnets*".

That the I is the body is not only the grounding proposition for racism. It is the source from which, on Levinas' estimation, a rejoinder must proceed. 3. D. sketches an alternative model of identity that Levinas' calls the *identity of the same* in his first major work in 1961, *Totality and Infinity*. This sketch sets up my analyses in sections 5. A. and 5. B. below. Further, the production of the identity of the same has a concrete context: the family. I argue that totalitarian politics is the context for understanding the concretions of transcendence that Levinas describes from out of relations between family members in section IV of *Totality and Infinity*, "Beyond the Face". Whereas many commentators have criticized these descriptions, sometimes rightly, I set the stage to develop them as resources for responding to state racism and totalitarian politics. This is a task I take up later in 5. C. (ii.).

III. A. Hitlerism, Human Identity, and Racism

The 1934 article "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" is primarily diagnostic in aim. It describes the threat that the philosophy of Hitlerism poses not only to governments but to the Christian churches. *I is body*: this identity proposition, simple-minded and reductionist, is the bedrock, according to Levinas, of racism, at least the brand Hitlerism champions. Biology determines the race to which one belongs and outlines one's fate. Political liberalism, on the one hand, and Marxist communitarianism, on the other hand, lack the resources to combat racism. Each puts its faith in the western "spirit of freedom", a broad category that includes the redemptive discourses and practices of religions no less than political freedoms (QRPH 8, RPH 64). Hitlerism rejects this spirit: "Man's essence no longer lies in freedom, but in a kind of bondage [*enchaînement*]" (QRPH 19, RPH 69). It champions instead an authenticity and sincerity

that affirms biological determinism. To be free is to accept one's enchainment to being this body. The problem Levinas depicts, then, is the lack of resources in liberal theory and communitarianism to counter the basic idea of racism: that one's body—from traits inherited to its abilities or functions to the way it looks—determines the meaning of human identity. On the one hand, to affirm the autonomy of reason to contract with others, increase the intelligibility of one's rights, and set up institutions to safeguard justice and equality remains abstract. On the other hand, to increase class consciousness and alter exploitative material conditions leads only to economic emancipation and, what is more, begins from the cohesion of an in-group that understands itself against others, too easily fueling tribalism. Neither addresses Hitlerism on its terms, the brutal material concrete. Where liberalism and communitarianism build their respective political philosophies on the basis of the freedom to work to change one's situation at any moment, whether beginning from an abstract I or group solidarity, Hitlerism stakes its claims contrariwise on the I's bondage to the corporeal, to the incorruptible past that this entails, and the fate it outlines.

"Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" is, however, more than the diagnosis of a lack of intellectual reserves in modern western philosophy's major political doctrines to combat Hitlerism. What is striking about this early essay is how contemporary politics, particularly its state sponsored racism, shapes the trajectory of Levinas' subsequent philosophical agenda. It sets up human identity to be *the problem and the key* to fulfilling the desideratum of his philosophy, transcendence.

The reason that liberalism and Marxist communitarianism are unable to indemnify themselves against and resist Hitlerism is that they do not take seriously enough the

“feeling [*sentiment*] of identity” of I (*moi*) and body (QRPH 18,RPH 68). Rather, like the Christian philosophy of which they are outgrowths, they prioritize the spiritual and insist on a gulf between it and the material. Levinas comments,

A view that was truly opposed to the European notion of man would be possible only if the situation in which he was bound was not added to him but formed the very foundation of his being. This paradoxical requirement is one that the experience of our bodies seems to fulfill (QRPH 15,RPH 67).

This feeling of identity is at the heart of the new conception of man that Hitlerism adopts, the “biological” (QRPH 18,RPH 69). By contrast, liberalism and communitarianism dismiss the body as foreign, an obstacle to be overcome, and inferior. Does the identity of I and body inevitably lead to racism, as in Hitlerism? Or does the identity of I and body outline another meaning, where the need to escape my body and its repeated frustration appears more fundamental than accepting the fate that my material being delineates for me?

The identity of I and body, examined more closely, presents the need to escape as a philosophically fecund structure. The need to escape is acute when, suffering, I lunge forward in an effort to get out only to collapse once again under the weight of a body in pain. The drive to escape is frustrated at every turn. This is the “...despair that constitutes the very foundation of pain” (QRPH 17,RPH 68). Hitlerism, to the contrary, responds to the body’s pains (or its disabilities, its functions, its sex, its skin color, etc.) with tragic affirmation: “Chained to his body, man sees himself *refusing* the power to escape from himself [my emphasis—PJG]” (QRPH 21,RPH 70). For Levinas, the *frustration* of escape attests phenomenologically to the *need* for escape.

Notwithstanding important differences, transcendence, the philosophical desideratum that Levinas announces in *From Existence to the Existent* thirteen years after

the publication of “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”, has its forerunner in the ontologico-existential structure of escape-frustration.¹¹² In the 1947 book, which I cover extensively in Chapter 4 below, Levinas defines transcendence formally as a human existent’s departure from being and the categories that describe it while maintaining a foothold in being (DEE 9,EE xxvii). “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” adds flesh, so to speak, to this formal structure: the departure from the I’s embodied selfhood—that is, from its identity in the sense that *I is body*—while maintaining a foothold in the characteristics that embodied selfhood defines. What drives Levinas’ thought thereafter is to describe concretely where these conditions are fulfilled. This takes him to the heart of racism’s basic proposition.

In affirming the brutal fact that *I is body*, Hitlerism’s notion of identity denies the need to escape altogether. There is only the affirmation of this crude identity proposition. It is fatalistic because one is unable to take distance from one’s body. The brutal fact of identity signifies for Levinas a new type of truth, one that aims at the creation of a new world on the basis of consanguinity (QRPH 22,RPH 70). It justifies the classification of persons into a hierarchy of racial groups and subtypes, of which one race is master. To create the new world, the master race does not propagate an idea like the truth of its

¹¹² One should understand Levinas’ descriptions of the impossibility of evading oneself in *From Existence to the Existent* in light of this ontologico-existential structure, escape-frustration. The attempt to escape one’s corporeality fails to accomplish transcendence concretely. However, in 4. H. below, I show how transcendence, importantly, outlines itself in this failure. The formal structures of escape-frustration, on the one hand, and transcendence in the finite experience, on the other hand, are different in important ways, but the frustration of escape cues Levinas into how transcendence must be conceptually structured and how it is really accomplished. In short, escape from myself always fails, but responsibility to help another across scarce material conditions accomplishes my transcendence. One suspects that this connection of escape’s frustration and transcendence is coming into view for Levinas in “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism’s” brief sketch of Judaism’s “magnificent message”, the pardon, even if Levinas does not develop this theme as a response to anti-Semitism’s racial myths for another 13 years in “*Être juif*” (“Being Jewish”) and does not develop it fully with regard to infinite time until section IV of *Totality and Infinity* more than a quarter of a century later. I return to the role of the pardon in contrasting salvation in Christianity from Judaism’s message below, and reserve discussion of the pardon in the two later texts for Chapter 5.

superiority; it expands by force. Racism, then, is not merely an ideology for Levinas. It is the self-evident fact of identity, that I am only my material being. It is thereby an existential structure. It is by my force that I impose the fact of another's identity on her.

By contrast, Levinas explains that an idea is fundamentally anonymous: anyone can freely adopt it, i.e., it is public and shareable, and one is free at any time to take distance from it or abandon it. The structure of an idea's propagation leads to its universality, one necessary criterion for truth. How does racist particularism, which identifies a new type of truth for a master race, square with this marker, truth's universality? Levinas responds that

The answer—to be found in the logic of what first inspires racism—involves a basic modification of the very idea of universality. *Universality must give way to the idea of expansion*, for the expansion of a force presents a structure that is completely different from the propagation of an idea (QRPH 22, RPH 70).

In the 1930s, the term *racism* is only beginning to consolidate its peculiar modern meaning. It is introduced to describe the theoretical discourses that the National Socialists used to legitimize their persecution of the Jews.¹¹³ But its meaning and connotation are far from set. It is striking that already in 1934 Levinas seizes critically upon racism as a basis for a state's politics.

The “logic of what first inspires racism” is the fundamental principle upon which Hitlerism is built: the truth of the proposition, *I is body*, for determining human identity. This *universal* proposition—ostensibly natural, ostensibly biological—has social and political consequences, foremost among them the race to which one belongs, whereby universality becomes determinate in the ideological discourses that valorize certain races

¹¹³ See George Frederickson's *Racism: A Short History*, 5. For a general account of racism in the twentieth-century, see 99-138; for an broad overview of Nazi racism, see 118-28. For a nuanced history of racism in the Third Reich, covering the robust debates and plurality of voices from the biological and social sciences that determined Nazi scientific racism, see Christopher Hutton's *Race and the Third Reich: Linguistics, Racial Anthropology and Genetics in the Dialectic of Volk*.

and devalue others. Racism requires a new form of universalization. It universalizes itself not as ideology does, but through the expansion of a force. Unlike an idea's propagation, it remains attached, Levinas comments, to the agent or agents who exert it. Thus, on Levinas' interpretation of racism, it is the agents' practices and the institutional arrangements they erect, like eugenics targeting who can breed with whom, that enforce the coherence of a world of masters and slaves. It is not ideas that justify the universality of this order.

Hitlerian racism begins, on Levinas' interpretation, from the banal "feeling of identity" of I and body, which no one who has undergone pain, nausea, or any number of related affections could deny. Valorizing naturalist and biological discourses, racism affirms the self-evidence of the identity proposition, *I is body*. This proposition becomes the founding principle by which it classifies persons into a racial order. Hitlerism adopts pagan ideas, to adapt a term Levinas will soon attribute to Heidegger's philosophy: the natural, consanguinity, and rootedness in a place. The nostalgia to recover these motivates eugenic practices through expansion, mobilization, and conquest within and without the population in the name of securing the master race's health and its destiny to flourish.

Meanwhile, Levinas will develop identity alternatively in order to respond to Hitlerism. He goes to the heart of racism's identity proposition, where I means the material self from whose fate there is no escape, and shows that this material self means *for another*. Because liberalism and Marxist communitarianism begin with a narrative of egos in the world, whether in the abstract conditions of a state of nature or overlaid by material scarcity and ideologies that put me into solidarity with others like me, they lack

the intellectual resources to conceive self for another. They lack, specifically, how to conceive that in being bound to my body I am, *in the first place*, bound to the hardship and oppression of others without falling into egoism or tribalism. I allude to this in section 4. H. below and focus on it in more detail in my reading of *Totality and Infinity* through the lens of *Otherwise than Being* in Chapter 5. For transcendence to work, it requires the structure of identity that Levinas develops, self for another. This is concrete in responsibility for others, i.e., caring for others, despite scarce material conditions, more than I care for myself, with which any philosophy of the ego is unable to reckon. What goes unnoticed in the secondary literature is the political context of transcendence: the politics of race, racism, and eugenics sets Levinas' focus on the problem of formulating a response to Hitlerism's basic assumption, the simplistic reduction of a human being's identity to her body, without escape.

3. B. A Live, Unsettled Question: Is Politics a Project for Applied Eugenics?

Levinas makes the need to escape the theme of his "*De l'évasion*" ("On Escape") one year after the publication of "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" in 1935. He defines the need to escape as the "...need to get out of oneself, that is, *to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [moi] is oneself* [soi-même]" (DE 98, OE 54). He directs this thesis to Heidegger: escape and its failure is more fundamental than *Being and Time*'s fundamental ontology. Fundamental ontology begins from the observation that ontology has prioritized essence (what-being), particularly the description of its a priori structures, at the price of existence (that-being) (SZ 42ff., BT 67ff.). This is because epistemological problems, like the correspondence of I and world, beset and set the course historically for ontology, particularly in modern philosophy. *That*

Dasein is, however, i.e., that it finds itself *in medias res* always already thrown into an understanding of its factual situation, is more fundamental—or ‘older’, so to speak—than the a priori structures of essences and the epistemological problems that shape their description.

Despite the merits of *Being and Time*’s analyses, for Levinas Heidegger is inattentive to Dasein’s embodied existence: the analysis of the categories of facticity (*Faktizität*), the moods (*Stimmungen*) that engulf its “affective disposition”¹¹⁴ (*Befindlichkeit*), overlooks the existential weight of the “identity of being” (DE 93,OE 51).¹¹⁵ “Being is: there is nothing to add to this assertion as long as we envision in a being only its existence”. For Levinas, the proposition *being is* contains an implicit reference to the existent who alone must bear it. For human existents, the “identity of being” is not primarily the likeness of two properties of being. It is rather the “feeling of identity”, as Levinas puts it in “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”, between I and body. In “On Escape”, the need to escape arises not from a lack but from the suffocating fullness of this identity, to which the “feeling [*sentiment*] of the brutality of existence” attests (DE 121,OE 69). Thus the “fact of being”—or identity, where the “*I* [*moi*] is *oneself* [*soi-même*]”—is neither banal nor a tautology (DE 93,OE 51 and DE 98,OE 54). Where he believes that Heidegger *presumes* Dasein’s embodied existence as

¹¹⁴ “*Disposition affective*” is Levinas’ translation of *Befindlichkeit*. See his article “*Martin Heidegger et l’ontologie*” in EDE 68ff. (“*Martin Heidegger and Ontology*” 24ff.). “*Martin Heidegger et l’ontologie*” was first published in 1932 in *Revue Philosophique* and later modified and abridged for inclusion in EDE.

¹¹⁵ It is not necessarily the case that one must take the ontologico-existential structure of facticity in *Being and Time* in this way. Sartre interprets it differently, finding room for properties like sex and race in his *L’être et le néant* 567-89 (*Being and Nothingness* 654-80). Indeed, Heidegger himself discusses sexual difference and Dasein’s facticity, for instance, in the context of a presentation of the problem of transcendence in *Being and Time* in the summer 1928 Marburg course delivered under the title “*Logik*” (see *Metaphysische Ausgangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* in *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 26, 170ff.; *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* 136ff.). Levinas arrived to Freiburg (where Heidegger had also recently arrive to occupy Husserl’s chair after his retirement) to study that winter, and so could not have had access to the analyses of Dasein’s embodiment and facticity.

given, Levinas shows that it must be *assumed*. Hence, the structure of escape-frustration is more fundamental than the triadic ontologico-existential structure of affective disposition, understanding (*verstehen*), and finding oneself in a factual situation. To bear the weight of identity that my body defines is burdensome. Existence takes effort, from which there is no release.

On Levinas' reading, the German response to the need for escape after the First World War, solidified in the 1933 *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) and *Ermächtigungsgesetz* (Enabling Act) of the National Socialist Party, is to affirm the fact of being, or identity. While primarily a work of ontology, in "On Escape's" closing remarks the political context is unmistakable: "Every civilization that accepts being—with the tragic despair it contains and the crimes it justifies—merits the name 'barbarian'" (OE 127,DE 73). In the light of my presentation of "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism", one knows what it means to accept being: my biological and material identity, my race, and the fate this prescribes for me. Although he does not name Germany, one can take "civilization" in this passage as Levinas' verdict on its embrace of Hitlerism (and, by extension, his verdict on Heidegger). Thinking these two early essays together, furthermore, sheds light on the main claim of the Prefatory Note that Levinas adds to the 1990 English publication of "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" in *Critical Inquiry*:

The article stems from the conviction that the source of the bloody barbarism of National Socialism lies not in some contingent anomaly within human reasoning, nor in some accidental ideological misunderstanding. This article expresses the conviction that it stems from the essential possibility of *elemental Evil* into which we can be led by logic and against which Western philosophy had not sufficiently inured itself (QRPH 25,RPH 63).

From one perspective, the claim is that Western philosophy in the early 1930s had not indemnified itself well enough to withstand (let alone combat) the “barbarism of National Socialism”. Above I argued why: its political theories, whether they begin from the abstract individual I who freely contracts with others to secure itself and its property (liberalism) or from the I overlaid by conditions of material scarcity who develops a tribal solidarity with others on these bases (Marxist communitarianism), do not take seriously enough the “feeling of identity” of I (*moi*) and body. They build discourses of liberation from the I’s material being on the spirit of freedom. But racism rejects freedom in affirming the bondage of being in one’s skin.

From another perspective, Levinas goes more deeply in this prefatory reflection on “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” more than a half-century after it was written. Western philosophy itself can lead politics into racial conquests like that of National Socialism. “On Escape”, in particular, makes this assertion through not-so veiled allusions to Germany like “Every civilization that accepts being...merits the name ‘barbarian’”. The thought is that logic, taking its cue from ontology’s fact of being (being *is*), can lead to racism’s grounding proposition, *I is body*. Levinas supplies no argument to substantiate this assertion, but one can sketch his strongest response from his second major work, *Otherwise than Being* (1974). Ontology takes the ego or I straightforwardly as egoism. What I give to another is bent on a return to me. Thus escape from the tragic solitude of the embodied self (even if it only meets frustration) remains *for itself*, the tragic resignation to the fact of being. This leads to the truth of the identity proposition, *I is body*, at the basis of every racism. Because it is primarily ontology, western philosophy is largely unable to break the bind of I as being for itself and instead to conceive I as

already *for another*. This is the basic orientation of Levinas' philosophy, and particularly the guideline for understanding the difficult central notions of *Otherwise than Being*. I will have occasion to detail this further in Part One of Chapter 4 below when I introduce the question of the sense in which the I's identity is self for another into my analysis of *From Existence to the Existent*.

In describing the various situations in modern life that cry out for escape, Levinas depicts in "On Escape" a social context that has collapsed with the political. He is keen on what is happening around him: nation-states taking increasing interest in practices and discourses to secure the population from internal no less than external threats. It is an age, Levinas comments, that leaves "no one in the margins of life" (DE 94, OE 52). "[C]aught up in the incomprehensible mechanism of the universal order..." is no longer the alienated individual, he continues with an allusion to Marxist discourse, but the autonomous Kantian agent's potential to "...be mobilized—in every sense of the term". Recall that freedom for Hitlerism means the autonomous resignation to the fact that there is no escape from the fate my body prescribes. No one, no institutions, and no social activities, public or private, are left untouched by the state's reach. Given the rapid expansion of force and the mobilization of entire populations along racial fault lines, the question Levinas is posing is whether politics, on the basis (as in Hitlerism) of the simplistic reduction of human identity to its matter, has become the application of eugenics. Does the repeated frustration of escape from one's corporeality signify only the I's definitiveness and its enclosure in a future that racist biology, anthropology, and hygiene can hijack? Is there a meaning or a sense whereby identity can signify otherwise and can combat this outcome?

That this remains a live, unsettled question for Levinas for years to come is clear from Levinas' *Carnets de captivité* (*Prison Notebooks*), which he wrote primarily during his internment by the Nazis as a member of the French resistance from 1940-45, and in texts published in the years immediately following the Second World War. The concern does not end there, however: in Chapter 5 below I offer a reading of the concrete structures of the family in his first major work, *Totality and Infinity* (1961), through this politically charged atmosphere. In the *Carnets*, one finds Levinas returning with an insistent regularity to the description of identity, that is, to the drama of I and the embodied self, through engaging with sources outside philosophy: works of biology and eugenics (or racial hygiene). This culminates in fecundity, an alternative to Hitlerism's brutish reduction of identity to the fact of being, which Levinas first sketches in print in the closing lines of *From Existence to the Existent* and at greater length in the essay *Le temps et l'autre* (*Time and the Other*) published one year later in 1948.¹¹⁶ His primary source of racial biology and eugenics ideology and policy in the *Carnets* is biologist Alexis Carrel's *Man, The Unknown*, a book to which he had access while in captivity.

3. C. The "Tragedy of the Individual Opposed to Universal Life": Eugenics, the Politics of State Racism, and Identity in Levinas' Reading of Carrel

In a sense, there is nothing remarkable about Carrel's *Man, The Unknown*. Like the works of many eminent scientists of the time, it diagnoses a collective decline from the natural (read: better) state of society and advocates for a politics that understands itself as

¹¹⁶ Levinas originally delivered *Time and the Other* as a series of four lectures in 1946-47 at Jean Wahl's *Collège Philosophique*, and published it a year after *From Existence to the Existent* in the collection of the *Collège, Le choix, le monde, l'existence*, making the two texts contemporaries. For his discussion of eros and fecundity, see TA 59-89, TO 71-94. Eros and fecundity again occupy center stage in section IV of his 1961 major work *Totality and Infinity*, where through these themes he conceives time as infinity (TI 233ff., TaI 256ff.). I explain these structures, in light of the political context I am describing above, Chapter V below.

the application of medicine, including positive and negative eugenics, to recover that bygone natural state by improving the health of the civilization or race.¹¹⁷ Published in English and French in 1935, sales of *Man, the Unknown* in the United States begin their meteoric rise after an abridged version is published in *Reader's Digest* in December of that year.¹¹⁸ For the 1936 German translation, the *Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt* (by then largely consolidated under the National Socialist government) requests that Carrel acknowledge its government's efforts in protecting the population from internal threats and improving the stock of the race, which is to say, in fulfilling the central agenda of Carrel's book, remaking man (HI 333ff., MU 274ff.).¹¹⁹ Carrel enthusiastically accepts, penning for the German edition of the book (1936),

The German government has taken energetic measures against the propagation of the defective, the mentally diseased, and the criminal. The ideal solution would be the suppression of each of these individuals as soon as he has proven himself to be dangerous.¹²⁰

The National Socialists had already adopted negative eugenics policies that included many more than the “defective, the mentally diseased, and the criminal”.¹²¹ Nevertheless, the original publication of *Man, The Unknown* already contained harsher and more direct

¹¹⁷ In some more detail, *Man, the Unknown* makes classic case for cultural despair over civilization's degeneration. According to Andrés Horacio Reggiani's *God's Eugenicist: Alexis Carrel and the Sociobiology of Decline*, Carrel constructs three pillars upon which society can overcome this decline and remake man (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 67-73. First, Carrel advocates for the creation of a new universal knowledge that synthesizes all the human sciences into the “science of man”. This science is relatable to the common man or woman and champions a new medical holism (anti-reductionist, anti-positivist, and anti-quantitative). Second, Carrel advocates for the creation of a technocratic elite that contributes to this science of man. Third, Carrel advocates for the implementation of eugenics measures, both positive and negative. The public must know, further, that eugenics is an absolute social necessity and that many have to be sacrificed.

¹¹⁸ See Reggiani's *God's Eugenicist* 74-75.

¹¹⁹ The editors of volume I of Levinas' *Œuvres* cite the French edition. They do not provide evidence of whether Levinas read the French, English, or German.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Reggiani's *God's Eugenicist* 71.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 71-72. Reggiani also notes that National Socialists read Carrel's book as an endorsement of their eugenics policies and institutions, like the Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases (1933), the Law against Dangerous Habitual Criminals (1933), and Hereditary Health Courts that the Reich founded. This despite the fact that Carrel admits that medicine has not yet conclusively shown that any traits beyond insanity or criminality, like feeble-mindedness or certain degenerative diseases, were heritable (see 67-73).

guidelines for classifications of individuals that Carrel deemed a threat to the “ultimate purpose of civilization”, the “development of human personality”: these individuals “...should be humanely and economically disposed of in small euthanasic [*sic*] institutions supplied with proper gases” (HI 388, MU 318).

Strikingly, Levinas remains silent on this passage in his review of *Man, The Unknown* in the *Carnets*. What this shows is that well into the 1940s the sociobiological organization of society that Carrel endorses—that is to say, the way he envisions eugenics, its policies to eradicate common hereditary and environmental ills that plague the population, as a viable politics—is for Levinas still *a live, undetermined question*. Moreover, as a political position, Levinas continues to take the racism that undergirds eugenics *seriously*.¹²² One can speak here of a politics of *state racism*. As in “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” from almost a decade earlier, a politics that understands itself as a project for racist eugenics and involves the modification of the “idea of universality” to “expansion of a force” and “war and conquest” has yet to be adequately defended against or challenged directly, either by liberal democracy or by Marxist communitarianism. Abstract concepts like the I and abstract political principles like

¹²² Levinas attached a negative connotation (as we would today) to the term “*racisme*” in “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”, associating it with Hitlerism’s reductionist view of human identity (QRPH 22, RPH 70 and QRPH 23, RPH 71). He nonetheless took it seriously as part of a developed political philosophy (Hitlerism), as I mentioned above. The lone use of “*racisme*” in the review of Carrel in the *Carnets* puts it on the same footing as liberal democracy: neither “...racism nor liberal democracy hold true salvation [*salut*]” (183). This suggests, once again, that Levinas considers racism an integral support for a politics of expansion, conquest, and war: in short, the politics of state racism. Further, this use of racism in the Carrel review seems to attribute racism to Carrel’s eugenics itself. In Carrel’s book itself, one does not find a specific endorsement of or an outline of eugenics policies that target specific races. This does not mean that the eugenics his science of man promotes was not racist or at least compatible with racism, if by racism one means, generally, the voluntary or involuntary discrimination of a group of persons on the basis of a reductive view of identity, whether this is skin color or other phenotypic morphological characteristics or the broad category of culture. Carrel clearly maintains a hierarchy of races, where the white is the highest rank and the most valuable to the future civilization (see HI 128, MU 109; HI 184, MU 155; HI 224, MU 187; HI 253, MU 212; HI 256, MU 214; and HI 353, MU 291). It does not take a great leap in thinking on Carrel’s eugenics principles that, if the proliferation of the lesser races becomes a drag on the normal individual of the superior northern European white race, then they should be suppressed in the same way Carrel advocates for the humane and economical disposing of serious criminals and the insane who have committed criminal acts.

freedom, equality, and justice, on the one hand, or the concrete economic liberation of an oppressed class from the material conditions and ideologies that overlay its intelligibility, on the other hand, are not sufficient political positions to combat the reductive understanding of human identity that state racism involves. For its part, Carrel's eugenics is a testament to state racism's popular application. For this reason, Carrel's book merits attention and serious engagement.

Levinas records that Carrel's book is "very impressive", but not from a philosophical standpoint (*Carnets* 182).¹²³ Philosophically, *Man, The Unknown* is naïve in its discussion of central concepts like consciousness. Further, it offers only a practical resolution of the relation of mind and body in merely affirming that the relation should be viewed as a "totality", according to Levinas' coinage.¹²⁴ Although totality means to overcome the pseudo-problems Cartesian dualism generates, he goes on to comment that Carrel's explanation is incomprehensible. This observation is telling of Levinas' interest: recall that in "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism", neither liberalism nor Marxist communitarianism took seriously the "feeling of identity" between I and body, whereas Hitlerism did. In Hitlerism, considered as a political philosophy, this feeling becomes the grounding principle of its politics, state racism. Any intellectual resources for unpacking human identity attract Levinas' attention, even resources as unsophisticated as Carrel's. Carrel at least refuses to accept Cartesian mind-body dualism.

For what reason, then, does Carrel's book impress Levinas? For its vision of a civilization as a living organism understood through the optics of the natural, health, and racial divisions and, in particular, for how it understands the individual human being's

¹²³ All translations of the *Carnets* are my own.

¹²⁴ Levinas refers to HI 137-38, MU 118 and ff.

identity within this vision. Levinas punctuates the scalar differences within Carrel's vision with vitalist imagery: civilization is a "universal gushing forth [*jaillissement*]" and "universal life" whereas the individual is "only a splinter [*éclat*], a splash of mud [*éclaboussure*]" (*Carnets* 182). So for Levinas the interest of the book lies in the "sociological consequences" Carrel deduces from this vision. That is to say, its interest lies in the way Carrel understands social-political life as the very point of application, all the way to the individuals that constitute it, of racist biology, medicine, and eugenics to fulfill what on Levinas' understanding of *Man*, *The Unknown* is the "goal of civilization", the "health of the race". As in "On Escape", the politics of state racism means that no one is left on the "margins of life", that every autonomous individual is accountable to "be mobilized".

Carrel's goal, the eugenic agenda of securing the "health of the race", pits the individual against the race, Levinas continues. For the individual there is the "duty of continuation, of preservation" of a healthy race (*Carnets* 182). Accordingly, "To trouble oneself with the survival of the weak is a sin against the race". A view such as Carrel's "...poses a problem, a difficulty, a matter of conscience [*cas de conscience*]" for any ideology or political theory that affirms the "dignity and happiness [*bonheur*]" of the individual. Reviewing resources for a response to this problem, Levinas finds some merit in Judeo-Christian thought and in liberal democracy because each starts with this affirmation. Tellingly, however, he endorses neither. What is the basic failing—in the face of the expansionist agenda of state racism, the sense of politics spreading across Europe—common to them? It is their inability to conceive the identity of the individual human being in a way that strongly opposes racism's *I is body*.

Each, Judeo-Christianity and liberal democracy no less than racism, offer “salvation [*salut*]” for the individual. Including liberal democracy and racism in salvation discourses ought to indicate that “salvation” should not be limited to its religious sense. Levinas is rather considering it in light of the structure of escape-frustration from “On Escape”. How does each, Judeo-Christianity, democracy, and racism, offer salvation to the individual’s need for escape from the fact of being, where the “*I [moi] is oneself [soi-même]*”?

3. C. (i.) Racism and the Individual’s Salvation

One can well infer what this looks like for Carrel’s racist eugenics: sacrifice. His eugenics is voluntary. Part of the political agenda is to educate the population of the duty to sacrifice many for the health of the race (HI 347, MU 285 and HI 364-67, MU 300-03). Moreover, medicine mixes with evaluative discourses on nature and what is natural. The race’s stock will be improved with a radical shift in environment: the comforts of modern cities have led to immorality, disease, and apathy (HI 19-25, MU 23-27; HI 252-53, MU 211-12; and HI 265-66, MU 222-23); women pursuing careers or participating in frivolous activities like bridge playing has lowered the quality of motherly child rearing (HI 326-27, MU 270); “...ill-conceived education, feminism, and short-sighted selfishness” has diminished the desire of women to give birth, leading to lamentable a decline in the birth rate of the superior northern European white race while the inferior races far outpace it;¹²⁵ etc. Over Carrel’s moralizing about modernity, his conservative pronatalism, and his misogyny, his message is clear: a return to the natural, to roots in a place and to living off the land, will improve the race’s stock through the hardship and

¹²⁵ Quoted in Reggiani’s *God’s Eugenicist* 66. The source is the new Preface Carrel added to the 1939 edition of *Man, The Unknown*.

struggle this return entails. Carrel's eugenics is for Levinas a sort of scientific paganism: the embrace of material being, the valorization of the natural or earthly and rootedness in a place, which supports the tribal reasoning that divides the native from other races. From this view, it is compatible with the paganism of Hitlerian racism I mentioned above. Thus racist eugenics, following Hitlerism's principles of expansion, war, and conquest, preaches a salvation for the individual inasmuch as she autonomously does her duty to promote the "health of the race", as Levinas puts it, whether this means the hardening up against degenerative diseases that living naturally proffers, sterilization, or humane and economical disposal in "small euthanasic [*sic*] institutions".

3. C. (ii.) Christianity and the Individual's Salvation

By contrast, Levinas comments that Judeo-Christianity seeks to "...surmount the tragedy of the individual opposed to universal life", i.e., the overriding political goal of a healthy race (*Carnets* 183). It does so by responding to the human demand to recognize the dignity of the individual in his totality, i.e., as material *and* spirit, and not merely as a duality where the former would determine one's fate, as in racism. Nonetheless, Levinas follows his praise with criticism, specifically of certain elements within Christianity that underwrite, rather than indemnify themselves against, Carrel's racist eugenics. He points out the predilection in *Man, The Unknown* for an "...aristocratic Christianity that accommodates quite well with paganism, the cult of the earth, and which found its expression in certain forms of Catholicism".¹²⁶ On the one hand, Levinas has in mind the

¹²⁶ The language of "paganism" and "cult of the earth" is familiar to the reader of *Totality and Infinity*. There, Levinas associates it with the extreme separation of the ego enjoying itself in the mythical element of the world (TI 115-16, TaI 142). His claim is that Heidegger's philosophy, particularly his later philosophy, expresses this paganism and cult of the earth (TI 17, TaI 46; TI 49, TaI 77; and TI 275, TaI 299). Given the association for which Levinas argues between fascist politics and Heidegger's fundamental ontology in "On Escape" (where his verdict on civilizations that accept the brutality of the fact of being—like Hitlerism's *I* is body—and the racism they entail merit the term "barbarian" [OE 127, DE 73]) and his

scientific paganism to which I referred above. He probably has in mind, more specifically, Carrel's plan to create a technocratic elite who research and administer the new science of man and oversee the pronatalist and ecological program of creating a hereditary aristocracy in the population, where the social classes would be synonymous with the biological.¹²⁷ This plan is indicative of the proclivity, common to any fascism, to put faith in persons rather than democratic institutions and procedures. On the other hand, the thinking that Christianity "...accommodates quite well with paganism, the cult of the earth..." signals a deeper problem that is not forthcoming in this passage from the *Carnets* but that Levinas indicates elsewhere.

A few weeks after the death of Pope Pius XI in 1939, Levinas writes a commemorative essay that suggests how certain strands in Christianity accommodate paganism like Carrel's eugenics.¹²⁸ The essay's aim is political: by reminding Christianity of its historical ties to Judaism, Levinas wants to rally the Catholic Church against the ongoing racial persecutions of the National Socialists. But it contains a subtle and forceful critique. In contradistinction to Judaism, Christianity is set up as a historical religion, not because of the divinity's revelation in finite time but because it shrewdly

imprisonment at the time of this writing, it is reasonable to think that Levinas judges that Christian philosophy and its various institutions have not properly indemnified themselves against fascist states because they lack the intellectual resources. The "spirit of freedom" that liberalism and Marxist communitarianism share has its roots in Christian dogma. The affirmation of an individual agent's freedom is not, as I mentioned in my presentation of "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism", enough to combat Hitlerism.

¹²⁷ Carrel intersperses comments for the formation of a technocratic elite to research the science of man. See, for instance, HI 55-56, MU 49-50 and HI 343-58, MU 282-93. On creating a hereditary aristocracy in the population, see HI 359-67, MU 296-303.

¹²⁸ "*A propos de la mort de Pape Pie XI*" was originally published in the journal *Paix et droit* in March 1939. It has since been republished in *Emmanuel Levinas: Cahier de l'Herne* in 1991. Parenthetical citations refer to the 1991 republication. All translations are my own. *Paix et droit* was the official journal of *L'Alliance israélite universelle* and published in Paris. The *Alliance* also plays a role after the Second World War in providing a stage for Sartre to give a summary of his 1946 essay *Réflexions sur la question juive* ("Reflections on the Jewish Question"). This will prompt important responses from Levinas. I will have occasion to discuss these in the next two chapters, when I reframe *From Existence to the Existent* and the familial structures of *Totality and Infinity* in the political context I am laying out here.

maneuvered itself over the centuries into political power. As a political institution, the church has cannily steered ships of state into pacts with the forces of the world to conceal its true motives, the “...struggle [*lutte*] that it carried on [*ménait*] against barbarism” (CH 151).¹²⁹ These very political maneuverings, however, have compromised it: the church, particularly the Catholic Church, has adopted elements of paganism, like the valorization of a return to soil, to putting down roots, and to the virtues of pastoral life that one finds in Carrel and Hitlerism’s ideology alike.¹³⁰ Thus Levinas brands Christianity with the charge of syncretism.¹³¹ The danger is that imagery of the natural, soil, and roots take on a divine aura, sowing the seeds of tribalism, the accommodation of racist eugenics, and further compromises of the Christian critical conscience for the sake of politics and power.

Judaism, by contrast, bears witness to persecution, “never having known real political independence” because it has never set down roots in a place (CH 152).¹³² The “racial persecutions” of Hitlerism remind the Jews of their vocation, an “...election that only manifests itself through suffering, by situating itself at the knot [*nœud*] of universal

¹²⁹ Indeed, “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” already refers to the “careful attentions or Concordats” that Christian churches have taken advantage of after Hitler’s consolidation of power, the most significant of which is no doubt the so called *Reichskonkordat* that Pope Pius XI secured (QRPH 8, RPH 64). The reference is meant to provoke the Christian churches: the pacts they sign will not protect the Christian churches and clergy in the *Deutsches Reich* from the National Socialists.

¹³⁰ In “Being Jewish”, Levinas observes that the religious lyric of “a [Charles] Péguy, a [Francis] Jammes, a [Paul] Claudel” “imperceptibly and admirably” continue the pagan poetic tradition of Virgil’s *Georgics* (EJ 101, BJ 207). He goes more deeply than this observation, however, as his appraisal of Christianity goes from a rallying cry before the war to deep criticism of its silence or politics of appeasement after the war. Levinas’ stronger claim in attributing paganism to Christianity is to present the Christian’s view of time, particularly, its valorization of the present that can break all ties with the past. It shares this with paganism’s valorization of the fact of being, which begins from a merciless present. Personal salvation, the freedom to embrace the cross, shed the body’s sins and material life, and begin anew does not simply *contrast* with a definitive and unalterable human nature that classes into stable kinds and follows implacable laws; it forms the “dialectical essence of the world”. This contrasts strongly with the Jewish view, which yokes the Jew to a past origin. I will have occasion to return to this in Chapter V below.

¹³¹ See Sarah Hammerschlag’s *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 138. For further insightful analysis, see 134-44.

¹³² Hammerschlag offers a persuasive reading that the uprootedness or deracination of Jewish identity is at the heart of Levinas’ ethical project in *The Figural Jew* 117-65.

history...”. This election to persecution does not mean a Jewish exceptionalism. Rather, it signals a critique or judgment situated *outside* history, yet from which there is no escape, that Christianity has, at least in part, conceded due to political ambition.¹³³

Persecuted and isolated from the machinations of a state, Judaism is thus “antipaganism in the fullest sense” (152). Yet it still distinguishes “human dignity” without resting on “power and success”, thus arriving at the “...tragedy of the individual opposed to universal life”, as Levinas puts it in his *Carnets*, differently. That is to say, Judaism affirms the individual, in its opposition to the health of the race that certain strands in Christianity accommodate so well, otherwise than by means of alliances with states and the political rights that their institutions secure for individuals. This accommodation leads Levinas by the end of his review of Carrel in the *Carnets* to decouple Christianity from Judaism. Judaism bears a different message for the individual’s salvation, i.e., an alternative response to the tragedy of escape’s frustration and solitude.

Is it not the case that Levinas ignores Christianity’s ultimate teaching on salvation, the embrace of the cross? In his essay commemorating Pope Pius XI, Levinas presented Christianity primarily from the viewpoint of the historical church. The pagan elements that its political ambitions have led it to absorb over the centuries are the reason that it does not offer salvation to the “individual opposed to universal life”: they inspire enchainment to the body and relations of blood, rootedness to the earth, and an adoration of the natural. As Levinas himself comments, it is “...the ‘totality’ of man that demands of religion a salvation that has to value the totality...”, that is to say, spirit and matter

¹³³ In regards to this exteriority that remains unconditioned by history, Judaism offers Levinas intellectual resources to conceive in *Totality and Infinity* a sense of human identity “‘before’ eternity”, that is, before one’s identity is determined with reference to one’s place in the totality, on the basis of the “eschatological notion of judgment” (TI xi, TaI 23). This is an allusion to the identity of the same, which I discuss below in Chapter 5.

(*Carnets* 183). If Christianity has a response to the ontologico-existential structure of the need for escape from the fact that one is oneself, it is to be found in a distinctly religious sense of salvation, not in the church as a political institution, and certainly not in its pagan strands, which value only the natural and the material.

The political freedoms of liberalism and Marxist communitarianism, each of which Levinas in “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” finds bankrupt of intellectual resources to combat the claim on identity that racism makes, do not exhaust, he says, the content of the “spirit of freedom” (QRPH 8, RPH 64). Christianity assumes freedom differently. How does it square the “spirit of freedom” I feel in the present with my powerlessness to alter my past? It bears the message of redemption: the believer repents before God, embraces the life of the Cross, observes the sacrament of the Eucharist, and she “triumphs over time” (QRPH 10, RPH 65). At any moment, my present is full of the potential for a new birth that breaks absolutely with the chains of my past. This salvation remains *personal*. As a Christian, I fulfill the transcendence of my flesh, my past, my sins, *alone*.¹³⁴ Christian salvation, on Levinas’ interpretation, responds to the need for escape with escapism: in the free assumption of the cross whereby I am reborn there is a flight from the finite world. It does not deal seriously with the “feeling of identity” between I and body: one’s salvation means overcoming the latter. For this reason, we may conclude for Levinas that, like racism and liberal democracy, it does not “hold true salvation” for the individual (*Carnets* 183).

A brief allusion in “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” to Judaism’s message indicates already how Levinas will come to contrast the Christian’s freedom in

¹³⁴ Admittedly, the institution of church, its offices, and the sacraments it observes are important conditions. But that is not the point I am trying to make.

the fullness of every present from the Jew's binding to a past in "Being Jewish" two years after the end of the war in Europe. The "magnificent message" Judaism bears is that the fact of being calls out for another in the flesh, as in my remorse, which only your pardon can redeem: "Remorse—the painful expression of radical powerlessness to redeem the irreparable—heralds the repentance [*sic*] that generates the pardon that redeems" (QRPH 9, RPH 65). The pardon exemplifies the paradoxical structure of identity that Levinas is driven to articulate in his subsequent thought to respond to Hitlerism: how it is the case that, through another's pardon, I can be relieved of my definitiveness without forgetting and without annulling my past, but rather while remaining myself. Judaism bears this as a message, in the terms of the *Carnets*, of salvation. It is neither to affirm absolutely the material nor take flight from it exclusively toward the spiritual. Through the ontologico-existential prism of the frustration of escape, the message Judaism bears is one service to others. The challenge in his 1947 book *From Existence to the Existent* and in Levinas' second major work, *Otherwise than Being* (1974), will be to ground this philosophically without denying the religious premises: to conceive that, in the drama of I and self, the I is not *merely* the embodied self, but that the embodied self is for another *before* it is for itself.

On the one hand, my interpretation shows that there is a robust place for Judaism's influence on Levinas' thought, against some commentators. He finds the intellectual resources in Christianity and western political philosophy largely wanting in the face of a state racism like Hitlerism. He turns instead to currents in Judaism that, as he understands them, have maintained an exteriority with regard to Christian history and western philosophy. Additionally, I take it that my reading is compatible with one that argues for a

sizable role that the Judaic commentaries with which Levinas engaged to develop his thought. On the other hand, one cannot reduce the notion of identity he develops to a phenomenological hermeneutics wrought from Judaic texts.¹³⁵ This explanation too easily neglects the political context in which Levinas lived, Hitlerian racism, and whether politics was just another word for the application of eugenics, as Carrel's book suggests. That the I is the body and the fate it prescribes is not only the grounding proposition for racism, it represents the source from which the rejoinder must proceed.

3. C. (iii.) Liberal Democracy and the Individual's Salvation

Democracy takes up the cause of the individual where Christianity fails to repel, and by Levinas' reasoning accommodates, Carrel's scientific paganism and racist eugenics. It "...sets out from the naked fact of the individual [and] installs itself precisely in the tragic contradiction between the individual and the species" (*Carnets* 183). Levinas does not detail what salvation liberal democracy offers to the individual, nor does he state

¹³⁵ My reading of the influence Judaic sources had on Levinas' thought attempts to present an alternative to the two horns of the dilemma that exercise some commentators. On the one hand, Samuel Moyn has argued that the influence of Judaic sources on Levinas is limited only to those he selected. (*Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005]). It is a very shallow pool, Moyn claims. He places Levinas in the intellectual currents of the interwar period to argue that he, like many of his peers, was deeply influenced and troubled by intersubjectivity in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. His project was to attempt to articulate an alternative intersubjectivity that grounds human dignity without religious or biblical premises. Moyn's reading is informative because it takes an intellectual historian's care to Levinas contextually: the transconfessional religious thinking of the interwar period was a far heavier influence than Judaic texts. The result is Levinas' theory of the other. Moyn concludes that this turns out to be a secularized theological concept. The project to find a ground for human dignity without religion turns out to surreptitiously encrypt theology into ethics, resulting in what Moyn calls an "ethical theology" (13). On the other hand, Michael Fagenblat finds nothing wrong at least with Moyn's last claim if one divorces it from his reasoning: Fagenblat's basic assumption is that secular moral concepts are an extension of the religious into a new historical dimension (*A Covenant of Creatures* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010]). So with Levinas, except that Levinas consciously constructed what he calls ethics through a phenomenological hermeneutics of Judaic sources. One cannot understand Levinas' thought if one cleaves from it its Jewish provenance. His ethics turns out to be a "secularized and generalized account of the Jewish covenant of faith" (xxv). Fagenblat claims that there is a conscious effort on Levinas' part to strip the Jewish covenant of faith of Jewish identity, religiously, socially, and politically conceived: Judaism as a way of ethical life depends on those who *respond*, rather than those called 'Jews'.

why it fails in the *Carnets*. On the basis of my analysis above, we can reconstruct his reasoning.

In classical liberal theory, the I, abstracted of any characteristics of its identity, freely contracts with others and has a mutual interest with them to set up institutions that secure it and its property. A necessary condition for the functioning of a democracy is the trust in them that these institutions keep, enshrined in principles like equality, freedom (with certain restrictions, like the harm principle), and justice (distributive and retributive). Therein lies an individual's salvation. It lies in her freedom to contract and exchange goods or services with others in order to secure her best interests because she has recourse to institutions if she feels threatened, wronged, or otherwise harmed.

This sketch of liberal theory is meant to be basic and uncontroversial. When Levinas thinks of liberalism, he has this classic view in mind. In it, institutions are set up in the first place to serve my interests. The interests of others matter, but they do so secondarily insofar as trust in institutions maintains commerce and my protection from others. The individual's salvation thus remains encrusted in egoism: the contracts into which I freely enter with others are for *my* benefit. Levinas' question, however, is *not* about the salvation of the ego or I; it is about the ontologico-existential structure that undergirds any salvation narrative, escape-frustration. Democracy, merely affirming egoism, fails to conceive the need for escape from the real experience of the leaden fact of being, where "*I [moi] is oneself [soi-même]*": Jew or Hispanic, female or intersexed, disabled, homosexual, old, consumed by pain, and any intersection of these or a host of other identity markers that take their orientation from and have their meaning in being embodied. It rather conceives the I, as we saw in "Reflections on the Philosophy of

Hitlerism”, abstractly of its situated embodiment and primarily on the presupposition of the “spirit of freedom”. It is a logic that is unable to conceive, from the perspective of Levinas’ thought shortly after the Second World War, a responsibility that *precedes* the I that freely contracts with others, like a parent’s responsibility for her child or a teacher’s responsibility for his student. That is why liberal democracy does not “hold true salvation”: it does not take seriously the “feeling of identity” between I and body, that is to say, the ordeal through which the I is put, collapsing, despite its effort, under the weight of each fleshy instant it bears. This is the *corporeal self*, from which the need to escape arises and never finds fulfillment.

For Levinas, the freedom that liberalism presupposes does not rebuke Hitlerism’s basic assumption, the simple-minded reduction of a human being’s identity her body. Liberal theory thereby misses the ontologico-existential structure racism amplifies for those discriminated and persecuted, escape-frustration. As I mentioned above, this framework, whereby politics takes society as site for applied racial eugenics, sets up human identity as the problem and the key to fulfilling the desideratum of Levinas’ subsequent philosophy, transcendence. *From Existence to the Existent* is Levinas’ first attempt to articulate this structure formally.

3. D. The Political Context of Structures “Beyond the Face”: Family “*Outside*” the State

Levinas’ early writings on politics offer a markedly different context for understanding his philosophical concerns following the war. The chief concern is to respond to Hitlerism, where material being determines identity, race, and fate. Liberal and communitarian political theory no less than Christianity are bereft of resources to

contest this grounding assumption of state racism; in some cases, they accommodate it. How does one reply to racial identification when the I is driven to escape its body but cannot, where its freedom proves impotent? Does corporeality signify only the I's definitiveness, leaving it vulnerable to a social-political life that is little more than a project for eugenics? Levinas wants to specify a meaning or a sense beyond being, whereby identity signifies otherwise and against this outcome. He finds it in the corporeal self, where it means to be for another before being for oneself or for one's tribe. In *Totality and Infinity*, he calls this self for another the *identity of the same* (TI 265, TaI 289). The identity of the same rebuffs racism's reduction by conceiving a relation with infinity in the very material body of a human being's identity. This state of affairs Derrida concludes is "unthinkable, impossible, unsayable" already in the 1964 publication of "Violence and Metaphysics" (ED 168, WD 114). The concrete political context that shaped the identity of the same puts Levinas' replies to Derrida in *Otherwise than Being* in a new perspective. Moreover, it underscores the resources and structures already at work, if not yet made themes in their own right, in *From Existence to the Existent* that Levinas will retrieve for this response. I take this up in Chapter 4 below.

That the problem of politics as a project for racial eugenics continues to remain a live, unsettled question for over a quarter of a century after "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" is evident in section IV of *Totality and Infinity*, where Levinas develops structures that accomplish the I's transcendence "Beyond the Face". The meaning of these structures follows, in the *first* place, from Levinas' concerns in the 1930s about state racism's reductive view of human identity and social and political life as a laboratory for eugenics. Few commentators have taken notice of this, and fewer have

attempted an interpretation of *Totality and Infinity* on its basis. I discuss this in Chapter 5. Commentators largely take it that the face to face ethical relation, and not the relations that Levinas specifies beyond it, accomplish transcendence in the fullest sense.

The structures that Levinas describes beyond the face are concretized in the “marvel of the family” (TI 283, TaI 306). In the family, Levinas intends to isolate a set of relations wherein the I’s identity follows neither from reference to an artificial totality nor straightforwardly from consanguinity or tribal bonds. Recall his observations about social and political life in “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” and “On Escape”. Hitlerism repurposes universality in making it give way to the “*idea of expansion*” for the sake of racial conquest and war. The social scene leaves “no one on the margins of life”. Even the autonomous agent “feels liable to be mobilized”. A sweeping force, politics has become totalitarianism, and as totalitarianism, descends into war. From one perspective, state racism is a totalitarianism: each constituent of the state gets her identity by reference to her position in the whole, a whole which is determined by a central authority that suppresses dissenting voices. This identity classifies her race and outlines her fate. But state racism is also a declaration of war. It justifies the use of violence in an array of forms against individuals or groups within the population that are labeled threats to the health, security, and future of the race. In war, beings refuse the identity established by reference to the totality (TI 197-98, TaI 222). When social and political life becomes a laboratory for racial eugenics, politics is not just totalitarianism. It is the justification of violence and war, which “...establishes an order from which no one can keep his distance; [where] nothing henceforth is exterior” (TI ix, TaI 21). Thus state racism exists in a liminal space that must maintain opposing conditions: beings in a totality, which

gives beings their identity and suspends war, and beings in war, which destroys identity and rejects totality. The question, then, that drives Levinas is whether the procession from politics to totalitarianism to the destruction of the totality by war is inevitable. War not only destroys the identity I have with reference to the totality—male, white, American citizen, etc.—but, Levinas remarks, “destroys the identity of the same”. In 5. A. below I return to explain how Levinas conceives the identity of the same as self for another.

It is in this politically charged atmosphere that Levinas develops the concrete structures out of relations between family members that resist the state’s encroachment. The family “...identifies itself *outside* of the State, even if the State reserves a framework for it” (TI 283, TaI 306). The state depends on the family—it supplies its citizens. From state to family, we have a relation of contingency, but the inverse is not the case. This conceptual schema, relation without contingency or without a correlation (i.e., taking up a theoretical attitude), is central to all the formal structures that describe transcendence, such as Levinas’ paradigmatic phrasing that what is beyond the totality and experience, infinity, is “...reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience” (TI xi, TaI 23). In the family, identity is produced in relations whereby the I is in the service of another’s fate, whether this is a son’s (fecundity) or a stranger’s (fraternity), while remaining itself. Despite the state’s dependence on the family, the idea is that the concrete responsibility for another learned there is an inviolable point of resistance to the state’s encroachment. This responsibility for another has its basis neither in freedom (liberalism) nor in class or group consciousness (Marxist communitarianism). It breaks, then, from the model of the ego where what I give to another returns to me, whether that return serves my personal interests or those of my class or tribe. Where Levinas accepts racism’s fact of being—that

there is no escape from my past, my identity, and the suffering I have witnessed—I must not do so with tragic resignation. For Levinas, generations of families produce the condition for pardon of the I’s definitiveness, infinite time distinct from the finite time of political states.

Conclusion

Well before Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” systematically engages his thought, Levinas is keen to develop philosophical resources to respond to a political philosophy grounded in racism and the concern that racial eugenics is organizing public life on sociobiological principles. In this chapter, I have argued that Levinas’ early political commentaries influence the trajectory of his subsequent philosophical agenda. Any attempt to understand and develop his notion of justice should take his critique of the failed responses of liberalism and Marxist communitarianism to Hitlerism into account. This sets up human identity as *the problem and the key* to fulfilling the desideratum of his philosophy, transcendence. We will see how Levinas conceives the I’s identity by examining his descriptions of embodied selfhood in his 1947 book *From Existence to the Existent* in Chapter 4. His early concerns about politics and racial eugenics culminate in the descriptions of how identity is accomplished outside the framework of the state and in the family in his first major work, *Totality and Infinity*, in 1961. We will see this in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 picks up the problems of Chapter 2, where I presented philosophy at the time of the closure through Derrida’s double reading of Levinas in his 1964 (republished, with important revisions and additions, in 1967) essay “Violence and Metaphysics”. I analyze the earlier *From Existence to the Existent* through the lens of key ethical notions

Levinas develops in his second major work, *Otherwise than Being*, in 1974. In my view, Derrida's challenges to transcendence *draw Levinas back* to his earlier philosophy, particularly to the descriptions of the I's identity and the meaning of the embodied self in *From Existence to the Existent*, in order to formulate the argument and conduct its exposition in *Otherwise than Being*. A primary thesis that he retrieves from the earlier work for the later is that, for a human existent to establish a personal identity, what is beyond being, infinity, flashes *in* being. To adapt what he says in the Preface of *Totality and Infinity*, one must conceive how infinity or the "beyond" the totality and objective experience is "...reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience" (TI xi, TaI 23).¹³⁶

I suspect that Derrida did not fully grasp this central claim of *Totality and Infinity* until after "Violence and Metaphysics". He remarks in "Violence and Metaphysics" that infinity beyond being and logos is "unthinkable, impossible, unsayable" even as he recognizes that Levinas' notion of the trace announces precisely this "*impossible-unthinkable-unsayable*" (ED 168, WD 114 and ED 194, WD 132). That is part of the strategy of double reading, as I argued in Chapter 2. But, at a minimum, it means that Derrida neglects to interpret the transcendence of my embodied identity—a transcendence that Levinas specifies, to any preempt confusion, as *excedence*, as I will detail below—through the structure of the trace. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge that Levinas *reconceives and expands* transcendence in *Otherwise than Being*, as I explain in 5. C. (i.) below, under the challenging reading Derrida gives his thought in "Violence and Metaphysics". He does not thereby abandon his earlier concerns about totalitarianism and racial eugenics, but *integrates* them into his responses to Derrida in *Otherwise than Being*.

¹³⁶ See A 57, AEL 27 and my footnote 52 above.

CHAPTER 4.

INTELLIGIBILITY AND INFINITY BEYOND BEING:

FROM IDENTITY WITHOUT IDENTITY IN *FROM EXISTENCE TO THE EXISTENT*

TO SUBJECTIVITY AND PROXIMITY IN *OTHERWISE THAN BEING*

Levinas' 1947 *From Existence to the Existent* is a remarkable book not only for the claims it derives from its intentional analyses of concrete, embodied experience but for the way these analyses set forth the central structure that occupies much of his subsequent thought, transcendence. While the book makes no reference to the political context, it was written in the aftermath of the Second World War. We saw in Chapter 3 how the 1934 article "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" adds flesh, so to speak, to transcendence's formal structure: the existent's departure from being—that is, with respect to racism, from the existent's identity in the sense that *I is body*—while maintaining a foothold in being and the categories that describe it. Levinas treats, additionally, the problem of human identity extensively in his *Carnets de captivité*, which he wrote primarily during his Nazi internment from 1940-45 for his role as a member of the French resistance. In this chapter, I will have occasion to consider further the problem of the I's identity and the structure of transcendence in Levinas.

From Existence to the Existent is primarily, although not entirely, a work of ontology, specifically, the process by which the human existent individuates itself, makes

itself determinate, and claims an identity of its own. He brackets the relation of intentional consciousness and world and the abstract relation of intentional self-consciousness in order to describe how an existent emerges from existence to constitute these bonds. One has to distinguish different levels of identity in Levinas' philosophy. While he sometimes refers to identity in the sense that philosophers today generally understand personal identity, the import of *From Existence to the Existent* lies in its examination at a deeper level, namely, how personal identity is wrought. Levinas contends that the relation of I and world or I and I is not there right off: one is first individuated by another with whom one does not coincide. This other is the *self*. A personal identity must be effectuated, produced, or accomplished in each instant.¹³⁷

Levinas draws his rich description of identity from this basic insight: the existent

...does not exist purely and simply. Its movement of existence, which might be pure and straightforward, is bent [*s'infléchit*] and caught up in itself [*s'embourbe*], revealing that in the verb *to be* its character of being reflexive: one not only is, one *is oneself* [*on n'est pas, on s'est*; translation modified] (DEE 38,EE 16).

For Levinas, human existence is a duality of sorts: the I (*moi*) and self or oneself (*soi* or *soi-même*). In beginning with this basic descriptive fact, Levinas aims to provide an ontological analysis without presuppositions. The leading anthropological ontologies of his day presuppose formal ontological structures, like Husserl's theoretical noesis-noema correlation or Heidegger's existential being-in-the-world. That ontology presupposes such structures leads it to deduce sense or meaning, primarily or exclusively, from being, that is to say, knowledge about being. That is the basic problem. If ontology is the ultimate source of meaning, then transcendence is immanent: the I is finite and stands only in finite relations, such that what it gives to another returns to it.

¹³⁷ An effectuating, producing, or accomplishing that the English title for *De l'existence à l'existant*, *Existence and Existents*, occludes.

By contrast, the ontological analysis of *From Existence to the Existent* sketches a meaning of transcendence that involves infinity, breaking through the closed circuit of the finite I without, however, acquiescing to a theological or mystical sense.¹³⁸ The focus on the quasi-duality or fissured oneness of I-self, abstracted from the relation with world and intentional consciousness, in *From Existence to the Existent* is deliberate in this regard. For this reason, it is better to call *From Existence to the Existent* a work in *proto-ontology*. This term is useful because it distinguishes Levinas' approach from Husserl's and Heidegger's respective ontologies. We see how in the details of the presentation below. Further, it already gestures at how Levinas will respond over a quarter of a century later to Derrida's challenging reading of transcendence in "Violence and Metaphysics". Levinas devotes *Otherwise than Being* (1974), his second major work, to the task of showing how one can conceive a beyond being and logos *without entirely* abandoning the language of philosophical discourse, ontology. He argues in *Otherwise than Being* that philosophical discourse, in a surprising and paradoxical way, constitutes itself by inviting to dialogue the interloper who puts its claims into question, the skeptic, if only to refute her. Against the conclusion in which Derrida tries to capture his thought in "Violence and Metaphysics", Levinas asserts in an essay roughly contemporaneous with *Otherwise than Being* that, "*Not to philosophize would not be 'to philosophize still'...*" (DVI 126, BPW 148 or GCM 77).¹³⁹ Transcendence, if it is not straightforwardly "*to philosophize still*", must involve a beyond being, or infinity. In order to draw this conclusion, Levinas resumes trails first blazed in the proto-ontological descriptions of *From Existence to the Existent*, as I show below. Even the proto-ontological event of

¹³⁸ Levinas' later work develops this sketch more fully, and I shall account for how and why in Chapter 5.

¹³⁹ One finds this in "*Dieu et la philosophie*" ("God and Philosophy"). For Derrida's use of Aristotle's thought, see ED 226, WD 152 and 2. A. and 2. D. (ii.) above.

personal identity—the event whereby an individuated, finite human subject emerges from anonymous, indeterminate existence—involves a relation with infinity whose meaning cannot be found in the process itself. But it does not come to pass without it.

4. A. An Overview of Transcendence in *From Existence to the Existent and Totality and Infinity*

Formally, this coming to be that involves a beyond being describes transcendence. For Levinas, transcendence is a relation with another that does not make of the other a thematic correlate of the same, as the transcendence of intentional consciousness involves. Nor does he mean transcendence in a theological or in its mystical sense, where participation in another (e.g., God) means the loss of one's identity. Still, he maintains that it involves a source of meaning beyond being, or the approach of infinity in finite existence. *From Existence to the Existent* uses the model of the Good beyond being from Plato's *Republic* to guide its descriptive searches for transcendence.¹⁴⁰ Levinas coins the term "ex-cendence" to describe a relation with a beyond being that does not end up in a thematic correlation but nonetheless individuates the existent.¹⁴¹ Of this, he says,

It signifies that the movement which leads an existent toward the Good [*Bien*] is not a transcendence by which that existent raises itself up to a higher existence, but a departure [*sortie*] from being and from the categories that describe it: an ex-cendence. But ex-cendence and the Good [*Bonheur*] necessarily have a foothold in being, and that is why being is better than non-being (DEE 9,EE xxvii).

This puts forward the paradoxical structure of transcendence as excendence: a departure from being and its categories while maintaining one's identity as a being. Transcendence is an intra-mundane affair. If for Levinas' later philosophy responsibility for another is its concretion, then transcendence means giving to another across relations of material

¹⁴⁰ Levinas often uses this famous phrase from Plato's *Republic*. See *Republic* 509b8 in *Plato: Complete Works*.

¹⁴¹ Levinas forms this French neologism from the Latin prefix *ex-* (out, to go out of) and the verb *scandere* (to climb, scale, or mount).

scarcity without the expectation of return. This is a state of affairs that, Levinas maintains, ontology—where the model by which an ego gives is transactional—cannot explain. At the end of *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas promises to show in a future work how fecundity, or the relation of the father with the son, fulfills transcendence as ex-cendence. I will show Chapter 5 how fecundity accomplishes transcendence in Levinas' first major work, *Totality and Infinity* (1961). Whereas commentators by and large confine themselves to Levinas' description of the face to face to discuss transcendence, my reading places fecundity in its political context, Levinas' worries about totalitarian politics and the inadequate philosophical responses from liberalism and phenomenological ontology to respond to it. I argue that the import of fecundity, notwithstanding its overt sexism and penchant for the biological, lies in the *I's* fecundity, and not in the father-son relation. Already in *Totality and Infinity*, the biological relation erodes and gives way to what Levinas calls fraternity, or responsibility for strangers against the institutions that oppress them. The chief reason for this erosion is that the thought of the trace, already present, if not thematic, in *From Existence to the Existent*, draws Levinas deeper into the recesses of human identity. Fecundity then serves as the model for substitution in *Otherwise than Being* and responds to the framework in which Derrida wants to read transcendence in "Violence and Metaphysics". Yet fecundity and substitution are not the *only* resources Levinas has to respond to Derrida's challenge of conceiving an infinitely other in philosophical discourse. I devote the two parts of this chapter to showing how infinity, beyond being, is outlined in the solitary relation of I with itself. The ontologico-existential structure of escape does not accomplish

transcendence, but it is integral to conceiving the model of identity that a concrete transcendence must involve.

4. B. Two Themes for Reading *From Existence to the Existent*: The Plan for Parts

One and Two

I conduct my reading of *From Existence to the Existent* in this chapter under two general themes. Each of these concerns the identity of the existent, specifically, the process by which the existent establishes a personal identity. By adopting these themes to frame my reading, my analysis will reconstruct the major conceptual developments from the early book *From Existence to the Existent* to the lead ethical notion of substitution in the later *Otherwise than Being*. The first theme leads to subjectivity and the second to proximity. Subjectivity and proximity are two pillars on which to understand the difficult thought of substitution. Each of these later ethical notions, I contend, is already at work in *From Existence to the Existent*, if not thematically. They are the chief resources from which Levinas will draw to respond to Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics".

The first theme I call double possession. On the one hand, the existent possesses or claims mastery over existence. This claim—that existence is *mine*—is the basis upon which a subject of intentional consciousness emerges from indeterminate and impersonal existence. On the other hand, the movement of existence, rising up or standing out, has consequences: the I must bear the gravity of being a self. That is to say, it is not just that the existent takes charge of existence but that existence, in turn, exercises a grip on the existent. This is double possession, possessing and being possessed. A helpful image in this regard is that the existent strikes up a contract with existence (DEE 31-32, EE 12; cf. also DEE 37, EE 16). The signatory to a contract is subject to its terms. Because the

proto-ontological account of identity does not presuppose an already constituted subject, this contract is one that the I did not freely choose. Yet this is not servitude. At the level at which existence emerges as an event, the terms of traditional ontology—like passivity and activity, free will and slavery, voluntary and involuntary, and even other and same as Derrida conceives them in “Violence and Metaphysics”—do not apply. To be an I who experiences the world does not only mean to be a conscious subject, receptive and reactive to experience. It means the incessant exposure to the *ordeal* of existing: “...one not only is, one *is oneself*”. This phrase is not a *factum brutum*. Fatigue (*fatigue*) and dilatoriness (*paresse*) offer concrete evidence for the ordeal in which the I is exposed to itself.¹⁴² The affective descriptions add flesh to the abstract notion of double possession. They give Levinas a basis for thinking how an I can have the structure not only of a duality (where each term, I and self, might be equal) but of the other-in-the-same, where the relation of self to the I is asymmetrical. Formally, other-in-the-same is the structure by which Levinas understands subjectivity in *Otherwise than Being*. Pressing on *who* this self is will, in part, lead in that book to the structure of the one-for-the-other, or substitution. If substitution accomplishes transcendence as ex-cendence, involving an infinity beyond being that Derrida calls “unthinkable, impossible, unsayable”, then its roots lie in the identity of the I in *From Existence to the Existent* (ED 168, WD 114).

The second theme goes more deeply into this relation of I with itself. It shows that this relation involves a rupture from being, on the one hand, and refastening to another, on the other hand. By *rupture from being*, I mean the disruption of intentionality: for Levinas, beings can only manifest themselves according to an a priori understanding of

¹⁴² John Llewelyn makes a convincing case that “dilatoriness” is the more appropriate translation than Lingis’ “indolence” for “*paresse*”. In translating this word, I am following his suggestion in *Emmanuel Levinas: The Genealogy of Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 34-37.

meanings (practical, axiological, ontological, etc.). The rupture does not transfer the I to some ethereal realm beyond being. Quite the contrary, it is a *refastening to another*, by which I mean that the I, *in* having to be, finds itself also bound to another where there is nonetheless a meaning outside of themes. Concretely, this is responsibility to provide her with sustenance, shelter, and opportunity in the midst of scarce material relations. While I present them singly, it is important to conceive rupture and refastening as two aspects of a singular, internally complex movement of existence. First, the rupture of an existent from existence, or of an I from itself, shows that existence is not there right off. It must be produced or accomplished. Levinas takes it that modalities of existence, like intentional consciousness or pre-thematic embodiment, emerge as events. Being is not static. In its bare state, being is unidentified and undifferentiated, a dense flux of forces to which all things, decomposing, return. Through the existent, being has an emergent- or event-character. To produce, effectuate, or accomplish an event, that is, a determinate being, requires effort. Through effort, I emerge, which means that I claim, pre-thematically, *this* body as *me* or as *mine*. This claim is the basis upon which my identity is personal. To claim that the existent ruptures from being presupposes, however, that it was once bound to being. Despite lagging behind its existence in the present, the existent is, second, fastened and refastened to its existence. While the rope that ties the I to itself may be slackened, the knot cannot be untied or cut. There is no escape from oneself. It is this impossibility of escape that individuates an I, encumbered with itself despite its effort to take control. Before it establishes a personal identity, another—even if this other is the *self*—identifies the I. Even in the tragic solitude of the finite existent's emergence from existence, however, infinity flashes. Levinas will retrieve these resources in order to

develop the notion of proximity two decades later. Subjectivity, the other-in-the-same, and proximity, rupture from and refastening to being, are critical for constructing the reply to Derrida, specifically, that the subject's very identity *is already* a substitution for another.

PART ONE. FIRST THEME: DOUBLE POSSESSION.

FROM THE IDENTITY OF THE I IN *FROM EXISTENCE TO THE EXISTENT* TO THE OTHER-IN-THE-SAME, OR SUBJECTIVITY

What I am calling Levinas' proto-ontology, the description of how an existent individuates itself in being by claiming an identity of its own, uses several terms in unconventional senses. So I provide a brief primer. I follow this with a note on Levinas' philosophical methods. This note should clarify my own approach to interpreting *From Existence to the Existent*.

4. C. A Terminological Primer for Levinas' Proto-Ontology

If one follows Levinas' criticism, what the anthropological ontologies of his day miss in beginning straightaway with intentionality (Husserl) or the I-world relation (Heidegger) is being's emergent- or event-character. They presuppose a subject already constituted by concerns, pragmatic understanding, and values, and endowed with the power to do something about them. Existing, however, exacts effort. It can be draining; further, and for some especially, existing can be tiresome or painful. Under the affective weight of embodiment, the I lags behind the *present* that summons it to assume itself. The existent's effort in a given present Levinas calls the *instant*. The instant is an event, a

surging up to muscle the weighty present into a determinate being, that is to say, to position the body given the situation in which one finds it entrenched. Thus, present and instant are terms of art in *From Existence to the Existent*. Rather than derive them from the famous image of time as a flowing river,¹⁴³ i.e., time as a straightforward measure of motion, Levinas makes the present fleshy, so to speak, identifying it with the weight of embodiment, and he examines the dialectical struggle internal to the instant to bear it. Through the event of the instant, the existent *takes a position* in being and claims it as its own (DEE 120-24, EE 67-70). In other words, with position Levinas names the process by which a substantive—an identity that carries a name (even if this name is only a pronoun, *I* or *self*)—emerges from being in general.

The result of taking a position in being is the *hypostasis* (DEE 140-41, EE 82-83). Intentional consciousness is able to extend itself, so to speak, in the world because consciousness presupposes an unproblematic return to a here or to a base, the hypostasis.¹⁴⁴ The I's hypostasis is the grip it exercises over the *self*. Bringing a corporeal

¹⁴³ Levinas refers to this image as if his audience will understand it and concur that it represents the traditional understanding of time (DEE 125, EE 71). He does not supply a source. Where he continues to use it almost three decades later in the lecture course "Death and Time", we get an indication of what he means. Evidently, he understands time as a flowing river as an illustration of Aristotle's famous conception of time. Time, Aristotle says in the *Physics*, "...is not movement, but that by which movement can be numerically estimated" (219b1-3). In contrast to time as a flowing river, Heidegger develops originary time on the basis of an existential relation toward death, from which measurable time derives (DMT 35, GDT 27). This, Levinas acknowledges, is an advance on Aristotle's conception of time (DMT 125, GDT 109). However, rather than conceive time on the basis of (my) death, Levinas develops a reading of death on the basis of time as patient awaiting for a term that does not arrive, nor even become a theme (DMT 131, GDT 115). So the image of time as a flowing river in the later work is an important illustration of how Levinas holds fast to the philosophical commitment he had announced three decades prior in *From Existence to the Existent*: to develop philosophical reflections that do not shy from their debt to Heidegger but are also "...governed by a profound need to leave the climate of that philosophy..." without, however, leaving it for a "...philosophy that would be pre-Heideggerean" (DEE 19, EE 4).

¹⁴⁴ Some two decades later in the 1968 essay "Substitution", Levinas still takes the description by which the I establishes a hypostasis as a major achievement. What Hegel's idealism and Sartre's phenomenological ontology neglect (notwithstanding the differences in their accounts of the identity of the I) is the effort it takes to position oneself. They immediately take the oneself, posited straightforwardly, as a *for itself*. Intentional consciousness, then, finds its way back to itself from engagement with the world without a problem. Transcendence, to put it in other terms, remains immanent. See RPL 492, BPW 83-84.

self into being is not tautological or straightforward but a production: “one not only is, one *is oneself*”. Older than any a priori structure of cognition, this remark concerning the embodied self already contains the kernel for how Levinas will conceive the identity of the oneself through the notion of the trace just over two decades later in “Substitution”. The focus in each work is on selfhood rather than the personal identity of the intentional ego. In *From Existence to the Existent*, the I endures the affects of embodied selfhood or (as Levinas prefers) ipseity from out of *fecundity*, the concretion of formal structure of transcendence. Thus, not only egoity, but ipseity—the event of embodiment always already undergone, but never an object of experience—characterizes the I. All the richness of Levinas’ ontological account follows from the analysis of what it takes, so to speak, to position oneself and, despite this effort, to collapse under its corporeal weight. The meaning of this *what it takes* and *collapsing under the self’s corporeity*, however, does not follow solely from ontology. A meaning follows also from what is beyond being and logos. That is Levinas’ wager in *Otherwise than Being*, where he earnestly carries forward *From Existence to the Existent’s* descriptions of the I and embodied self, or the identity of ipseity. This warrants the name proto-ontology.

4. C. (i.) A Note on Methods: From Intentional Analysis to Ethical Language

At many points in his career, Levinas affirms that his philosophy follows Husserl’s central method, intentional analysis.¹⁴⁵ As he practices it, Levinas presses

¹⁴⁵ In each of his major works, Levinas explicitly says that he proceeds by phenomenology’s intentional analysis (TI xvi, Tal 28 and AE 230, OB 183). One must add, however, that Levinas distances himself from the explication of transcendental subjectivity toward which Husserl turns intentional analysis in 1907. Levinas makes this point himself in a 1975 dialogue, correcting Theodor de Boer’s characterization of his use of intentional analysis (DQVI 139, GCM 87). Matters are more complicated than Levinas describes in this dialogue. In *Totality and Infinity*, he admits to seeking the conditions of empirical experience and, in the same breath, undermines the transcendental search for an origin. This is neither an oversight nor a contradiction; it is deliberate. Levinas is already searching for a way between empirical and transcendental philosophy, responding to shortcomings he sees in Husserl and Heidegger, while keeping to intentional

intentional analysis to the point at which a reversion of subjectivity occurs, such that the subject as seat of the will, freedom, or power is revealed in an extreme passivity. The subject is exposed, susceptible to another, and part of a plot beyond what it can know and beyond what remains unthematized. At such extremes, as Levinas says in *Otherwise than Being*, a phenomenological description that remains at the level of being—in this case, the subject—and beyond being—in this case, another’s face—fails (AE 120n.35,OB 193n.35). On my reading, which I detail in Part Two of this chapter, the description fails because it *separates* being and the beyond being rather than investigating how the I and another are *tied together*. Phenomenology must resort to ethical language to express the “paradox” into which it finds itself thrown (AE 154-55,OB 120-21). In a word, the subject in Levinas’ later philosophy is substitution, or, a one-for-the-other, the very structure of responsibility. To piggyback on another commentator’s insightful précis, one can detect three integrated philosophical methods: intentional analysis, overbidding or emphasis, and ethical language.¹⁴⁶ Only after *Totality and Infinity*’s publication does Levinas make this practice of pressing or overbidding the intentional analysis to the point where one must resort to ethical language an explicit theme.¹⁴⁷

Nonetheless, it is instructive to see these methods are integrated in *From Existence to the Existent*. I remain faithful to them in this chapter’s analysis. I take it that, if one takes the intentional analysis of the fatigued I as one’s blueprint, it is not only the

analysis’ basic objective, to do philosophy that arises from concrete experiences. In this regard, see his note on method in *Totality and Infinity* (TI 148,TaI 173). In this passage, Levinas embraces, on the one hand, transcendental philosophy’s search for the formal structures that describe empirical experiences and, on the other hand, gives the ontological role of specifying the meaning of those formal structures to their “*concretization*” in experience.

¹⁴⁶ See de Boer’s comments, already mentioned in the previous footnote, in DQVI 138-43,GCM 86-90. Rather than “emphasis”, de Boer uses “exaltation of language”. “Emphasis” is Levinas’ own term in his reply.

¹⁴⁷ Perhaps the first time Levinas makes the integration of these methods a theme for his own philosophy is in the 1968 essay “Substitution”. See RLP 500,BPW 90.

case that *From Existence to the Existent* leads to subjectivity and proximity, but that they are *operative*, if not explicitly made into themes in their own right, in the description of the I's identity. Thus, one has intentional analysis and emphasis but the ethical language is different: fecundity (Chapter 5 below), rather than the later notions of substitution, subjectivity, and proximity. What primarily motivates Levinas to retrieve the description of the I's identity and to express it as substitution is, I am claiming, Derrida's double reading in "Violence and Metaphysics".

An example is instructive. In *From Existence to the Existent*, intentional analysis brings out one particularly novel philosophical idea. If existence is not there right off for the existent but must be produced, then it follows that there is a way to describe existence without the existent. The main idea of *From Existence to the Existent*, according to Levinas himself, is existence without an existent: the neutral *there is being* (*il y a de l'être*). Impersonality or anonymity characterizes the *there is*. With the *there is*, Levinas describes an existence held in an extreme passivity: an existent immobilized by impersonal existence, unable even to break through its paralysis to take a position in being—i.e., unable to get a grip on itself, as it were, and make being its own. It is not merely an ideal thought experiment: insomnia attests concretely to the ordeal of the *there is*, while fatigue and dilatoriness approximate it.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, it is the experience of insomnia that makes the idea of the *there is* meaningful and not nonsense. In undergoing these affections, the I unhinges from the existence that burdens it, its embodied self. The intentional analysis of my fatigue, pressed to the extreme of insomnia, reveals neutral being incessantly *going on* in the background. The conscious I is in fact a modality of

¹⁴⁸ In the early essay "On Escape" (1935), Levinas investigates several other affections that similarly approximate the ordeal of the *there is*. These are malaise, pleasure, shame, and nausea.

what Levinas calls *wakefulness* (*veille*). Wakefulness "...is anonymous. It is not that there is *my* vigilance in the night; in insomnia it is the night itself that watches. *It* watches [my emphasis—PJG]" (DEE 111,EE 63). Before I can understand myself through what I can do, consciousness (or sleep) must tear itself away from anonymously watching being's incessant *going on*. The intentional analysis of concrete insomnia, unfolded by emphasis, opens new horizons for thought, the idea of the *there is*. It showcases the subject's extreme passivity, its exposure and susceptibility to being held by neutral being. As his philosophy matures, Levinas argues that insomnia and wakefulness as ethical terms themselves: it is the other human being's oppression, particularly my part in it, that holds me in wakefulness.¹⁴⁹

It is to affective affairs like insomnia and fatigue that Levinas will return to describe the ordeal of subjectivity, of the other *in* the same without integration or correlation, in *Otherwise than Being*. He does so with a view toward responding to the gauntlet Derrida lays down for the "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable" infinity beyond being in "Violence and Metaphysics" (ED 168,WD 114). After Derrida, Levinas' account of the I's identity, its emergence from indeterminate existence, could *no longer* remain straightforwardly ontological. Infinity beyond being, he will claim, is already written into human corporeity, specifically, in the relation of I and embodied self. There, transcendence outlines itself.

4. D. The Refusal "in" Lassitude and the Need to Escape

¹⁴⁹ Inter al., see: the 1974 essay republished in "*De la conscience a la Veille*" ("From Consciousness to Wakefulness") in DQVI 50,GCM 25; the 1975-76 lecture course "*Dieu et l'onto-théo-logie*" "God and Onto-theo-logie"), where Levinas describes insomnia as a "categorical", in DMT 242,GDT 209; and the interview "*De l'utilité des insomnies*" ("On the Usefulness of Insomnia") with Bertrand Révillon in *Les imprévus de l'histoire* 199-202,IRB 234-36.

The need to escape oneself is particularly acute under the duress of certain affects, like fatigue (the burden of embodiment and the conditions in which the body is embedded) and dilatoriness (the inability to effectuate a beginning). To interpret these as moods with certain mental contents (e.g., feelings) is to take up an attitude of reflection.¹⁵⁰ This already misses the level of identity production Levinas is after, where the first personal I must be wrought through struggle with the self. To be sure, fatigue and dilatoriness are objects of cognition. But cognition does not exhaust their respective meanings. Levinas' interest lies in what they tell us about a state of affairs that we never, strictly speaking, experience, but which is nevertheless written into human corporeity.

The psychological description neglects that fatigue and dilatoriness are, first, refusals. The I refuses to take up the being with which it is charged, as when one is spent by hard labor (DEE 49-50, EE 24); or when one wakes cocooned in bed and cannot bring oneself to setting one's foot on the ground (DEE 33, EE 13; cf. also DEE 120, EE 67).¹⁵¹ In refusing being, the existent recoils from itself, or, before the inevitability of having to be: of having, for instance, to continue the job, which just doesn't flow effortlessly (in contrast to play), and is made more difficult each moment weariness increases; or, of having to get up, which seems harder each moment one lingers in bed.

Phenomenologically, lassitude itself is already symptomatic of refusal. Levinas comments, "The refusal is *in* lassitude [translation modified]" (DEE 32, EE 12). The I, when weary, does not have in mind a destination. Its refusal only signifies a recurring

¹⁵⁰ Levinas' analysis of affects or passions does not have the structure cogito-ego-cogitatum characteristic of Descartes' philosophy. See Descartes' *Les passions de l'âme* in *Œuvres de Descartes*, volume XI, 349-50 (*Passions of the Soul* 338-39). The basic difference is that Levinas' analysis seeks to derive the meaning of affects *without intentionality* (to slightly modify a term of Michel Henry's that Levinas himself will praise some thirty years later in his 1975-76 lecture course "Death and Time" in DMT 26, GDT 17; see Henry's *Essence de la manifestation* [*The Essence of Manifestation*]).

¹⁵¹ Here Levinas follows William James' vivid example in his *Principles of Psychology*, volume II, 524-25.

drive to flee the overwhelming presence of itself, a need to escape the conditions that cage it in its corporeity and in its situation, even if this need is invariably frustrated on account of the I's identity with its body. The I can be weary of itself—for example, weary of the body from which it suffers, of the troubles that weigh it down, of captivating gaze of others, etc.—only if the I delays or lags behind itself. Thus, in producing itself substantively, Levinas sees a divergence of the existent from its existence, notwithstanding the latter's suffocating fullness, that other anthropological ontologies neglect. The pathos that existing involves is not an object of cognition for intellectual intuition (the self-positing I) nor does it disclose one's pragmatic involvements (being-in-the-world). Existence is not an unproblematic result. *To exist*, that is, to approach the body that bears down on me, demands that I exert effort. Being has an emergent- or event-character: in order to be, one must undergo oneself. To be embodied is to refuse overwhelming affects like fatigue.

What is important is that these affects already outline transcendence as a need to escape oneself: an I driven to an elsewhere where it would not find itself again, but where it would not vanish into another, either, losing its being altogether. The self—the body, embedded in a context—thwarts this escape. In the full presence of being *me*, I discover my powerlessness. That does not preclude, however, that a relation with infinity arises in the affective ordeal of being finite. I will show in what sense in Part Two of this chapter.

The insight that existence must undergo itself will be important for understanding how Levinas develops subjectivity in *Otherwise than Being*. To respond to the test to which Derrida puts Levinas' notion of transcendence in "Violence and Metaphysics", Levinas presents subjectivity through the structure the other-in-the-same (AE 31-32, OB

25). What he wants to investigate in *From Existence to the Existent* is the process by which an existent establishes itself as a subject *of* existence, one who has a name and the attributes that make up a personal identity. He is verbalizing, one might say, existence without a subject in order to give attention to what it takes to make a claim of ownership on it and emerge as a substantive differentiated from neutral being.

4. E. Fatigue, Experience, and the Immemorial

Investigating the present and the instant under the first of the themes I mentioned above, double possession, will help to bring out the complexity of this emergent- or event-character of existence by which identity is made personal. Existence demands an effort that must be constantly renewed, as if the self behind which the I lags is born newly in each present. In this regard, Levinas says, the I's effort "...surges forward [*s'élançe*] out of fatigue and falls back upon it [translation modified]" (DEE 44,EE 19). This movement of the I, always doubled, surging forward and falling back, is the effort that the I gives in order to muscle an instant into existence (DEE 50,EE 24). Thereby the I establishes itself as a first personal substantive, i.e., a subject of existence. A subject of existence is one aspect of the double possession of which I spoke above, namely, the subject with a fair degree of control over its existence. Control begins in the possession of a present from the personal, if not often thematic, claim, *this embodied self is mine*, whereby the reflexive pronoun is an attribute or predicate that indexes back to the I. There is no more elementary—and, at first sight, no more unproblematic—predicate of identity than the *self*. It goes almost unnoticed in pronominal verb constructions.¹⁵² This process of establishing an identity, the position that produces an identity that is

¹⁵² This is a feature of language to which Levinas will repeatedly refer and exploit in order to respond to Derrida's challenge that the infinitely other is "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable" in *Otherwise than Being*. See, inter al., AE 10,OB 8 and AE 132,OB 104.

personal—taking up a *self* (*soi*), indexing it back to *me*—and the hypostasis that is the result—an *I* (*moi*), *here*, is primarily what holds Levinas interest in *From Existence to the Existent* when he speaks of identity. Fatigue undermines personal identity's presuppositions, namely, that it is determinate, personal, and that the I is in control of itself or has power; instead it uncovers the process by which an identity—a *me* that is *mine*—must be wrought.

The process by which a personal identity must be wrought is not, strictly speaking, an experience. Neither is it straightforwardly in time. To make this intelligible, one must introduce the thought of a past that exceeds experience and the recall of memory. Levinas does not make the immemorial an explicit theme in *From Existence to the Existent*. But fatigue implies it, and it will be productive for how he formulates the trace later. That the I has devoted itself to putting its languishing body to work means nothing *now*, in the present. Existence demands, in each present, that one take up oneself newly (DEE 132,EE 76). As the I muscles a present into an instant of its existence, by the same token the I collapses under its weight. Muscles strain and slacken: *in* the instant itself, one who is fatigued has taken a step only to find herself farther from the next, which already encumbers with its fullness. Existence is unforgiving. The present is evanescent: it can never be captured *in* a present qua a unit of time (DEE 124-25,EE 71). Its departure toward a future present is consumed in an instant, that is, in the effort that the I has already given (DEE 131,EE 75). The present and the instant, then, are discrete or *partes extra partes* phenomena. They are ontological terms for Levinas meant to capture the emergent- or event-character of being: the emergence of an embodied self,

located within a situation and bearing all the conditions it implies, in order to establish a base for intentional consciousness.¹⁵³

The I's commitment to its embodied self is immemorial. That the present's evanescence grips the existent is, in each instant of its existence, absolute (DEE 133,EE 77). Prior to choice, freedom and enslavement, passivity and activity, having-to-be demands the I's total investment in itself. Written into human corporeity is a total giving without alternative: one cannot half-heartedly assume one's body (DEE 132,EE 76). When fatigue is too much, as when one finds an "unreal, inverted city...after an exhausting trip" (DEE 97,EE 54), the contours of things begin to blur, and the density of being in general barrels forth. Likewise, mentally fatigued, one stares blankly out of the window and sees not the field and trees, their branches, bark, and leaves, but matted blotches of color with limited depth. Experience is not *in the making*; one finds oneself *being absorbed into* a watching without intention. But one finds oneself so absorbed only

¹⁵³ Levinas' analyses account for how each of these emerge. Notionally, we can divide these events as the emergence of the embodied self (*soi*); of the I or ego (*moi*), a pre-thematic intentional consciousness; and of the I (*moi* or *je*), a thematic intentional consciousness. We can pull out a distinct sense of identity for these from Levinas' rich analyses. I am focusing, as he does, on the identity of the embodied self and the identity of the I (*moi*), or of ipseity, for short. Really, however, a subject of existence emerges all at once. In straightforward perception of an object, for instance, I have an intentional (if pre-thematic) sense of a 'myself' whose experience is localized and perspectival and whose abilities are finite on account of its embodiment, even as my limited perception of the object foreshadows its other aspects or views. Intentionality involves these folds of awareness—of my embodied self and of a pre-thematic intentional consciousness—all at once, as it were, even as tend to lose myself in focusing on the perceptual object. (I note that this short description of straightforward perception does not cover the sense of the identity of the I [*je*] in *From Existence to the Existent*. Whereas the I [*moi*] emerges in the present and is identified by the definitiveness of having to be an embodied self [*soi*], the I [*je*] emerges as the hope for non-definitiveness. The present is pregnant with the future, directedness toward the fulfillment of an escape from the irremissibility of being oneself. This occupies the final pages of Levinas' study. Whereas the study is primarily devoted to an ontological interpretation of the present and the instant in order to detail the emergent- or event-character of existence, he devotes the short, last part of the final chapter on the hypostasis to how time comes to the I [*je*] through eros and the promise of fecundity [DEE 147-65,EE 86-99, particularly DEE 158-59,EE 95]. I return to these in the next chapter. One must add, however, that Levinas does not strictly follow this distinction between the present-definitiveness of the I [*moi*] and the future directedness of the I [*je*] in *From Existence to the Existent*, and indeed even less so in his writings in the 1960s and 1970s when they, alongside the self [*soi*], are the central focus of his philosophical thinking, identity.)

after one has come to, so to speak, and gathered oneself once again. In each of these two examples, one risks falling too far, so to speak, into the objects of one's perception, closing the distance consciousness imposes and the perspectival potentialities that the body's position establishes in regards to the world. Consciousness puts a halt to this falling into indeterminateness and anonymity. One regains first personal experience and rejoins understanding oneself from the image of the forward flow of time and pragmatic concerns. But there is a price. Because it is out of the accomplishment of the body that consciousness emerges, a total devotion to one's body, however depleted one is, is the price paid to be a conscious, intentional ego (DEE 122-23, EE 69). The accomplishment—a body that localizes a *here*, a perspective on the world, of which the being-in-the-world (from which, according to Heidegger, spatial determinateness originates) is itself derivative—is the result.

The result of what? And when did it come about? Only *after* I have *already taken up*, once again, my fatigued body, despite my weariness. Lassitude indicates a refusal, a hesitation before having-to-be. As an attestation of the effort that I have already exerted, or better, as an attestation to having undergone an affect, I *experience* the weariness of fatigue only when I find how worn-out I've become. To be worn-out: that is to say, how weary of this *myself* I am. It is this sense that the thought of an I undergoing a past, never experienced, nor subject to recall, is intelligible. This past is the most intimate, the oneself, which, even in being weary, I must have already approached.

4. F. The Other-in-the-Same, or the Ordeal of Subjectivity, in *From Existence to the Existent*

In the extremes of fatigue—and in the affective undergoing generally that comes with the territory of being an embodied, sentient being—the body languishes as if powerless, as if it is, one might say, less than nothing. As it turns out, the phrase *less than nothing* is not merely colorful language, nor is it nonsense for Levinas. It has a concrete ontological meaning: when the I has nothing left to give, where any more giving is impossible, the I still gives *everything* it can muster in order to close the gap between it and its present having-to-be, that is, to assume that to which it is subjected, an embodied self. By contrast, the concept of nothingness is a pseudo-idea for Levinas.¹⁵⁴ The thought that a human body languishing as a *less than nothing*, beyond any capacity to passively undergo, yet still the exertion of *something* will return when I analyze sensation and what Levinas calls patience in Part Two of this chapter. For the moment, I want to use this to call attention to the other aspect of double possession, not the mastery the I gains over itself, but the grip existence exercises on the I. Double possession indicates how Levinas understands subjectivity in two senses in his later work, through the identity of identification (ego), on the one hand, and through the identity of ipseity (self), on the other hand. Needless to say again, his interest, as in *From Existence to the Existent*, lies in the latter.

4. F. (i.) The Embodied Self as the Key to Understanding the Other-in-the-Same

To be an I means not only the ‘I can’ of embodied consciousness or the pragmatic understanding that being-in-the-world involves. To be an I means, under affective stressors, the defection of one’s personal identity and its attributes in a total giving, one never chosen or experienced, while maintaining a grip on oneself. In this paradoxical

¹⁵⁴ In taking nothingness as a pseudo-concept, Levinas follows Bergson’s critique of nothingness in *L’évolution créatrice*, 273-98 (*Creative Evolution*, 275-98).

state of affairs, the I refuses what is most intimate, the embodied self, in a struggle to escape it and the concrete context that inflects it. Suffocating from fatigue's full presence, what lassitude refuses is the command to approach the other, *this* weary body. The drive to depart from this modality of being, to get out of myself, could not be more acute as when I am *most* myself. There is therefore a sense in which, at the extremes of affective embodiment, oneself is *another* while one remains the same. This is true even as, in the end, it's just *me*. Sentient embodiment means to suffer—from fatigue, joy, hunger, etc.—the other in the same. It lights up, so to speak, when the body languishes as if less than nothing. Here we see the other aspect, far more grave, of double possession: a subject of existence is subject *to* existence.¹⁵⁵ The structure—which no hypostasis can extirpate, since it is precisely *its* stability that, in existing, evacuates—that characterizes the identity of ipseity in *From Existence to the Existent* is the other-in-the-same. Even as this other is just the self, there is a sense in which the fatigued body remains *other* because I cannot depart from it.

The other-in-the-same is primarily how Levinas understands subjectivity over a quarter century later in *Otherwise than Being*. The question that occupies him is whether a meaning that does not derive from being is intelligible in subjectivity. This is a question integral to transcendence. To show Derrida that infinity beyond being is neither illegitimate, unintelligible, or ontotheological, Levinas argues that subjectivity *is* transcendence because it means substituting oneself for another along the lines I am suggesting in my reading of *From Existence to the Existent*. The question in *Otherwise*

¹⁵⁵ Levinas also expresses this other aspect of double possession, the hold existence has over the I (i.e., the terms of the contract for the signatory), when he remarks that the I "...does not go toward its existence, it is enthralled [*envoûté*] by it. *Possessed, existence possess it* [*Possédée, l'existence possède*; translation modified; my emphasis—PJG]" (DEE 74,EE 39).

than *Being* is whether this transcendence remains an immanent one.¹⁵⁶ But one need not leap ahead to this work for Levinas' riposte. In *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas mentions another structure of concrete transcendence. Fecundity already indicates substitution of the same for another, as I outline in Part Two of this chapter. In Chapter 5, meanwhile, I further develop fecundity and place it into its political context, totalitarian philosophies of applied eugenics, and see how in *Totality and Infinity*, it exceeds the literal father-son relation.

Languishing as less than nothing, the need to escape puts me into contact with the thought of a beyond my situated embodiment. It is no matter if it is my very situated embodiment, qua *other*, that thwarts this escape. I bear and endure the other in me, the fatigued body, *still*—i.e., in each instant of new effort—because I approach what is beyond me. Is this need to escape the embodied self ultimately for *my* salvation? Is it *my* beyond that I am after? It is difficult to see in this case how transcendence breaks through the hard crust of egoism. Levinas consistently understands egoism on a transactional model: what I give to another, I give because I get something in return. To put it in a very different ethical register, namely, Kant's practical philosophy, even fulfilling my moral obligation in conformity with duty can let satisfaction slip in: I can never know for certain whether my maxim was for the sake of duty alone.¹⁵⁷ However, Levinas'

¹⁵⁶ As if preoccupied by Derrida, Levinas at several key junctures in the book interrupts his own descriptions, putting his own claims of a beyond being reflected in the subject under suspicion. For example, in Chapter IV "Substitution", he asks if the first movement of double possession I am describing, in the end, wins the day: "But how does the passivity of the self become a 'hold on oneself'? If that is not just a play on words, does it not presuppose an activity behind the absolutely anarchical passivity of obsession, a clandestine and dissimulated freedom? Then what is the object of the exposition developed to this point?" (AE 144, OB 113) The answer, he continues, lies in the notion of substitution.

¹⁵⁷ Kant notes this lack of complete transparency of the motivational source of an agent's action in his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. There he remarks, "In fact, it is absolutely impossible by means of experience to make out *with complete certainty* a single case in which the maxim of an action otherwise in conformity with duty rested simply on moral grounds and on the representation of one's duty [my emphasis—PJG]" (*Akademieausgabe*, volume IV, [Berlin: *Königlich Preussische Akademie der*

description of the identity of ipseity does not presuppose the for itself of consciousness: the hypostasis must be wrought newly in each instant for consciousness to return to itself. Therefore we can at least raise the question here as to whether undergoing oneself involves transcendence, or whether it is only sketched out there, in human corporeity, on account of its frustration. I table further discussion of this until Part Two of this chapter. Minimally, I suggest that the approach of an infinitely other in the same is written into the ordeal, if not the experience (considered *straightforwardly* as something I can potentially exhaust by taking up a theoretical attitude) of subjectivity for Levinas.

4. F. (ii.) Two Views of the Subject: Double Possession as a Framework for Conceiving the Relation between the Major Works, *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*

By using double possession to frame our reading, we see how by subject Levinas can understand, on the one hand, the seat of the will, freedom, or power and, on the other hand, exposure, susceptibility, and intrigue. These two views of the subject map onto his two major works *in part*. Subject as the seat of the will, freedom, or power rules the day in the quasi-state of nature narrative of the bourgeois ego in sections I through III of *Totality and Infinity* (which is to say, in the bulk of that work): the ego eats and enjoys its way through the world until put into question, one fine day, by the face of the destitute other. Responsibility ushers it into sociality, the formation of institutions, and the

Wissenschaften, 1911], 4:407; *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* in *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 4:407). Kant says this in passing. The worry that underlies it is whether reason is a strong enough motive to legislate human nature (4:406). There is no example of a will acting from pure duty. If moral worth from duty is doubtful, then this invites the skeptic's criticism that morality is just a modification of self-love. For Levinas, this ambiguity, where I can never know "with complete certainty" whether I act for another for reasons that benefit me or, in contrast (and in Levinas' register), for a future that is not mine, has a very different stress and is far more important. My presentation of *Otherwise than Being* will highlight the role of this permanent ambiguity or equivocation in the subject's responsibility. Incidentally, it is on this point, and not on the question of the moral feeling of respect, as Derrida suggests, that a "systematic and patient confrontation" of Levinas with Kant should be organized (ED 145-43n.2, WD 314n.26).

problem of justice. But in section IV, where the analysis turns to fecundity, one is struck by a very different notion of the subject. The subject or ego finds himself vulnerable to and responsible for another where it never committed itself freely and where it works for a future in which the subject himself will not participate. The affinities of this view of the subject—exposed, susceptible, and caught up in an intrigue beyond themes—with the brief sketch of fecundity in *From Existence to the Existent* and *Time and the Other* are strong. Indeed, it is not surprising that parts of section IV of *Totality and Infinity*, such as “Transcendence and Fecundity”, were written around the same period as the earlier text. Does this mean that *Totality and Infinity*, where the Enlightenment subject figures prominently in the narrative of the face, on the one hand, and where fecundity weaves the subject into the plot of another (the father into the son’s, and conversely, the son into the father’s), on the other hand, is at odds with itself? Such a conclusion would leave the first major work, moreover, at variance with *Otherwise than Being*, where the Enlightenment subject and the narrative of the face have vanished from the page almost entirely.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Jacques Rolland argues in his *Parcours de l'autrement* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000) for a change of great magnitude in Levinas’ thought between the two major works. Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics”, he contends, drives this change. Many individual analyses testify to this in Rolland’s book; among them, see 19-20, 72-74, 86-89, 91-95, and 140-44. (Cf. also Perpich’s précis of Rolland’s position in *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008], 108-10). I argue that Derrida’s role is substantial, but suggest that the right reading of *From Existence to the Existent* brings out the affinities of the two major works. At the other end of the spectrum, given the reading Stephen Strasser presents in his *Jenseits von Sein und Zeit: Eine Einführung in Emmanuel Levinas Philosophie* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), the role “Violence and Metaphysics” plays in reorienting Levinas’ thought between *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being* is negligible (219-51). The “Kehre” in Levinas’ thought, he comments, is already present in the 1963 essay “*La trace de l’autre*” (“The Trace of the Other”), one year prior to the first publication of Derrida’s two-part essay (223). While not seeing a radical break, Strasser suggests that the methodological changes and conceptual innovations of *Otherwise than Being* follow because of Levinas’ devotion to a radical understanding of transcendence. (Cf. also Bettina Bergo’s précis of Strasser’s position in her *Levinas between Ethics and Politics: For All the Beauty that Adorns the Earth* [Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003], 135-36.) Notwithstanding their differences, what Rolland and Strasser presuppose is that there is indeed a radical change or turn in Levinas’ thought. If we follow the threads of the analysis of fatigue and of fecundity through the challenge “Violence and Metaphysics” presents to transcendence, we see that, while there is a turn, it is far more nuanced. In fact it is a *return* to develop resources latent in *From Existence to the Existent* and also a *return*

The theme of double possession, because in *From Existence to the Existent* it accounts for each view of the subject, suggests an alternative. I present this alternative along two paths. One connects this early text with the two major works through fecundity. This is my focus in Chapter 5, although I also provide a sketch of fecundity in Part Two below. While it is true that fecundity, the concretion of transcendence where infinity arises through the father's relation with the son, must pass through the erotic relation, the *formal model* of subjectivity that it offers need not.¹⁵⁹ The *I*'s fecundity exceeds the strict biological relation, father-son. The formal model is Levinas' first sketch of the subject as a substitution for another, the central notion of *Otherwise than Being*. Faced with the problem that infinity, in Derrida's words in "Violence and Metaphysics", is "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable" in philosophical language and the challenge that this represents for transcendence, Levinas does not return to the narrative of the face in *Totality and Infinity* but reworks fecundity into substitution (ED 168, WD 114).

to Levinas' desire in the mid 1930s to develop personal identity as a resource that responds to how political totalitarianism identifies persons.

¹⁵⁹ In *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*, Diane Perpich argues that the failure in *Totality and Infinity* of the figure of the feminine in the domestic and erotic relation to mediate and resolve the tension between the deaf bourgeois ego, on the one hand, and the imposition of the other's face, on the other hand, accounts for the radical notion of subjectivity as responsibility in *Otherwise than Being* and for the embrace of ambiguity in that work and several essays leading to its publication (108-23). Perpich's argument is persuasive. However, my point is that to jettison altogether the account of fecundity (without thereby normalizing the overt sexism it espouses) on account of the failure of the feminine to mediate between the terms Perpich sets up (the deaf bourgeois ego and the ethical relation with the face) neglects how Levinas conceives the radical notion of responsibility as the subject substituting itself for another. To account for the innovations—stylistic, argumentative, and methodological—of *Otherwise than Being* primarily by the failure of *Totality and Infinity* is to neglect the context of "Violence and Metaphysics" and its impact on Levinas' thought. Perpich goes so far as to say, "...were it not beyond the scope of the present work, I would argue that *Otherwise Than Being* is likely to be misunderstood should it be divorced from the questions raised (without resolution) in *Totality and Infinity*. Without the earlier work—and especially without its failure—responsibility in the later account is all too likely to be read either in falsely theologizing terms or falsely naturalizing ones [my emphasis—PJG]..." (110). There is much to be gained from Perpich's analysis. It is to her merit that she at least presents the main problems Derrida's essay leaves for Levinas (70-72). Her analysis only does not incorporate the identity of the I and self in *From Existence to the Existent* and Derrida's essay enough into how she accounts for the "deep thematic connections" that she claims to see between the two major works (110).

But to herald fecundity alone neglects the other resources of *From Existence to the Existent* from which Levinas draws to meet Derrida's challenging reading. When we frame the analysis of fatigue through the themes of double possession and rupture from and refastening to being, we account for subjectivity and proximity, respectively, in the later work. That is the path on which we find ourselves currently in Parts One and Two of this chapter.

4. F. (iii.) The Ordeal of Subjectivity. Subject as Host in *Totality and Infinity* and Subject as Hostage in *Otherwise than Being*

Exposure, susceptibility, and intrigue, which we will see in greater detail under my second theme, rupturing from and refastening to being, are terms that describe the subject in *Otherwise than Being* and in several essays leading up to its publication in 1974. Among the principal concerns of that work is to show how, against the dominant readings of subjectivity in modern philosophy (the seat of the will, freedom, or power), the subject flashes (*clignoter*) in these senses. Nonetheless, their import into the analysis of fatigue in the earlier *From Existence to the Existent* is warranted.¹⁶⁰ The second aspect of double possession, where the I must take on another to be personally identified, is the kernel of how Levinas comes to conceive subjectivity not as the structure of possible *experience* for a subject but as its *ordeal* or *test* (*épreuve*).¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ I say this even as I acknowledge that the terms *subject* and *subjectivity* in *From Existence to the Existent* are not explicitly taken in the sense that they will be beginning particularly with the 1968 essay "Substitution". In *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas understands them in a straightforward sense of an anthropological ontology, as when he comments of subjectivity appositionally that it is a "preeminence of the subject over being" (DEE 142, EE 84). That is, he understands them according to the first view of the subject I present above. He will come to rewrite *subject* and *subjectivity* as he rejects the categories of experience as tied to presence and the theoretical attitude in the description of infinity beyond being. He will turn increasingly, in other words, to explicating the subject according to the second aspect of double possession.

¹⁶¹ Whereas the ordeal of subjectivity is one of the primary themes of *Otherwise than Being* (even if Levinas uses the term *épreuve* itself only once in the book), Levinas indicates it already toward the end of *Totality and Infinity*. Suffering, not death (contra Heidegger), puts the subject's freedom and will to the

Already in *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas is cautious in using *expérience*, as when he describes the central idea of the book, the *there is*:

If the term experience [*expérience*] was not inapplicable to a situation that involves the absolute exclusion of light, we could say that night is the experience of the *there is* [translation modified] (DEE 94,EE 52).

Experience and its categories refer to possible cognition, which for phenomenology, means to make a theme present in the form of an ideal being or meaning.¹⁶² Cognition of being appears under a theme for intentional consciousness according to an already

“supreme test [*épreuve*]” (TI 216, TaI 239). To be sure, Levinas still understands the subject as the traditional Enlightenment subject vis-à-vis the will, freedom, and power, whereas in *Otherwise than Being*, the subject has already been dispossessed of this and other like attributes. This is because the later work operates almost entirely at the level prior to experience, that of the ordeal of the self, or the identity of ipseity. Regardless, the objective in this passage of *Totality and Infinity* is to mark the transition from the ethical encounter between the freedom and the will of an I and the face of the other to what is beyond this encounter. In the corporeal suffering, what is beyond the face comes to pass. To be more specific, Levinas introduces the link from the finite subject’s isolated suffering (like what I am describing using fatigue above) to a time of its non-definitiveness yet without its salvation, fecundity. Indeed, the time of fecundity, infinity, is the very reason I endure suffering. I will show how this is already at work in *From Existence to the Existent* when I return to the ordeal of subjectivity in my discussion of enduring sensation patiently in Part Two. Finally, François David-Sebbah is the commentator who has given the greatest attention to this important word, *épreuve*, for Levinas’ phenomenology of subjectivity. See his *Le épreuve de la limite: Derrida, Henry, Levinas et la phénoménologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), 173-88; *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas and the Phenomenological Tradition*, translated by Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 142-55.

¹⁶² As early as his 1972 essay “*Jacques Derrida: Tout Autrement*” (“Jacques Derrida: Wholly Otherwise”) and on several occasions thereafter, Levinas credits Derrida’s *Voice and Phenomenon* for putting into question the privilege that western metaphysics accords to the presence of the present for determining meaning. Levinas himself made gestures that seemed to align his philosophy with a metaphysics of presence in *Totality and Infinity* (e.g. discourse as the “pure experience” of the social relation or the proximity of the Other as a “revelation of an absolute presence”, TI 50, TaI 77-78). But the idea of infinity and the latent thought of the trace save him from this charge (see my Chapter 2 above). Levinas’ précis of Derrida’s deconstructive reading of Husserl are always laudatory. For instance, on the occasion of expanding his 1971 essay “*Le dire et le dit*” (19-48, and particularly 29) for Chapter II “From Intentionality to Sensing” of *Otherwise than Being* in 1974, Levinas adds a footnote praising Derrida’s translation of Husserl’s *Meinung* as *vouloir dire* in *Voice and Phenomenon* (AE 46n.23, OB 36n.23). He even happily adapts notions important to his own philosophy, like the passivity of the creature, to the new vistas Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence opens (NP 87, PN 60; cf. also DQVI 106-08, GCM 64-65; DQVI 181, GCM 116-17; and DQVI 58n.29, GCM 191n.40). It is not a stretch to speculate that, as Levinas himself grows more suspicious of intentionality as the exclusive structure of meaning, the presentation of the metaphysics of presence in *Voice and Phenomenon* makes him even more cautious in discussing experience and its categories. He explicitly rejects Husserl’s *Erlebnis* (*le vécu*), for instance, in *Dieu, la mort, et le temps* (*God, Death, and Time*), a work written within two years after the publication of *Otherwise than Being* and sharing similar concerns (DMT 218, GDT 186). I am suggesting that the embodied self in affective affairs like fatigue already indicate that Levinas is attentive to the inadequacy of experience, and, by extension, presence, for the determination of meaning. This suggests the thought of the trace, a past never present but whose absence still disturbs, which I cover below in 4. H. (For an overview of the metaphysics of presence, see my Chapter 1 above.)

grasped context of meaning, this *as* that. By presenting fatigue through the second aspect of double possession, we have already seen that this does not cover the identity of ipseity. Levinas only comes to *épreuve*, rather than *expérience*, later in his thinking. In a 1981 interview, he says,

I prefer the word ‘ordeal’ over ‘experience’, because the word ‘experience’ expresses always a knowledge of which the I is master. In the word ‘ordeal’ there is at the same time the idea of a life and of a critical ‘testing’ [‘*vérification*’] which exceeds the I which is its scene.¹⁶³

A proto-ontological account of personal identity does not slip the categories of experience, nestled as they are into networks of ideal meanings, in through the back door. In beginning with ipseity, a critical testing of the self, rather than with disembodied egoity or an I-world link, it shows the sense in which, *in* rising as a substantive, the I produces its own subjection to another. It is not only a possible object of cognition understood within an already constituted context of meaning. If being only appears through the working of a priori understanding, then ipseity does not appear: it is not a being. Nonetheless, there is evidence, like fatigue, of this ordeal. In a word, Levinas identifies the subject not as the host who welcomes the other—whether this other, if we take consciousness as our model, is practical, axiological, intersubjective, or any other possible cognition—but as the hostage of the other, as he does explicitly in *Otherwise than Being*.¹⁶⁴ This other is the embodied self, which, in some sense, remains wholly

¹⁶³ One finds this interview with Salomon Malka in the latter’s *Lire Lévinas* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 108 (IRB 97).

¹⁶⁴ The I as hostage to another, responsible even for the other’s free choices, faults, and misfortunes, is beyond concern for its being in *Otherwise than Being*. Concretely, it is responsibility (AE 11-12, OB 10). The ultimate meaning of responsibility is substitution. Slightly altering this, the thought of an I hostage to another being, the *oneself* that is not yet its *own*, is what I am describing above and attempting to correlate it to the later major work. It is indeed live as early as Levinas’ 1935 essay “On Escape”. John Llewelyn takes the need to escape as an “invitation” to escape one’s being in his *Emmanuel Levinas: The Genealogy of Ethics op. cit.* 13-14. His book keys us into the proximity of and development between “On Escape” and *From Existence to the Existent* (9-41). Llewelyn’s focus on the *self* is admirable and stands out among commentators. I can agree with, “One’s self is from the start the need to leave oneself” (14). But I take the

other in the I or same. This is why understanding how transcendence is written into human corporeity is critical for Levinas' response to Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics". A beyond being flashes *in* taking a position in being. But its meaning for Levinas does not resolve itself there. The subject, ex-posing itself, is a susceptibility¹⁶⁵ because it finds itself already caught up in an intrigue beyond that which it can make thematic.¹⁶⁶

Quite often in *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas contrariwise presents the subject as host. This is not lost on Derrida in "Violence and Metaphysics".¹⁶⁷ The

need to escape the self as graver than an "invitation". In the earlier essay, and especially in *From Existence to the Existent*, as I am making the case above, the I is hostage to the self. The self, in its turn, does not rest on any condition that would limit its exposure, susceptibility, and intrigue to the other. To be a one, an I, means to have already been substituted for another, inasmuch as the I is a self. Therefore the need to escape from oneself is meaningful not as an invitation but as the other's incessant disturbance through the conduit of having to be oneself. Levinas will find the value of the human being consists in approaching the other despite this disturbance rather than in an invitation to escape. This disturbance, where the I is a hostage of another (even if this other is itself), is what I am stressing in the second aspect of the phenomenon of double possession. The difference between Llewelyn's interpretation and my own may come down to the vantage point from which our respective readings proceed. Whereas his "invitation" might be read to follow from the vocabulary of *Totality and Infinity* (through the lens of Derrida's *Adieu*; see footnote 167 below), I am stressing the vocabulary of the later *Otherwise than Being* to make sense of Levinas' early works. It is to these philosophical developments that Levinas returns under the pressure of "Violence and Metaphysics". From my reading of the self as already substituted for another, it follows that, as I claim below, what it means to be a self already has the structure of the other-in-the-same. The structure of the other-in-the-same or subjectivity is key to Levinas' response to the central problem he gets from Derrida, namely, how, from the perspective of the same, to conceive infinity beyond being and the language of being.

¹⁶⁵ Levinas describes "my pre-originary *susception* [susception; translation modified]" to having been elected by the Good in the "Substitution" chapter of *Otherwise than Being* (AE 157, OB 122). He uses this term and susceptibility (*susceptibilité*) in that book, but the former goes more deeply because it is never an object of my power (a priest's office involves a susception to dispense the sacraments, not a susceptibility to them). Levinas contrasts susception with my free choice to do the Good. If I freely choose to do the Good, nothing prevents me from predicating myself of it. The risk is that I settle into the good conscience of having done my part. My responsibility would derive from negotiating terms with others, only going so far. In connecting *Totality and Infinity*'s fecundity with *Otherwise than Being*'s proximity and substitution in 5. C. (i.), we will see how my very egoism awakens me to the ultimate fact of the "pre-originary *susception* [susception]". I never leave the plane of an interested ego; in fact, I am happy for my needs. That is why, for reasons we will see, I can never assume this susception to the Good.

¹⁶⁶ As is often the case, Levinas' terms are precise: etymologically, *intrigue* is from the Latin *intricare*, to entangle or involve. *Intrigue* in French also means "plot", the complex interweaving of affairs (as in Greek tragedy, the most important of these affairs for Levinas are those that conspire against the agent and to which she is subject while escaping her knowledge), protagonists, and actions in a narrative.

¹⁶⁷ Three decades after the publication of *Writing and Difference*, Derrida at first sight doubles down on this interpretation of *Totality and Infinity*. In *L'mot d'accueil (A Word of Welcome)*, he says of Levinas' first major work, it "...bequeaths to us an immense treatise of *hospitality*" (AEL 49; AETL 21). This

passages upon which he concentrates imply an ethical encounter of the same and an empirical other, an already constituted intentional I assailed, suddenly, by the face of the beggar or widow, as I explained in Chapter 2. If one remains at the level of experience, whereby phenomena (real and ideal) only manifest themselves—*as* useful, *as* hostile, *as* indifferent; or *as* multiple, *as* wooden, *as* circular, etc.—through the a priori understanding of axiological, practical, and ontological meanings, then Derrida justly questions Levinas' right to speak of an *infinitely* other and, more generally, of a *beyond* being: Levinas undermines his own assertions with the ontological language he must use to make them.

However, Levinas' analysis of the same, or the I, does not *only* remain at the level of possible intentional experience. This means that the beyond being is not a theme of intentionality, some ideal being claimed or meant (*gemeint*, to use Husserl's term). Rather, Levinas' analysis of the same is tied to an irretrievable past and a future that is not its own. That is why the account of a need to escape, or of a transcendence in immanence that attends closely to the physical body and the affects that would seem to fissure an I from itself, is so important, even if transcendence as excendence *fails* in this case. In overlooking this, Derrida misses how it introduces the concrete structure of transcendence. The frustration of the need to escape opens onto fecundity. For Levinas, I endure fatigue or suffering more generally from out of the time of fecundity. In *Totality*

interpretation of *Totality and Infinity* as a treatise “of hospitality” has been influential among commentators, who have taken it as something of a banner under which to read all of Levinas' work. However, the analysis that follows Derrida's pronouncement is far more nuanced concerning this notion of hospitality. Derrida sees how the subject of *Totality and Infinity*, the host, is not straightforwardly the empirical same encountering the face of an infinitely other, as he did in “Violence and Metaphysics”. The host is caught in a “double bind” with regard to the other through Levinas' account of the third and justice (A 67, AEL 33). The structure of illeity in *Otherwise than Being*, which Derrida mentions in this regard, influences his insightful re-reading. It is unfortunate that commentators have not been attentive to this, persisting instead to read *Totality and Infinity* under the banner of hospitality. The problem then is that it remains irreconcilable with the subject as hostage in *Otherwise than Being*.

and Infinity, this is infinity. Infinity attests to my contact with a beyond being, the son who is and is not me, and the generations to follow beyond my time. Derrida overlooks the identity of ipseity in *From Existence to the Existent* in presuming it a straightforward ontological account of personal identity. Embodied ipseity is not a straightforward tale of experience: affective experience only attests to the immemorial ordeal of subjectivity as its residue. Derrida thereby misses that, even as the body frustrates the need to escape, there is a sense in which the identity of ipseity involves contact (rather than relation) with a beyond being that remains infinitely other, or infinity. For Levinas, knowledge of ontology is not the ultimate arbiter of the meaning of human corporeity.¹⁶⁸

4. F. (iv). Does Levinas' Intend to Offer a Transcendental Legitimation of Ego and Infinitely Other? A Partial Response to Derrida's Double Reading

It follows, importantly, that Levinas does not aim to offer a transcendental account of intersubjectivity. In "Violence and Metaphysics", Derrida, using the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* as his lens to interpret intersubjectivity in Levinas, finds the lack of transcendental legitimation in Levinas' description of the other, particularly his claim of an *infinitely* other, problematic. It is not a criticism: Derrida, certainly by the time of the publication of *Writing and Difference* (1967), would be the first to criticize the desire for a transcendental legitimation on

¹⁶⁸ Indeed, in the "Substitution" essay some two decades after *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas puts the same point in this way: "The fundamental concept of ipseity, while tied to incarnation, is not a biological concept. (Indeed, must not the original meaning of the 'lived body [*corps propre*]' be sought in the 'in itself' conceived as 'in one's skin'?) The ontological (or me-ontological) movement of contraction takes us further. It outlines a schema in corporeality which permits us to attach the biological to a higher structure" (RPL 496-97, BPW 87; cf. AE 139, OB 109). Opposing in turn Husserl's *Leib* ("*corps propre*"), which takes the body as the center of potential volitional action, and biology, which reduces the body to a present-at-hand object, Levinas understands human corporeity—contraction into oneself, where the I meets impotence and is denied escape—through substitution. I continue the account of how the frustration of being embodied individuates the I in *From Existence to the Existent* in Part Two below, and how the I is tied to another for whom it substitutes itself (fecundity) in the next chapter.

account of its tie to a metaphysics of presence. The transcendental phenomenology of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* is more of a foil for Derrida's double reading. So, rather than a criticism, I presented this in Chapter 2 as a major problem Derrida's reading bequeaths to Levinas.

That the I grows weary of the oneself in *From Existence to the Existent* suggests the other-in-the-same structure of subjectivity. This structure is not that of consciousness. For Levinas, consciousness follows a gnoseological model whose aim is knowledge of being and, in Derrida's terms, remains tied to a metaphysics of presence. What is placed before consciousness is, in principle, thematic. To be thematic means to take *as* a being and to aspire to bring it to its full presence for cognition.¹⁶⁹ Intentionality, after all, is about meaning. In sum, if one understands consciousness by the structure the other-in-the-same, then it aims at *knowledge of* the other. The other cannot remain infinitely other, as Levinas declares.

Levinas' claim, by contrast, is that not all meaning is gnoseological, which for him always refers to beings. He discovers the structure of subjectivity by investigating a non-philosophical experience, Who is this fatigued and weary I? It is the embodied self qua other. This motivates the description of how existence produces itself, in a past never present, as an individuated, determinate, and personal I. The intentional I of consciousness, before it can *posit* itself, must take a *position* in being. The ordeal of subjectivity is the bearing of a sensation and the production of the body. Levinas takes this production as an event in undifferentiated, neutral being. Affective experiences like fatigue, a residue of this ordeal of bearing a self, identify the I with another who remains other in the same in a strong sense (rather than a theme for potential cognition). So it is

¹⁶⁹ Inter al., see AE 31-32, OB 25.

through problem of *who the I is*, specifically, how a human existence produces itself as individuated, determinate, and personal, that Levinas first conceives the later structure of subjectivity, other-in-the-same. This *how*, a modality or manner of being, is an ordeal or test of ipseity arising from an experience of a *certain sort* rather than a transcendental account of ego and other.

Nevertheless, taking the long view on the developments of *Otherwise than Being* from vantage point of the earlier *From Existence to the Existent*, one sees the decisive role Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics" plays. Levinas will intensify his account of the ordeal through which the self puts the subject. This sheds any appearance of a transcendental account of I and other; indeed, we will see in Chapter 5 how Levinas intentionally prevents any such reading of his work.¹⁷⁰ It is no longer, then, the meaning of the identity of the *I (moi)* that Levinas is after, as in *From Existence to the Existent*, but the meaning of the identity of the *oneself (soi-même or soi)*. The focus remains on ipseity in *Otherwise than Being* but with an unparalleled concentration. Pressing on *who* the oneself is, Levinas will claim that it signifies a responsibility *for others*. Self, on his interpretation, is already substitution for another, beyond concern for one's own being. How does he arrive at this conclusion? He takes up, once again, the ordeal of embodied ipseity in *From Existence to the Existent*, arguing in *Otherwise than Being* that, *in taking*

¹⁷⁰ He does this, to anticipate my Chapter 5, primarily through embracing ambiguity or equivocation in his account, the ambiguity or equivocation to which his emphatic association of ideas (emphasis as a philosophical method) leads him. I do not wish to claim that Levinas never offers a distinct brand of phenomenological transcendental philosophy, only that the story for how to read him does not end there. *Otherwise than Being* in particular seems to subvert any transcendental method. The best argument in the literature that Levinas does in fact offer a transcendental philosophy is Michael Morgan's *Discovering Levinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 39-60. See also his *Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 36-58. While this latter work must call itself (by consequence of its publication series) an "introduction", it is, like all introductions worth reading, challenging, persuasive, and continues Morgan's admirable effort to create new avenues for Levinas' philosophy by bringing various figures from the pragmatic and analytic traditions to the table, so to speak.

a position in being, making a claim on existence—that it is *mine*—one is irrecusably bound to others. Already fecundity in *From Existence to the Existent* provides a model for how to conceive the difficult thought of substitution, oneself for another. I show how in Chapter 5 below.

My reading shows that it is Derrida's challenges to Levinas' notion of transcendence that *draws Levinas back* to his earlier philosophy, to the question of the I's identity. There is even truth in saying that, not only is it the case that Derrida discovers or sharpens his own style of reading philosophical texts—double reading, the problem of the closure, and even *différance*—by reconsidering Levinas' trace in the course of revising “Violence and Metaphysics” for *Writing and Difference*,¹⁷¹ but that Levinas *rediscovers the problem of the embodied self* in how he understands the challenges that Derrida's essay presents to his philosophy of transcendence. This motivates him to investigate once again the *identity of the I*, pressing it to the point where it becomes the problem of the *identity of ipseity*.¹⁷² The identity of ipseity testifies to the trace. Rather than the state of nature narrative of the fully formed Enlightenment subject and its encounter with the face that occupies the bulk of *Totality and Infinity* and dominates its discussion in the

¹⁷¹ Bernasconi suggests this in his “The Trace of Levinas in Derrida” 19-27.

¹⁷² One might object that there is nothing new in Levinas' investigation of the process by which identity is wrought. As late as the 1963 essay “The Trace of the Other”, Levinas speaks of the I as “identification *par excellence*”, from the first “the same—*me ipse*, an ipseity” (EDE 187,DIC 345). As it is the case that Derrida publishes “Violence and Metaphysics” the year following, I would mislead in saying that his reading causes Levinas to return to the problem of identity. One might even cite Strasser's reading in *Jenseits von Sein und Zeit* of a “turn” in Levinas' thought where Derrida evidently has a negligible role as support (see footnote 158 above). But in the 1968 publication “Substitution”, Levinas for the first time, as far as I can tell, distinguishes between the “identity of identification” and the “identity of ipseity” or the “identity of the oneself” (RPL 493,BPW 84). *Identification*, as in the “event of identification of the subject” in the 1947 work *From Existence to the Existent* or simply “identification” in “The Trace of the Other”, is in fact his preferred term for the process by which an existent accomplishes its identity, i.e., by which it makes its identity personal, at least up until 1963 (DEE 150,EE 88; EDE 187,DIC 345). What causes Levinas to renew the “tautology of *ipseity* [my emphasis—PJG]” as a distinct philosophical problem, such that it can no longer be an ontological account of the self? (EDE 187,DIC 345) In this regard, the publication of “Violence and Metaphysics” in 1964 and its republication (with substantial revisions and additions) for inclusion in *Writing and Difference* in 1967 should not be underestimated.

literature, the reflexive pronoun, *self*, becomes the focal point for developing the trace and responding to the charge that an infinity beyond being is “unthinkable, impossible, unutterable” in the language of being.¹⁷³ The very fact of being exposed to one’s body puts the subject through the ringer, so to speak, making it susceptible to the intrigue of infinity that arises in undergoing itself but whose meaning is not enclosed there. By returning to the identity of ipseity in *Otherwise than Being*, and not to the ethical encounter with the face, Levinas will justify the desideratum of his philosophy, transcendence as excedence.

Reading *Otherwise than Being* as in part a set of responses to “Violence and Metaphysics” accounts for the deep differences between it and the earlier *Totality and Infinity*. Commentators have offered differing views on how to account for the relation between the two works.¹⁷⁴ Further, by developing Levinas’ proto-ontology in *From Existence to the Existent*, we see that the innovations of the later work are not altogether surprising. I suggest how below through fecundity and the trace. This reading accounts not only for the deep differences between the two major works, but, additionally, underscores the philosophical notions *Levinas himself* thought it important to retrieve and

¹⁷³ In the first published version of “Substitution” (1968), Levinas comments, “The reflexive pronoun ‘itself’, or the self, *remains the great secret to be described* [translation modified; my emphasis—PJJ]” (RPL 498, BPW 88). That Levinas omits this intriguing promissory note from the reworked and expanded version of “Substitution” in Chapter IV of *Otherwise than Being* suggests that, to some extent at least, the “Substitution” chapter makes good on it.

¹⁷⁴ I have already named several: Rolland’s *Parcours de l’autrement* (see my footnote 158 above); Strasser’s *Jenseits von Sein und Zeit* (219-51; see my footnote 16 above); and Perpich’s *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas* (78-123; see my footnote 159 above). Further, see Bergo’s interpretation of how Levinas’ two major works relate in *Levinas Between Ethics and Politics: For the Beauty that Adorns the Earth*. In his *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), Adriaan Peperzak argues against Strasser’s notion of a “*Kehre*”. *Otherwise than Being* is rather an “intensification and radicalization of the thoughts reached in 1961 [i.e., in *Totality and Infinity*]” (7). The problem that leads to *Otherwise than Being* is that of language, namely, a language that can remain faithful to the ethical relation and transcendence (209-34). Peperzak is right to mention, if only in passing, that Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” besets Levinas with this problem, even if he misrepresents it with the terms “criticism” or “critique” rather than double reading (209 and 209n.1).

develop. Commentators tend to criticize fecundity or neglect the trace, whereas I see them, from the perspective of how Levinas understood “Violence and Metaphysics”, as the very motors driving the developments from *Totality and Infinity* to *Otherwise than Being*.

PART TWO. SECOND THEME: RUPTURE FROM AND REFASTENING TO BEING.

PROXIMITY AND IDENTITY WITHOUT IDENTITY IN *FROM EXISTENCE TO THE EXISTENT*.

If we now frame our reading of *From Existence to the Existent* through the second of the two themes I mentioned above, the rupture from and refastening to being, in the analysis of fatigue one finds the rudiments of a notion that Levinas introduces in his mature philosophy, proximity or nearness (*proximité*). Under the title general title “*Au-delà de l’essence*”, he delivers the lecture “Language and Proximity” in 1967 (published, also, in the same year), where proximity has pride of place, alongside the lecture “Substitution” (published in 1968), where substitution has center stage.¹⁷⁵ An overview of the composition of these lectures shows that they are companion pieces. Reading them suggests that their ideas on sociality and the ethical relation, respectively, call out for one another. This indicates that the central notions of Levinas’ mature philosophy, proximity and substitution, are intricately interwoven.

In Part One of this chapter, my goal was to show how subjectivity—formally, the-other-in-the-same where the other is neither a determinate negation of the same, nor does

¹⁷⁵ One finds proximity in the sense “Language and Proximity” gives it already in the 1965 essay “Enigma and Phenomenon”, but not yet as a theme of philosophical investigation (EDE 203-216; BPW 65-77). Levinas’ 1961 major work *Totality and Infinity* hints at proximity under the rubric of *fraternity* (TI 194, TaI 214 and TI 255-57, TaI 278-80).

it appear as a past present of the same, but remains infinitely other—already operates in the analysis of fatigue in *From Existence to the Existent*. I did this with an eye toward one of the central problems that Derrida gives Levinas in “Violence and Metaphysics”: What legitimates Levinas’ right to speak of an infinitely other? Subjectivity is one necessary component for understanding how Levinas’ notion of substitution in *Otherwise than Being* responds to this question. In Part Two of this chapter, I turn to another, proximity. The other’s proximity allows Levinas to make the argument in *Otherwise than Being* that subjectivity is already substitution—already a one-for-the-other, formally speaking—thereby responding to Derrida’s challenging reading of transcendence. Levinas first treads these pathways, subjectivity and proximity, in *From Existence to the Existent*. The occupation with the emergent- or event-character of being in this early text—how the I takes a position, emerges as an embodied self, and makes a personal claim on existence—is therefore of paramount importance to seeing how *Otherwise than Being* repudiates the framework in which Derrida tries to capture Levinas’ thought.

To look ahead, proximity in *From Existence to the Existent* brings out three features that characterize what Levinas will call in the “Substitution” essay the “identity of ipseity” or the “identity of the oneself”.¹⁷⁶ After I show in the first three sections of Part Two how proximity operates in *From Existence to the Existent*, these features will follow in the final section illustrated by the trace. But let me here provide a context for their description.

¹⁷⁶ RPL 491-97, BPW 82-87.

In the “Substitution” essay from 1968, Levinas asks the question at the center of his thought: Who must I be in order to give to another?¹⁷⁷ In *Otherwise than Being*, he answers with substitution, which, as he comments elsewhere, is the ultimate meaning of responsibility for another human being.¹⁷⁸ The structure of identity in substitution, one-for-the-other, challenges both ethical egoism and altruism. Recall my comments from the Introduction to this work. If egoism motivates my response to another in need, then I never really depart from concern for my being. By contrast, altruism threatens the loss of my identity if it means the outright denial of myself for another. If I seek to maintain some sense of myself through my altruism, it is far from clear how *I* can motivate a *denial* of myself without at once *affirming* myself. Thus altruism does not resolve the problem raised by egoism but simply affirms my egoism. Egoism and altruism, then, are only apparently alternatives. They are built on the same model of personal identity, in which what I give to another returns to me. I never depart from concern for my being.

Meanwhile, Derrida adds that philosophical language, ontology, undermines the very attempt to speak of an other who is beyond being and logos. But this is just what the question central to Levinas’ ethics, a question of transcendence, involves: an infinitely other. The strident force of Derrida’s reading, his insistence that Levinas legitimate his speech about infinity and its relation (or non-relation) to the same, drives Levinas’ mature philosophy of the I’s identity to new depths. One ought to see it in the context of Derrida’s challenge to transcendence: a positive infinity, beyond being and logos, is

¹⁷⁷ See Robert Bernasconi’s essay “What is the Question to Which Substitution is the Answer?” in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, edited by Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 234-51.

¹⁷⁸ See Levinas’ “*Questions et réponses*” (“Questions and Answers”) in DQVI 130, GCM 80.

“unthinkable, impossible, unutterable” (ED 168,WD 114).¹⁷⁹ The other must enter into a mediated relation with the same, whereby it loses its infinity. The problem this leaves Levinas is to show how to conceive a relation without correlation (grasping through a theme), or how infinity does not become a present term of the finite I through the motor of negation. In *Otherwise than Being*, subjectivity itself means to be a one-for-the-other (the structure of substitution), despite the risk this runs for one’s being, while remaining oneself. Substitution thus involves the finite I in a relation—yet to be defined—with infinity. If substitution is, as Levinas comments, the “germ” of *Otherwise than Being* (AE 125n.1,OB 193-94n.1), then in some sense the book itself is an argument to repudiate the framework in which Derrida tries to capture Levinas in the concluding remarks of “Violence and Metaphysics”: even to denounce philosophy, one has to philosophize. According to Derrida, one always, in fact, has to philosophize (ED 226,WD 152). Philosophical language, ontology, seems to preclude a model of identity that involves a beyond being. Levinas takes this to have the consequence that ontology is the ultimate source of meaning. It is against this consequence that *Otherwise than Being* vociferously argues.

¹⁷⁹ It is true, as I detailed in Chapter 2, that this conclusion about conceiving “Infinity” as “positive plenitude” appears as an addition to the republication of *Writing and Difference* in 1967. It is only a footnote in the 1964 version of the text. Perhaps a reader skeptical of my interpretation might say that Levinas, if he indeed read the earlier version, missed Derrida’s conclusion that “As soon as one attempts to think Infinity as a positive plenitude...the other becomes unthinkable, impossible, unutterable. Perhaps Levinas calls us toward this unthinkable-impossible-unutterable beyond (tradition’s) Being and Logos. But it *must not be possible either to think or state* this call” (ED 168,WD 114). Nonetheless, Derrida adds this conclusion it to a passage in the body of the 1964 version of the essay in which he already states something quite similar: “The positive Infinity (God)—*if these words are meaningful*—cannot be infinitely other [my emphasis—PJG]. If one thinks, as Levinas does, that positive Infinity tolerates, or even requires, infinite alterity, then one must renounce all language, and first of all the words *infinite* and *other*”. This passage, particularly the clause I emphasize, clearly shows that Derrida is already questioning Levinas on how he proposes to conceive the infinite or the other (as infinitely other) in a positive, meaningful way while maintaining the independence of these terms from ontological categories. Therefore, it is reasonable to think that Levinas is, upon reading the first version of Derrida’s essay, already keen on the problem of how to conceive a beyond being that does not rejoin being.

Formally, transcendence in *From Existence to the Existent*, twenty years prior to the publication of *Writing and Difference*, already offers a model for identity that involves a relation with infinity. As ex-cendence, to remind us of what I introduced above, transcendence toward the Good (*Bien*) beyond being involves a "...departure [*sortie*] from being and from the categories that describe it..." (DEE 9,EE xxvii). While the model involves a beyond being, the Good (*Bien*), ex-cendence and the Good (*Bonheur*, as in, welfare, happiness, prosperity, etc., and the concrete goods that are integral parts of these), Levinas continues, must nonetheless maintain a foothold in being. Transcendence is neither a theological structure that posits the Good (*Bien*) as a determinate being, nor mystical one that assimilates a finite I into an absolutely other. Rather, it takes place across scarce material relations, such as responsibility for providing others with sustenance, shelter, and opportunity (the Good as *Bonheur*). I am driven to give selflessly, so to speak, not out of kindness or to predicate myself of the good (wherein the trap of good conscience lies in wait), but because it is impossible to retain my interests given my complicity in bourgeois egoism. The most emphatic sense of transcendence is substitution, in which one is not only for another, but already another's hostage, responsible even for her freedom, faults, and miseries. The I is a hostage, Levinas will argue in *Otherwise than Being*, because *in* being, i.e., in taking a position with respect to existence and establishing a hypostasis, it is bound to all others, near and familiar, distant and unknown, those present and historically past, by *proximity*. One sees why the proto-ontology of *From Existence to the Existent* is integral to this argument. The I or subject inverts from a being, from one with a transactional regard for the world, into a meaning or a sense (*sens*) that is beyond being. This identity individuates the I as

for another, the very structure of responsibility for Levinas. This meaning beyond being, as I show below, is nonetheless intelligible. This shows that ontology, which Levinas understands in relations between egos through systems of exchange or through violence, is not the ultimate source of meaning.

Each of the next four sections has a central objective. I have already mentioned the first. I detail in 4. G. how the analysis of fatigue as the “slackening itself” in *From Existence to the Existent* suggests an ethical notion, proximity, in Levinas’ mature philosophy even if Levinas does not yet make it thematic. Whereas my focus above was on how the theme of double possession leads to subjectivity, here I use a second theme, rupturing from and refastening to being, in order to show how proximity operates in the analyses of the I and embodied self in *From Existence to the Existent*. In each instant of fatigue, one sees the dual, oppositional movements of cleaving or breaking up from being and finding oneself already bound or fastened up to the fate of another. Like subjectivity, proximity will be critical to understanding how substitution involves a relation with infinity. In the second, 4. H., I take a closer look at what one means by transcendence and make a concrete distinction between it and the thought of a beyond being that it must, by Levinas’ own criteria, involve. Levinas conceives what is beyond being as yet a sense or a meaning (*sens*). That means that, while the beyond being is not a phenomenon (Husserl’s intentionality), a being (Heidegger’s ontical category), the first being or the ground of beings (Heidegger’s ontotheology), or the being of beings (Heidegger’s thought of being), it is nonetheless rational or intelligible. I propose a formula for making intelligible a meaning whose source is not ontological, even if it arises in our relations with others. This formula is identity without identity. In the third section, 4. I., one sees

how a meaning of a beyond being is at work, so to speak, in the very descriptions of identity in *From Existence to the Existent*. I examine how enduring a sensuous givenness, or a sensation, overthrows the I's being into *sense*. Enclosed in tragic solitude, where the finite I, despite its constant struggle to emerge substantively, is dragged down by a suffering that no grip on oneself can manage, a relation with an infinitely other flashes. Finally, in 4. J. I use three features of what Levinas calls the identity of ipseity in the 1968 essay "Substitution" to describe and summarize the I's identity in *From Existence to the Existent*. This serves to create a bridge between that book and Levinas' *Otherwise than Being* more than a quarter century later.

4. G. The Structure of Proximity in *From Existence to the Existent*

The effort of the I to position itself as a body, that is, to enact the event of the instant as a present (DEE 124,EE 70), is never enough. In the very effort to gather up its body, fatigue builds and the I falls further behind the present that it has no choice but to assume, each time, newly. In *making* effort, effort *wanes*; and, assuming the *instant*, *distance* gapes. But fatigue is not simply the cause of this waning or distancing. To adapt slightly Levinas' imagery, *in the very slackening* of her grip on a heavy bag, the tired traveler *tightens* her grip (DEE 42,EE 18). Fatigue is not just the cause of slackening, but the *stiffening up* or the *digging in* of the body against an obstacle. This digging in is characteristic of fatigue when "torpor [*engourdissement*]" sets into the body. Fatigue is the "slackening [*relâchement*]" itself. One must read in this slackening the internal dialectic of the instant, distancing from the oneself *in* the very effort of approaching.

This is the kernel for how Levinas will formulate proximity, rupture from being and refastening to another, two decades later in "Language and Proximity" and after that

in *Otherwise than Being*. The idea is that, as fatigue grows, torpor sets in: in falling behind oneself, one finds oneself stubbornly plodding ahead. The price of existence goes up: the I gives in order to be, but every lunge forward out of weariness saps its strength, demanding that the I give *more* as its lag behind itself gapes. Although Levinas does not put it this way himself in *From Existence to the Existent*, *giving* in this case must be gratuitous: encumbered with the other, the self that weights me, I find myself having already approached it, but falling further behind with each push. I do not, strictly speaking, experience this giving. This is why it is gratuitous—I have not anticipated or expected anything in return. I only know it when I consciously reflect on what just happened, make the heavy ontological present a unit of *time*, that is, suspend the incessant recurrence of bearing myself and see, notwithstanding my consistent output, just how enervated I have grown. There, I have rejoined intentionality, and my being appears to me under themes. As in the later notion of proximity, every approach that the I finds itself making increases the distance to the other who has called it forth: the more effort I give, the more I flag; the more I lag behind, the more effort is exacted of me. So of proximity's ethical structure: the more I give to another, the more I individuate myself as responsible for her. This *breaking up from* being, a disruption of intentional consciousness, at once *pulls me nearer* to the other who encumbers me.

4. G. (i.) The Affective Residue of Proximity: Disturbance

Levinas will develop the sense of this being bound even more tightly to another despite her withdrawal in his 1965 essay “*Énigme et phénomène*” (“Enigma and Phenomenon”) as a disturbance (*dérangement*).¹⁸⁰ Disturbance is an affection without

¹⁸⁰ EDE 203-216, BPW 65-77. That Levinas cites “Enigma and Phenomenon” in *Otherwise than Being* as many times as “Language and Proximity” is telling of its importance (he cites it four times: AE 11n.6, OB

intentionality. There is no experience of the other who disturbs my order. She is not a phenomenon, which presupposes the understanding of meaning. She is an enigma. An enigma disturbs by having departed. But the affection, disturbing my composure, remains. My reflection on it—attributing to it a cause, identifying it with a name—does not calm my ongoing affection. By withdrawing, it troubles without toppling my order. Adapting a famous line from Eugène Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano*, Levinas expresses this when he says, “...someone rang and there is no one at the door: did anyone ring?” (EDE 208,BPW 70)¹⁸¹ In *Otherwise than Being* nine years after “Enigma and Phenomenon”, Levinas will intensify the ongoing sense of disturbance with several terms, like restlessness (*inquiétude*) and obsession (*obsession*), while continuing also to use disturbance. He will use disturbance, restlessness, and obsession as the affective senses of his ethical terms, like proximity and substitution. This is how one should understand statements like “Proximity is disturbance of memorial time” (AE 113,OB 89). The source of the disturbance, an enigma rather than a phenomenon, flickers in the subject only ambiguously or equivocally.

Thus, we may say that disturbance is an affect or sensation of proximity, a ripple through my order that I cannot recuperate despite already drawing near it, as when my concentration is broken up, abruptly, by someone who rang. If someone is at the door, the disturbing ring would dissipate. A new order, with new intentional foci, thematic and

187n.7; AE 15n.8 and 9,OB 187n. 10 and 11; and AE 163.29,OB 198n.29). One expects this of “Language and Proximity”, since it was first delivered as “Proximité” with the essay “*La Substitution*” (the “germ” of *Otherwise than Being*) under the general title “*Au-delà de l’essence*” over two days in 1967 at the *Faculté Universitaire Saint-Louis* in Brussels. “Enigma and Phenomenon”, particularly its notions of disturbance, enigma, and trace, are integral to my reading of *Otherwise than Being*.

¹⁸¹ Cf. “signifyingness [*signifiance*]” as an “irremissible disturbance” in “The Trace of the Other” (EDE 198,DC 355) and “Meaning and Sense” in HAH 64,BPW 59. (NB: the final pages of the 1963 essay “The Trace of the Other” are largely, although not entirely, the same in content as the final section of the 1964 essay “Meaning and Sense”. Cf. EDE 197-202,DIC 354-59 with HAH 62-70,BPW 59-64.)

unthematic, would organize itself. But no one is there. Another's ring draws me toward the door, and when I realize that my expectations are not to be met (neither by a misapprehension nor a delusion—I could not be more sure of the ring I just heard), her departure continues to demand: “did anyone ring?” The errant ring resounds in my body's cavity as I return to pick up the thread of my work. Withdrawing from my experience, and despite the effort I have given to reach her, the other as enigma exacts more of me. The doorbell's ongoing disturbance, still troubling my efforts to resume my order, attests to this in a special way: it attests not to the sign of an absence, but to the trace of another who did not intend to leave her mark. She is already passed, a past beyond the recall of memory, but continues to disturb my order. In this sense, every sign is a trace because human tenderness has already spread over all things and woven me into a plot greater than my concerns.¹⁸²

What this example shows is that the other's proximity disturbs me without having entered the present as the form of my experience. “The great ‘experiences’ of our life have never properly speaking been lived”, as Levinas comments (EDE 211, BPW 72). Just as in the proto-ontological account of rising as an existent in *From Existence to the Existent*, where fatigue attests to what must have already occurred in a past that the I cannot access, namely, its rupture from themes and fastening to another, the self, so disturbance avows my responsibility for another prior to the subject as seat of the will, freedom, and power. Indeed, self-interest cannot account for my approaching the door;

¹⁸² These last thoughts, meant to introduce the notion of the trace, may appear, at this stage in my presentation, enigmatic. I return to the trace in greater detail below and in Chapter 5 (for Levinas' discussion of trace and sign, see HAH 80, BPW 62; for his discussion of trace and *tendresse*, see EDE 228, CPP 119). The link between trace and tenderness—the vulnerability of others, which Levinas speaks of metaphorically as the skin open to sensual affection or wounding, spreads over every object I can claim as mine—is of particular importance because it shows that proximity is not merely an ethical concept (between two, I and another) but at once a social one.

rather, my approach avows a notion of subjectivity as exposure and susceptibility to an intrigue that exceeds themes. Furthermore, my approach only increases the sensation disturbing me. That no one is at the door does not calm it. Breaking up my concerns, breaking up even my perception of her *as* this or that, the other's ring fastens me more tightly to her. Despite her absolute non-presence, I have already obeyed her command.

The interruption of my order, the break with my concerns and intentionality, where I find myself drawing nearer to another, *presupposes*, moreover, that I was already bound to her. Otherwise, how could what cannot appear as an object of consciousness, an enigma, affect me? This is a critical point for Levinas' notion of proximity. The untying of being presupposes that I was already fastened to another, but now (with the ring at the door) more tightly. What flickers in this refastening is not a greater resolve for my work or a heightened moral awareness. What flickers is a sense beyond being, my affection by another, never present, despite my concerns for myself. This thought of the trace will be of paramount importance for how Levinas responds to the challenges concerning the infinitely other and transcendence in "Violence and Metaphysics". He first opens this pathway of a sense or meaning beyond being in the analysis of fatigue as the "slackening itself" in *From Existence to the Existent*. The very structure of proximity and a meaning beyond being, I am showing, is at play, if not made a theme in its own right, in this early book.

4. G. (ii.) Fatigue as Disturbance in *From Existence to the Existent*

In fatigue, the rupture from existence is particularly acute. It *feels like* the self is breaking up from the intentional I of consciousness. As the burden increases, always a bit more than the effort the body can give, separation becomes like a smothering. In *From*

Existence to the Existent, this nearness is the *too much* or the excessive pathos of the self that I, exposed all the more by fatigue qua slackening, undergo. My personal identification, the usually unproblematic claim that indexes this self to me—the *mineness* of my identity—breaks up under the self that disturbs me. This break up must be understood without any alienation of the I from itself. It is the *I*, its very “drama”¹⁸³ of being, i.e., taking a position vis-à-vis existence, that fuels or—to take another term that Levinas later develops with stress on its etymological sense—*inspires* this disturbance. We speak for descriptive purposes of a duality, the drama of I and self in the instant, only on account of the affective senses of Levinas’ ethical terms. That is to say, there is a duality only because there is another human being. Levinas’ proto-ontological account thus does not rejoin Cartesian thought-extension dualism in an effort to escape the climate of Heidegger’s philosophy; rather, the drama of I and self is at once a unicity. But it is far from the empty tautology, ‘I am I’ (DEE 150,EE 89). In proximity, to exist means to be disturbed incessantly by another. Proximity’s structure is already at work in fatigue as “slackening itself”.

Levinas understands proximity in his later work as an ethical notion that expresses the bind in which the I finds itself, *further separated from* the other with each effort to approach her, yet, for all that, still disturbed by the other so *near* that she is as if closer to me than my skin, under my skin.¹⁸⁴ Just as in fatigue, where the distance from the oneself

¹⁸³ “Fecundity is part of the very drama of the I [*moi*]” (TI 251, TaI 273). Levinas uses “*drame*” in section IV of *Totality and Infinity* to describe the I’s fecundity and also to describe infinite time. Whereas drama in one sense is suitable to describe the relations beyond the face that involve the I (erotic subjectivity, fecundity, fraternity, and infinite time), the sense of *action* that it evokes is altogether inappropriate (TI xvi n.1, TaI 28n.2). Therefore one must not read in drama the I’s act, or something that the I intends or chooses to do, but something to which it is subjected.

¹⁸⁴ Many commentators emphasize the *first* of these aspects of proximity, rupture. This is likely under the influence of *Totality and Infinity*, in which ontological separation is integral to the idea of infinity (which guides Levinas’ analysis), the idea of infinity to atheism, atheism to the life of the ego, and the life of the

consequent in the instant in no way connotes a spatial location, proximity as the untying of the same and finding itself fastened to another in no way supposes as its starting point two empirical egos, same and other, encountering one another in the world. Same and other are not straightforward ontological terms. Recall that in “Violence and Metaphysics” Derrida wants to take them in that way to perform his double reading. But this misses Levinas’ primary focus: it is not merely the alterity of the other, but the alterity of the other *in the same*. Similarly, it is not merely the infinitely other, but how the infinite is produced *in the finite without* rejoining it. The “beyond” the totality and objective experience, as I have already mentioned in quoting Levinas from the Preface of *Totality and Infinity*, is “...reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience” (TI xi, TaI 23).

In truth, the passages upon which Derrida’s commentary rests in sections I, II, and especially III of *Totality and Infinity* may lead one to the conclusion that same and other are to be taken straightforwardly, i.e., as standing always in relation to one another

ego to habitation, labor, and property (on the requirement of separation for the idea of infinity, see TI 24-26, TaI 54-55; on atheism and the ego, see TI 29-30, TaI 58; on the life of the ego, or egoism and enjoyment, see TI 81-92, TaI 109-120; on habitation, labor, and property, see TI 125-149, TaI 152-74). This goes for even the best readers of Levinas’ work, like Paul Ricœur. Ricœur is entirely right to emphasize *hyperbole* as part and parcel of Levinas’ philosophical argumentation. It is, as he says, a “systematic practice of *excess*”, and not merely a figurative style or a literary trope (see Ricœur’s *Soi-même comme un autre* 388-89; *Oneself as Another* 337). Indeed, as I noted above, Theodor de Boer had already pointed this out to Levinas in a dialogue in 1975. Perceptively, De Boer notices new philosophical methods, one of which he calls the “exaltation of language”, in *Otherwise than Being* from the year prior. Levinas then takes up “exaltation” in the subsequent discussion as what he calls exasperation or emphasis in that work (even as he goes on to dampen the philosophical value of a reflection on method) (DQVI 138-43, GCM 86-90). This is similar to what Ricœur means by hyperbole. Ricœur says that it is paradoxically a hyperbole on the side of the same (separation) that leads to hyperbole on the side of the other (exteriority). But here the two, same and other, end in an “impasse” (SA 390-91, OA 339). He concludes, “In truth, what the hyperbole of separation renders *unthinkable* is the distinction between self and I, and the formation of a concept of selfhood defined by its openness and its capacity for discovery [my emphasis—PJG]”. In other words, Levinas ends up eliminating the I’s capacities: I vanishes into self, and self is entirely absorbed into the other. Paradoxically, then, it is the hyperbole of *separation* or rupture from being that, on Ricœur’s reading, leads Levinas to the utter loss of the I and, consequently, any meaningful notion of the role of selfhood in personal identity. To the contrary, my reading of proximity, rupture from being and refastening to another, *preserves* the difference of the other *in the very position* that the same takes in being.

mediated by an understanding of ideal meanings. This is in part the fault of Levinas' quasi-state of nature presentation in the first major work, as I explained above. On Derrida's reading, it is beyond the capacity of our Greek philosophical language to translate the arresting experience of the immediateness of the face in the way that Levinas suggests. Levinas places it beyond being, and it remains unclear to Derrida how a beyond being is meaningful. Is it not the case that what is beyond being, in order to be comprehensible, presupposes an a priori understanding of meaning? Meaning is ontological. The beyond being, then, is an object of intentional consciousness, a *this* taken *as that*. This reading is particularly persuasive if one neglects the developments Levinas proposes in section IV of that work, "Beyond the Face", like fecundity and fraternity.¹⁸⁵

By contrast, the alterity of the other *in* the same, and not the alterity of the other *in relation to* the same, is far more explicitly where the focus falls in the 1947 work *From Existence to the Existent*. In investigating the identity of the I through the internal dialectic of the instant, Levinas is arguing that being an I already implies being another, and not for oneself, but for another, without the I losing its foothold in being. This is the case inasmuch as the self ceaselessly disturbs the I, indeed, all the way to the point at which the I is exhausted of its power to put an end to its disturbance: withdrawing from presence, no theme captures the other. Disturbance disrupts intentionality, or, ruptures being. *But proximity goes further: in being*, the I inspires *its own* disturbance, fastening me to another I must have already approached. *Otherwise than Being* argues for this thesis vociferously, if not always in the most straightforward terms, as I will explain in

¹⁸⁵ As I mentioned above, it is not incidental that some subsections of section IV of *Totality and Infinity* were written around the time of *From Existence to the Existent*. For instance, "Transcendence and Fecundity" was written in 1948, whereas *Totality and Infinity* was published thirteen years later.

the next chapter. The other-in-the-same, the very structure of the I's identity, means a rupture from and an incessant disturbance of the same by the other so near that she is as if under my skin. Thus the I's identity must be understood through this notion, which is that of proximity in *Otherwise than Being*. It is already at work in *From Existence to the Existent*, where Levinas first describes it as arising from the concrete experience of the hand "...slackening [*lâche*] in the very instant it tightens its grip [translation modified]".

4. H. Concrete Transcendence or A Beyond Being?

How Identity Without Identity Offers a Formula for Non-Ontological Intelligibility

Understanding how proximity is at work in the analysis of fatigue as the "slackening itself", one can speak here, as Levinas does of dilatoriness, of a "bad conscience" of fatigue (DEE 33,EE 13). This is not the bad conscience that regrets avoiding or regrets only a half-heartedly fulfilling a normative obligation that the conscious I intends. It is rather the torpor characteristic of fatigue, where one, languishing, digs in each time before what one *has to be*, this onerous body. In *From Existence to the Existent*, no burden can be nearer, yet none farther away, than the very self whose excessive pathos the I undergoes just by being. In having to be, the existent gets worn down, fatigues itself, in the way that I explained proximity to the other disturbs one incessantly. The I is individuated by such a pathos: it is a one, or a oneself. Where personal identity comes apart, there is no *me*, a self that is *mine*, of which to speak. So we are in a territory unfamiliar to anthropological ontology: a connection with the world, let alone the sovereign I, has not yet established itself. The one or oneself, less than nothing, is not a being; at least, it is only from ontology that for Levinas it derives its significance.

The description in 1947 of the I's identity is what in 1968 Levinas retrieves as the identity of ipseity or self-recurrence in the "Substitution" essay, where the focus is far more explicitly on the meaning of this *oneself*. The oneself is not yet for itself, as Levinas puts it, because the for itself presupposes an indexing or return (RPL 492, BPW 84; cf. RPL 498, BPW 88). It is, in the sense I described the fatigued body in 4. F. above, a *less than nothing*. He describes self-recurrence as the "negativity of the *in itself*", where negativity is not dialectical (i.e., accomplishes no positivity), and as "...nonbeing, but on this side of being and nothingness thematizable as being" (RPL 496, BPW 86-87). One might say of Levinas' use of *one* or *oneself* what Husserl said of subjectivity's time-constituting flow as absolute in *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*: "For all of this, we lack names".¹⁸⁶ How is this self, allegedly non-phenomenal or athematic, intelligible?

If proto-ontology is careful not to presuppose identified beings but rather attentive to how they emerge as events from undifferentiated, neutral being, it follows that the pathos that the I undergoes is never, properly speaking, experienced, which is to say, never present or brought to cognition by the recall of memory. There are no horizons for its reception; only the affective residue it leaves remains, like disturbance or fatigue. Its sense or meaning is to be for another, even if this *for another*, from our reflective standpoint, is just *me*. The proximity of the I cleaved from the themes of personal and determinate being and bound to the athematic self suggests transcendence. In section 4. F. above, I wanted to show how transcendence in a certain sense is written into human corporeity. This is a critical point that Derrida neglects. I referred to this as transcendence

¹⁸⁶ Zur *Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (*Husserliana* volume X) § 36, 75 (*On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* § 36, 79) and especially *Beilage VI* (*Husserliana* X 112-15, PCIT 116-19) of the same work.

in immanence: the need to escape from being that affective stressors like fatigue, pain, and even joy animate and the frustration of falling back under the weight of embodiment. Levinas' idea in *From Existence to the Existent* is that the drama of I and self gets its meaning, ultimately, from elsewhere than ontology: it involves a beyond being and logos. Above I tabled a discussion that I want to take up now. This is the question as to whether undergoing the finite, tragic solitude of oneself, the need for escape and its frustration, is a concrete transcendence, or whether it is only sketched out there, in human corporeity. Is it the case that in the very instant of fatigue, in the "slackening itself", a beyond being flashes? If it does, how are we to make what is athematic intelligible?

4. H. (i.) Intelligibility and a Beyond Being in Levinas, Kant, and Husserl

For purposes of clarity, let us split apart notionally what is really inseparable in Levinas' thought: a beyond being, on the one hand, and transcendence, on the other hand. Levinas conceives what is beyond being and logos as yet a *sense* or a *meaning (sens)*. As a sense or a meaning, it must be intelligible or rational. But it exceeds themes, even as ontological discourse immediately reabsorbs or retracts it once it is *said*. Quite often he names *infinity* or *other (autre and autrui)* the beyond being. That there is a claim for a non-thematizable intelligibility of a beyond being is not altogether unfamiliar in western philosophy. In the lecture courses from 1975-76 published together under the title *God, Death, and Time*, Levinas points to how Kant thinks the transcendental ideas *in concreto* yet denies them being (DMT 70-72, GDT 60-61). To be sure, with the transcendental ideal in the theoretical philosophy, Kant rejoins ontotheology (DMT 178, GDT 154). But in the practical philosophy, a "rational", "*a priori*" hope arises in reason where it demands the immortality of the soul and God's existence (as pure practical postulates) in

order to resolve the problem of virtue's accord with happiness (DMT 74,GDT 63). On Levinas' interpretation, this hope is not bent on a will to survive or a desire for immortality. Not only would morality not escape egoism in this case; it would be, further, a subset of ontology, where hope derives its meaning from the question of *to be* or *not to be*. The motivation for a rational hope shows that reason, by its own need, produces the thought of a time *beyond* my time, where I cannot cognize it on account of the strictures of the theoretical philosophy, yet *in* my finite existence. With rational hope, Levinas argues for the intelligibility of a meaning of time where finite being is not the ultimate arbiter even as it impossible to conceive without it.

Derrida announces in the introductory remarks of "Violence and Metaphysics" that he will resolve himself to an "incoherent" reading (ED 125,WD 84). He presumes, without criticizing, the incoherence of Levinas' thought because that is how one must read Levinas in order to follow his thought to the point at which philosophical language betrays it.¹⁸⁷ In contrast to such remarks, Levinas maintains in *God, Death, and Time* that the "...discourse on the beyond of being...sought here intends to be *coherent* [my emphasis—PJG]" (DMT 144,GD 126). To conceive a beyond of being and logos is not to give up on intelligibility. We see in the example of rational hope how the coherence of this thought is quite different from another important interpretation of reason's ideas, namely, Husserl's idea in the Kantian sense in *Ideas I*. As I showed in Chapter 1, the idea in the Kantian sense is the complete determination of a thing. This ideal meaning regulates a thing's profiles and contexts, making perception a seamless synthesis in any direction perception leads me. On the reading for which I argued, Husserl's Idea in the

¹⁸⁷ For further discussion and the choice Derrida faces in his reading, see Lawlor's *Derrida and Husserl* 153-54.

Kantian sense is an actually given infinity in experience (even if Husserl notes that we have only inadequate evidence for it). But the introduction of this metaphysical idea of an actual infinity in experience, even if altogether different from the infinity a dogmatic, pre-critical metaphysics conceives, ultimately serves the primacy of the doxic thesis: it gives us knowledge about *beings*.¹⁸⁸ Levinas' thought of a rational hope in Kant's practical philosophy sharply contrasts with this interpretation of an actual infinity. Despite the merit of Husserl's Idea in the Kantian sense, we can at least understand Levinas' pronouncement that, "Since Kant, philosophy has been finitude without infinity" (DMT 45, GDT 36).¹⁸⁹

In sum, the thought of a beyond being in Levinas, as a sense or meaning, must be intelligible or rational. What we lack is a form for an intelligibility whose meaning being's themes do not resolve. Meanwhile, that from which the beyond being is really inseparable, transcendence, structurally *involves* a beyond being as a necessary condition. As I explained in my introductory remarks to this chapter, as ex-cendence, transcendence is a movement that departs from being and its categories yet maintains its foothold in being. According to the interpretation of *From Existence to the Existent* that I have been presenting, a beyond being, or infinity, flashes *in* taking a position in being. Hence, again, the question I would like to consider: is corporeity or the embodied self *already* transcendence?

¹⁸⁸ For this explanation, see Husserl's *Ideen* [b] § 117, 268-72, particularly 272, *Ideen* § 117, 278-82, particularly 282.

¹⁸⁹ The context in this passage is not Husserl but Heidegger. In discussing Heidegger's existential structure of being-towards-death, where an understanding of being and nothingness is the source of all meaning, Levinas observes, "In no way is the infinite (which perhaps brings thinking closer to diachrony, to patience and length of time) ever suggested by this analysis. Since Kant, philosophy has been finitude without infinity". While I am sure, given his presentation of Husserl in Chapter II "From Intentionality to Sensing" of *Otherwise than Being*, that Levinas would apply this remark to Husserl as well (this is how I present it above), I have my doubts as to whether Levinas' wholesale indictment of philosophy since Kant does justice to the actually given infinity of Husserl's Idea in the Kantian sense.

4. H. (ii.) A Closer Examination: Concrete Transcendence and a Beyond Being through Trace and Fecundity

For Levinas, the solitary subject in *From Existence to the Existent* does not achieve transcendence *concretely*. I have argued that Levinas' descriptions of ipseity make the case for the thesis that to be an I means to be for another without yet being for oneself. Proto-ontology shows that the immemorial *for another* is older than the recallable *for oneself*. One already detects the structure of the trace in *From Existence to the Existent*. I will have occasion to return to it in Chapter 5 when I discuss fecundity and a *certain sort* of experience of infinity (namely, desire for the other) in *Totality and Infinity* in greater depth. It is one of two takeaways from this early work that Derrida overlooks. But this other, from the reflective standpoint, is just *me* or *myself*. It remains unclear, at least during this period of Levinas' thought, how by the identity of ipseity the I is responsible *for others* beyond a responsibility for its body that, as my analysis of double possession shows, it cannot, properly speaking, be said to assume. I return to how Levinas makes this argument in *Otherwise than Being* through the thought of the trace below in 5. C. (i.). A responsibility for others not assumed—i.e., giving across scarce material relations without return—is concrete transcendence. Levinas continues to maintain this as the concretion of transcendence in *Otherwise than Being* (AE 12-13, OB 10).

Nonetheless, the frustration of transcendence in human corporeity, or transcendence in immanence, is critical for how Levinas, under the challenging reading Derrida gives in "Violence and Metaphysics", *reconceives and expands* transcendence in *Otherwise than Being* (1974) and in several essays leading up to its publication after

Totality and Infinity. I detail this in 5. C. (i.) below. If we keep in mind how subjectivity, the other in the same, and proximity, rupture from themes and refastening to another, are at work in *From Existence to the Existent*, then we see that this reconceived and expanded notion of transcendence does not put the central desideratum of Levinas' thought at variance with itself. Proximity to others in the publications after *Totality and Infinity* and especially in *Otherwise than Being* underwrites the account of the identity of ipseity: in taking a position in being and furnishing a spot in the sun for myself, have I not already oppressed someone?¹⁹⁰ Proto-ontology shows that guilt of a *certain sort* is an irremissible outcome of being an I. This affective disturbance—which, in a sense I will explain in detail in section 4. I. below, exceeds themes and my self-interest—is produced *in* taking a position in being. Thus a beyond being flashes in the identity of ipseity, but now *ambiguously* or *equivocally*. There is a sense or meaning of transcendence that is not, strictly speaking, concrete and is integral to understanding how *Otherwise than Being* offers a set of responses to Derrida's reading. To be a self means to be bound to others even before being bound to the pathos of one's body: one cannot take a position in being without having already approached others, welcoming, harming, or—

¹⁹⁰ Here I am adapting two remarks Levinas makes later. First, a question, whose intention is not rhetoric, that Levinas asks in an interview from 1981 with Salomon Malka: "In being has one not already oppressed someone?" (LL 108, IRB 97). The same or ego can never really be deaf to others in living from its needs: its appetite for things *ties* it to others more closely. The quasi-state of nature style of presentation in sections I through III of *Totality and Infinity* obscures this. What is important, briefly, is that the subject's disturbance takes the form of a *questioning* in a specific sense, namely, one that *does not outline its response* (for this sense of questioning, see, inter al., DMT 32, GDT 23). One cannot *know* how, merely in being, how one has oppressed another, or know the limits of one's oppression. That ongoing disturbance, which the I produces *of itself* to disturb its egoism and good conscience, is the ambiguous flashing of transcendence. That is how Levinas expands transcendence beyond its concretion in responsibility. Second, the question Levinas mentions in the interview with Malka is a particularly poignant version of a passage from a thinker to whom Levinas continuously returns in his texts, Pascal. Indeed, the thought is already ensconced seven years earlier in an epigraph to *Otherwise than Being* from Pascal's *Pensées*: "... 'That is my place in the sun'. That is how the usurpation of the whole world began" (AE vi, OB vi). (For the original context, see his *Pensées*, pp. 18, passage 64/295). Because these remarks are integral to understanding the argument of *Otherwise than Being*, I return to them in 5. C. (i.).

ambiguously—both.¹⁹¹ Because ontological discourse immediately retracts this once it is *said*, moreover, transcendence appears uncertain to the reflective standpoint. The question one has to consider is whether this makes good on Levinas' response to Derrida in "God and Philosophy": "*Not to philosophize would not be 'to philosophize still'...*" (DQVI 126, GCM 77 or BPW 148). What we can conclude in this regard is that, if the beyond being that transcendence involves is intelligible, then "*Not to philosophize*" is *not* to "repudiate" philosophy altogether (DMT 147, GDT 129). Levinas may put philosophical discourse, particularly the priority to ontology it presupposes, into question. But he still seeks the production of another meaning in being, "*Infinity in the finite*", where *in* does not imply the outright negation of being (DMT 126, GDT 110).

Where does one find, by contrast, the concretion of transcendence? In *From Existence to the Existent*, transcendence comes to pass through eros, the erotic encounter with the infinitely other, the feminine (DEE 162-65, EE 98-100).¹⁹² Fecundity, the possibility of having a son, exceeds the erotic coupling of the two. The thought is that, in this relation, I am for my son (I is for another) without being for myself (I without interest in returning to its being). I am devoted to a future that is not mine and that I will never experience. The description, only sketched in the final pages of this early book, is

¹⁹¹ Levinas makes this claim in several passages in *Otherwise than Being*. Perhaps the clearest is what I emphasize here: "The sensible—maternity, vulnerability, apprehension—ties up [*noue*] the knot [*noeud*] of incarnation in an intrigue greater than self-apperception. *In this intrigue, I am bound [*noué*] to others before being bound to my body* [translation modified]" (AE 97, OB 76). He continues a few lines later, replete with the ambiguity to which I refer above, "Gordean knot of the body—the extremities in which it begins or ends, are forever dissimulated in the knot that cannot be untied [*le noeud indénouable*]..." [translation modified]" (AE 96-97, OB 76-77). Even if Levinas embraces ambiguity or equivocation for strategic purposes counter to any argumentative form, one must put such claims into the context of the argument of Chapter I of that work, which Levinas directs in good part toward Derrida.

¹⁹² Cf. the expanded discussion of eros, the feminine, and fecundity in TA 77-89, TO 84-94. Whereas in *Totality and Infinity* fourteen years later transcendence comes to pass, primarily, although not exclusively, in the encounter with the other's face. I have presented Levinas' quasi-state of nature narrative above in section 4. F. The face interrupts the same and its egoistic concerns, dispossessing it of its property in the sense that it cannot identify itself with it as before.

far richer and reaches beyond the biological relation father-son in section IV “Beyond the Face” and in the Conclusions of *Totality and Infinity*. I present this and the crucial political context in which Levinas conceives the I’s fecundity in Chapter 5. Nonetheless, between this and the earlier book, the basic thought is the same. Should one wonder, then, how this concrete account of transcendence could have failed to satisfy Derrida? One may ask this particularly when Derrida himself, in a revision to “Violence and Metaphysics” for its republication in *Writing and Difference* (1967), elevates the following passage (a footnote in the original) from Levinas’ “The Trace of the Other” (1963) to the essay’s body: “...Levinas speaks of an ‘eschatology without hope for the self or without liberation in my time’” (ED 141, WD 95) Is it not the case that the account in *Totality and Infinity* of the father’s election to responsibility for the son’s future, without excusing its overt sexism, its implied hetero-normativity, and its apparent penchant for the biological relation, presents a transcendence toward an infinitely other that Derrida declared “impossible, unthinkable, unutterable”? (ED 168, WD 114) To ask such questions mistakes the double reading of Levinas for criticism. The unintelligibility and impossibility of transcendence given the language of ontology, on the one hand, and the trace as a resource for responding to the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics, on the other hand, serves this reading. Nonetheless, one may also infer that Derrida did not fully appreciate the trace structure implicitly at work in Levinas’ descriptions in *Totality and Infinity* whereby the “beyond” the totality and experience is “within experience” (TI xi, Tai 23).

Fecundity is the second takeaway, alongside the trace, that Derrida’s double reading, powerful as it is as a methodological and philosophical framework, causes him

to overlook in *From Existence to the Existent*. Trace and fecundity are the resources to which Levinas returns to reconceive and expand transcendence toward the infinitely other in *Otherwise than Being*. Fecundity, purged of its biological ties and pressed by a concerted effort to read ipseity through the trace, will reveal itself to be my substitution for others. In section 5. C. (i.) below, I return to this exposition.

4. H. (iii.) A Formula that Makes a Beyond Being Intelligible: Identity without Identity

With this notional dissection of what is really inseparable in Levinas, we can specify more closely the beyond being. Levinas conceives this as a sense or a meaning (*sens*). The idea of a beyond being, then, must be intelligible or rational, even if it does not derive this rationality from being and its categories. Transcendence as ex-cendence requires an identity—being for another who exceeds themes—without identity—that is, without interestedness in one’s own being. The subject in this case is an *identity without identity*. I want to propose *identity without identity* as a formula by which one can make the beyond being that transcendence involves is intelligible.¹⁹³ Its form is elliptical because it purposely undermines the model of personal identity that underwrites egoism and altruism, where, as I explained above, what I give to another returns to me. Further, its “para-doxical” form is deliberate because it underscores that the meaning it makes intelligible does not restore the primacy of the doxic thesis.¹⁹⁴ But this precisely becomes the problem when, as soon as transcendence toward an infinitely other is uttered, it nullifies the beyond being. Being and its categories swallow up what Levinas alleges is

¹⁹³ In Chapter V, section 5 “Skepticism and Reason”, of *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas speaks of an “intelligibility as proximity” that he opposes to the “intelligibility as impersonal logos” that governs philosophical discourse. With identity without identity, I propose an explanation for the former. Every line of *Otherwise than Being* V,5 seems to have been written with Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” in mind.

¹⁹⁴ Here I am adopting a specific understanding of the term “para-doxical” that Levinas uses to describe transcendence itself some three decades later. See his 1975-76 lecture course “God and Onto-theo-logie” in DMT 157, GDT 137.

beyond them. Nonetheless, what Derrida's challenge to transcendence misses is the structure of the trace and its concretion in fecundity. First, fatigue suggests the thought of a past, the *self* that is for another, that does not enter into the form of a living present (cf. ED 194, WD 132). Second, without excusing Levinas' sexism and apparent bias for the biological relation, fecundity suggests a model of concrete responsibility: being for another without being for (and often being against) one's own interests.

To return now to the question I raised above: is corporeity or the embodied self *already* transcendence? I have already said that it is not *concrete* transcendence, since throughout his two major works Levinas reserves this for responsibility, i.e., giving goods and services to others where these are scarce. Nonetheless, in the instant of fatigue in *From Existence to the Existent*, there comes to pass a beyond being. Nothing extra-mundane is intended. A beyond being does not rest on a theological discourse. Neither, however, does it follow being's exhibition according to an a priori understanding of meaning. A meaning is still intelligible, even if the instant of fatigue never, strictly speaking, takes the form of a living present. It is a past to which, in being, the I exposes itself, leaving itself susceptible to a plot beyond themes. Thus the I is an identity without identity, where it is for another without yet being bent on return to itself. The *another* is the *self*, that is to say, the pathos by which the I endures embodiment. While in the instant of fatigue transcendence is not concrete, i.e., is not giving to another *human being* across scarce material relations but rather remains an I trapped in a tragic solitude, there is still the flash of a sense or a meaning beyond being *in* being.

To explain: recall that Levinas begins his analysis of the I's identity in fatigue without the presupposition that identity is already *mine*, determinate and personal. He

begins, rather, with a notional duality, the existent as I and self, where the self disrupts the I's drive toward undisturbed egoism. Another, the self who does not fit themes, contacts the I. Summoned to approach itself, the important point is that to be an I produces an ongoing disturbance or bad conscience *in* the very process of producing its result, a determinate and personal identity, or a self that is *mine*. Neither time determined on the basis of presence (since this is not straightforwardly an experience determined by a theoretical attitude) nor interestedness in persevering in being (since the need is to escape one's being, not to return to it) applies at this level of identity production. Yet, that self-recurrence does not refer to first personal experience or to any being (an entity already named, i.e., a substantive) but rather, as in the "Substitution" essay I mentioned at the beginning of this section, to the "negativity of the *in itself*" and "nonbeing", where the only names available are *oneself* or *one*, does not preclude its intelligibility. This ongoing disturbance or bad conscience before having to assume a fatigued body uncovers an I bereft of power yet still giving for another. Indeed, one can carry this even further: a sense flashes in which the I *is* another, while remaining (tragically) itself, that is to say, without alienation.

It is from the perspective of this sense beyond being, i.e., beyond my capacity to grasp within a horizon what I undergo, that one can specify the non-thematizable formula that makes it intelligible, identity without identity. This is why the account of embodied ipseity, a transcendence that remains immanent, in *From Existence to the Existent* is so valuable. In the struggles of human corporeity, I is the pathos of another with whom it is never coincidental. No giving is ever enough, as the account of its proximity to another

shows. It is a one without personal identity and identified by another: a body animated by the sensible, which Levinas names *one* or *oneself*.

I want in the next section to further specify this sense or meaning of the beyond being and logos that flickers in the one or oneself. The genetic description of this sense, a sensation, as the ongoing disturbance of the I *in* the very process of producing a personal existence, is essential *to all the phenomenological analyses of sensibility* and particularly to the critical transition from the *proximity of the sensible* to the *proximity of the neighbor* in *Otherwise than Being* over a quarter of a century later. Levinas will argue, through the conception of language as *saying*, that this genetic account of sensation has an ethical meaning that ontology overlooks.

4. I. Sensation: Enduring Patiently

Whereas in the face to face that he describes in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas primarily conceives the sense or meaning of the beyond being as the infinite engendering of desire in the same for the other human being, in fatigue he conceives it as an ongoing disturbance by another, the self, that commands the I to it, to *this* body. *Fatigue* is a substantive, merely the result of existence verbalizing itself, a hypostasis, which establishes a subject of existence. Ontology, on Levinas' reading, traditionally deals with already constituted subjects and their attributes. The novelty of *From Existence to the Existent*, by contrast, is to turn with unparalleled concentration to the description of this verbalizing without a subject, the emergent- or event-character of being, in which being relates to itself adverbially and not only adjectivally. I want to claim that the disturbing of the same by the other—in the case of fatigue, we can call it (keeping in mind my analysis in section 4. G. above) existence *slackening*, i.e., commanding the existent to assume the

heavy body behind which it lags, and claim this weary body as *mine*—is for Levinas a raw sensuous givenness or datum. We may name it a sensation, for short. Sensation in its givenness is a way that a finite existence endures the excessive or that which it cannot contain. This sketches out a way of relating—or better, of *undergoing* or *enduring*—the infinite *in* the finite. This other-*in*-the-same structure characteristic of sensuous human corporeity, which I described in Part One, will prove to mean in Levinas' later philosophy that to be an I already means to be *for* another, identified with a modality of being that it cannot bear while nevertheless maintaining its grip on itself. How is one to understand the I's enduring its fatigued body *patiently*, as Levinas puts it in *Otherwise than Being* and contemporaneous works, as a way of enduring infinity?

Sensation in Levinas' sense is altogether different from the mode by which a substantive, an already constituted human subject, perceives and understands the world around it: the subject has the capacity to apprehend experience because it fits (or does not) into already grasped ideal structures of the meaningful. Consciousness for Levinas means the assumption of a theoretical attitude. Sensations in this case are attributes of being. As properties of the subject, they are sensible intuitions. Levinas is clear to mark a difference between sensation or the sensible, on the one hand, and sensible intuition, on the other hand, in his 1967 essay "Language and Proximity". To be a sensible intuition means that sensation can be appropriated, identified under themes, and, so, named. Language is the primary modality of being's exhibition, i.e., how being and its attributes manifest themselves: in perception, something is taken *as* something (EDE 117, CPP 109). To take something *as* something refers in turn to the way in which meaning sets itself forth. Levinas, recovering an old term, names this act kerygma. Kerygma is the

power of language to proclaim meaning, which crystalizes into the ideal, historically contingent structures in which identities named are understood. “Without this ideal meaning being could not show itself” (EDE 220, CPP 112).

Levinas does not doubt that perception and understanding work in these ways. But he argues that Husserl’s description of perception, which posits the Idea in the Kantian sense to regulate experience, and Heidegger’s circle of understanding, which constitutes Dasein as Dasein constitutes the world, unduly constrain the significance of the sensuous.¹⁹⁵ The basic problem for each, on Levinas’ reading, is that they return the sensuous to knowledge or comprehension of being. This unexamined presupposition maintains the primacy of the doxic thesis. What counts in *saying* is what is *said*, that is, the ideal identity (or semantic content) that, despite occurring nowhere in perception, is *meant* or *intended*. Language, shaping how we perceive and understand the world, is inseparable from being’s exhibition: “Every phenomenon is a discourse or a fragment of discourse” (EDE 221, CPP 112).

What matters to Levinas is not that sensations are attributes of being, but *how* the I endures them. Husserl and Heidegger are certainly attentive to this *how*. But, in privileging the gnoseological function of language, they reduce sensation to something that the subject can, in principle, make an object of consciousness. There is a sense in which for Levinas one cannot recuperate a sensation in a living present: it is already *passed*. To put the adverbial, rather than adjectival, difference on which Levinas is

¹⁹⁵ In *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas points to the example of emotion (which I take to be a particular kind of sensation). Emotion overcomes the subject: it is the disintegration of the hypostasis while holding onto it. Physiological psychology, he suggests, despite its shortcomings, grasps the “true nature of affectivity” better than phenomenology because the latter deduces emotion from comprehension (Heidegger’s *verstehen*) or from the emotional experience of objects clothed with new properties (DEE 121, EE 68). Levinas’ way of defining emotion, holding onto while losing one’s base, fits the formula I propose above in section 4. H., identity without identity. If transcendence involves enduring the beyond being patiently, identity without identity makes it intelligible.

focusing more concretely: even a good night's rest, while it may indeed restore the body, cannot, in some sense, undo the *aching* of pain (*dolence de la douleur*)¹⁹⁶ from hard days of labor; or, food for someone starving may satisfy her stomach, indeed even beyond the physiological need for sustenance (i.e., food may be joyfully consumed or may be a source of comfort, elevating one beyond mere alimentary needs), but, in some sense, food does not comfort the *despairing* of hunger (*désespérer de la faim*).¹⁹⁷ Aching and despairing in these examples have not merely to be *undergone*, such that the representation of the cause of my pain ascribes to it an ontologically determinate meaning in relation to my being (e.g., *my aching*, which I endure in order to learn a trade, to secure salvation, etc.). As Levinas puts it with regard to aching in *Otherwise than Being*,

It is not a matter of an effect undergoing its cause. The subjective does not only undergo [*subir*], it suffers [*souffrir*]. Aching [*dolence*] is a distance of 'negative extent' behind undergoing. Surplus of passivity that is no longer consciousness of... identifying 'this as that', 'ascribing a meaning' [translation modified] (AE 111-12, OB 88).

One should take Levinas' description of aching as a "distance of 'negative extent' behind undergoing" in the sense that I explained the body languishing as a *less than nothing* in the throes of fatigue above in 4. F. Aching ousts any of my attempts to assume the pain; despite this, it *still* exacts more of me. It is in this sense that the aching of pain or despairing of hunger have to be undergone *patiently*. Levinas will use this term, *patiently* or *patience*, emphasizing its etymological sense, heavily in *Otherwise than Being* and other roughly contemporaneous works.¹⁹⁸ He does so in order to designate a passivity that

¹⁹⁶ Levinas uses this phrase three times in *Otherwise than Being* (AE 64, OB 50; AE 66, OB 51; and AE 71, OB 55-56). See also "*La souffrance inutile*" ("Useless Suffering") in EN 107, ENTO 92.

¹⁹⁷ Levinas understands hunger as a privation in his 1975-76 lecture course "God and Onto-theo-logie". The exact phrase he uses is "despairing of this privation itself [*désespérer de cette privation même*]" (DMT 199, GDT 170).

¹⁹⁸ Particularly in the two lecture courses from 1975-76 brought together under the title *God, Death, and Time*. However, one can already see in earlier works Levinas developing patience in at least one important sense that I cover presently, patience as the site where the approach of an infinity beyond concern for or return to my being arises and where transcendence, for this reason, outlines itself. For instance, patience in

exceeds the traditional conceptual orbit in which passivity is thought, i.e., vis-à-vis activity.¹⁹⁹

We can specify the meaning of patience more closely by differentiating it from Heidegger's description of readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*).²⁰⁰ When I have no bed to rest my exhausted body, a meaningful structure irrupts: hard days of labor call for a rest. The representation of the cause of my exhaustion (hard days of labor) presupposes a pragmatic network of meanings determined by being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world, in turn, presupposes ascriptions of meaning that derive from interestedness in my being.²⁰¹ But pain's *aching*, like hunger's *despairing* or fatigue's *slackening*, ousts any ideation of pain. Further, it disrupts meaning ascription deriving from pragmatic concerns. It does not *prevent* this ascription. It only puts into question whether pragmatic concerns for my

the 1963 essay "The Trace of the Other" is enduring work for a "time without me" (EDE 192, DC 349). It is in this regard that Levinas speaks of an "... 'eschatology without hope for the self or without liberation in my time'". As I explained in Chapter 2 and again in section 4. H. of this chapter, Derrida includes this passage in one of the footnotes in the 1964 version of "Violence and Metaphysics". He incorporates it into essay's body proper for its republication in *Writing and Difference* in 1967. Clearly the conception of a non-totalizable relation of the same with an infinitely other intrigues Derrida. This does not, however, cue him into how this relation arises in the patience of corporeity or embodied selfhood in earlier works, particularly *From Existence to the Existent*. Moreover, already three years prior to the first publication of "Violence and Metaphysics" in 1964, *Totality and Infinity* interprets suffering (and not, contra Heidegger, my death) as the "supreme ordeal [*épreuve*] of the will" through patience (TI 216, TaI 239). Enduring another's hatred or violence patiently places me at the extreme limit between my reduction to a thing and the hyper-vigilance of my subjection. Here I suffocate under the excess of my embodiment, which outlines corporeally a need for me to escape without positing a destination where I can return to myself. This need to escape, or transcendence, occurs in my time, yet without returning to me. I can endure the other's violence, then, only in patience (TI 217, TaI 239). Why is this the case? Because in *Totality and Infinity* it is from fecundity, the "... 'eschatology without hope for oneself or without liberation in my time'", as Levinas remarks in "The Trace of the Other", that the "time of patience" ultimately flows (TI 217, TaI 240). Derrida, however, did not consider the sense or meaning of a beyond being, an "'eschatology without hope for oneself'", that arises in patient suffering of the embodied self. His double reading framework prevents him from seeing this, and, consequently, its connection to the concretion of transcendence in fecundity.

¹⁹⁹ The problem with this orbit is that in it passivity is typically understood as that which, in principle, at least, is convertible into an act. Among many descriptions of this "absolute" or "anarchic" passivity, see the "Substitution" essay in RPL 499, BPW 89.

²⁰⁰ Here I am adapting Levinas' critical reading of Heidegger's being-in-the-world and especially of readiness-to-hand in *From Existence to the Existent* for my own purposes. See DEE 64-70, EE 34-38 and section "II. Interiority and Economy" of *Totality and Infinity*. See particularly TI 82-86, TaI 110-14.

²⁰¹ Interestedness in my being, of course, involves the alluvial deposits of other determinants as well (e.g., cultural, linguistic, gender, racial, etc.).

existence are the ultimate source of meaning, or if there is a meaning beyond my being. Pain's aching is the incapacity to get a grip on oneself and maintain a position in being under its onslaught. Indeed, it drives me *from* my being without presupposing that this effort to get out is *for* my being: it is just in order to escape, with no destination in mind. Rest, then, does not undo pain's aching. Stored, without remittance, in the body, pain's aching (unlike pain itself) never happens in the present: I have *already* given in order to endure its painfulness. Aching has already *passed*. Enduring sensation patiently follows in this regard the structure of the trace.²⁰²

In this way, pain's aching makes the I determinate as a pure modality of being, all the way to the point at which the I is another—a modality of being, the *aching*—through which it relates to itself. The I's being is overthrown into *sense* (*sens*), as Levinas puts it in *Otherwise than Being* (AE 123,OB 97).²⁰³ What he means follows from the way he describes human corporeity in *From Existence to the Existent*. That the I's being is overthrown into sense means that it is directed toward another, the self, through enduring what is beyond its capacity, aching.²⁰⁴ While I cannot make the aching *mine*, I nonetheless find myself its sign or bearer. Patience means to endure all the way to the point at which the bearer cedes to what it bears: a body animated by sensation. The source of sense or meaning (*sens*), therefore, is not solely in the I or the same. Stripped of its identity, I still *is*, but *for* another without yet being for itself. The formula identity without identity makes these rather tortured turns of phrase, which abound in the descriptions of sensibility and proximity in *Otherwise than Being*, intelligible.

²⁰² The inspiration for my reading is how Levinas explains time and all temporal phenomena *beyond* intentionality. See, inter al., AE 69,OB 53 and DMT 126,GDT 110. I will return to this in 5. C. (i.) below.

²⁰³ The phrase is “overthrowing [*bouleversement*] of this being into sense [*sens*]” (AE 123,OB 97).

²⁰⁴ Here one must keep both senses of *directed toward* in mind, viz. direction or orientation and command to serve.

Let me summarize what undergoing a sensation patiently means for Levinas. First, one cannot reduce sensation to a human capacity for suffering. The sensation's withdrawal from any capacity the I has to recuperate it means that an absolute relation exists *within* the I. That is to say, an other is *in* the same that remains other (subjectivity's structure). Second, Levinas conceives sensation as a relation with a beyond being. Undergoing the sensuous patiently Levinas specifies as a "way of enduring the Infinite", to adapt what he says in *God, Death, and Time*.²⁰⁵ The insistence of aching cannot leave me indifferent to the other. This other is the *self*, an excessive pathos, who troubles me. Despite the absolute difference with the other, I could not be bound to it more closely (proximity's structure). Third, if pain's aching goes beyond the human capacity for suffering, whatever effort existence exacts to assume it, then sensation, properly speaking, is not a possible object of experience. A living present does not fit pain's aching; to put it otherwise, pain's aching ousts the very form of a present. As we saw in the analysis of fatigue's slackening, what attests to the fact that I have *already*, prior to will, exerted effort to be, i.e., to produce an identity that is *mine*, is when I discover how worn-out I've become. The *already* is a modality of a past never present that nonetheless

²⁰⁵ The context is a description of time using the model of Descartes' "idea of the Infinite" rather than the image of a river's forward flow or Heidegger's being-towards-death. Time is the modality of the Infinite, its way of relating to the finite. Time conceived thus would be the "...bursting [*éclatement*] of the *more* of the Infinite in the *less*..." (DMT 132, GDT 116). For Levinas, time traced from a river's forward flow or from being-towards-death presupposes that nothing can enter into intentional consciousness that memory cannot, in principle, represent presently. By contrast, the Infinite is not a term for the finite. It recedes to the point of absence. Time as the finite's patient endurance of the Infinite is a waiting, therefore, without an awaited term (DMT 131, GDT 115). Nowhere in this alternative description of time does Levinas mention sensation. But this is how time passes, as sensation. Levinas follows Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Internal Consciousness of Time* on this basic point. Time passes concretely as sensation: waiting without measure arises through an affection that could not leave me indifferent to it and exposes my impotence to put it to a halt. Its concretion happens *in* the finite, where affections arise that exceed intentionality. In this regard, Levinas later speaks of a "non-ontological transcendence" that begins in "human corporeity" (DMT 198, GDT 169). Human corporeity as an affectivity without intentionality has a sense or a meaning beyond being: it opens the passage to transcendence. That is the way in which I am arguing that sensation undergone patiently (above) is to be read.

has evident consequences: not only my being worn-out, but my exposure and susceptibility to the embodied self. To undergo patiently means *always* to be beholden to this *already*, that is, always obedient to the adventitious sensations characteristic of corporeity, like pain's aching. It demonstrates the impotence of the existent to assume existence, i.e., to take charge of and get out from under aching. So, to undergo a sensation patiently is an ordeal of existence—without awaiting an *end*, only a possible *postponement*—rather than an experience, given that Levinas limits experience to the power, in principle, to appropriate what affects me (a theoretical attitude).

4. J. Three Features of the I's Identity in *From Existence to the Existent* that Bridge to the Identity of Ipseity in "Substitution"

The identity of the I is, according to the reading of *From Existence to the Existent* for which I argued in Part One of this chapter, the other-in-the-same. I established this through the theme I called double possession. My claim was that subjectivity as one finds it in Levinas' later work already dictates the description of the I's undergoing sensations in this 1947 book. The *other* in subjectivity is the self. The quasi-duality of I and embodied self, that the I *is* and *refuses* itself at once, dramatizes the fundamental thought that drives Levinas during this period, the ontological structure of escape-frustration. In Chapter 3, I placed this structure in the context that it arises: the experience of Hitlerian racism and the worry that social and political life is being organized along the sociobiological lines of racial eugenics.

But is this not to make a drama out of a tautology, a duality of I and self alleged but nowhere demonstrated? Is it not the case that the I, in individuating and personalizing existence, gains control of itself? Is it not the case, further, that the I approaches the self,

despite the weariness or suffering it causes, out of an interest in persevering in its being? These are concerns that dogged Levinas in later works, like the essay “Substitution” (1968) and his second major work, *Otherwise than Being* (1974).²⁰⁶ I am trying to show through the description of the I’s identity, when it is animated by affective experiences like fatigue, the resources to which Levinas later returns in order to respond to the test to which Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” puts to transcendence by challenging the thought of an infinity beyond being and logos. If I am making the case that subjectivity, as exposure, susceptibility, and intrigue, is already at play in *From Existence to the Existent*—albeit not yet in the ethical sense of responsibility for another—in the event through which being is made determinate and personal, then I have to show how the identity of I and self is not merely a tautology but has a different meaning, the identity of I and another; how the I never gets back behind the self enough, so to speak, to take control of it fully; and how the approach of the I to the self that encumbers it is, paradoxical as it sounds, a devotion, despite oneself, to another without interest in one’s own being. These claims are essential to understanding how Levinas picks up once again the thread of how personal identity is accomplished in *From Existence to the Existent* and

²⁰⁶ That Levinas is concerned about the first question I raise is evident from the fact that he mentions it three times, if only to deny the objection that the duality of the I and self is an empty tautology, in *From Existence to the Existent* (see DEE 19,EE 4; 27,8; and 150,89). He mentions it again in just the same form in the contemporaneous *Time and the Other* (TA 37,TO 56). One can rightly read *From Existence to the Existent* as a campaign against taking the “‘I is I [*Moi c’est Moi*]”, as he puts it in his first major work in 1961, *Totality and Infinity*, as an empty tautology (TI 7,TaI 37; cf. also TI 8,TaI 38). For this remains oblivious to the event- or emergent character of being, before being gains a name, from which there is no escape. It neglects, to put it differently, the corporeal characteristics of identity—sexual, racial, and cultural differences, differences in ability, etc.—that an I must shoulder. The concerns that the second and third questions I raise belong to a philosophical period in which Levinas retrieves identity as the problem and key to facing the challenges Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” present. One can see these concerns in the 1968 essay “Substitution” (RPL 499,BPW 89). They remain live in the chapter on substitution six years later in *Otherwise than Being* (AE 144,OB 113). However, these later works emphasize ambiguity or equivocation. The questions above arise but do not outline clear answers. For example, in *Otherwise than Being*, it is unclear whether *I* approach the other or the *other* approaches me. Or, I cannot know whether what I give to another is genuinely *for the other* or *for me*. That egoism cannot be eliminated is guilt of a *certain sort* for which Levinas finds a necessary place in ethics.

follows it all the way from the ordeal of subjectivity to the one-for-the-other structure, or substitution, in *Otherwise than Being*.

I turn in this section to analyze what Levinas refers to in *From Existence to the Existent* as the internal dialectic of the instant at a greater depth. I do so by presenting three features of the I's identity in order form a bridge to the identity of ipseity in "Substitution" and *Otherwise than Being*. These are: the non-coincidence of I and self; recurrence on this side of existence; and concern for another despite one's interest. These features respond to the questions I raised above, even if, by translating them into philosophical prose, one renders the sense beyond being and logos that they invoke ambiguous or equivocal.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Levinas acknowledges the ambiguity, equivocality, and ambivalence of a sense or meaning beyond being constantly in the period after *Totality and Infinity*. I suspect it is under the pressure of Derrida's claim that, in the language of ontology, an infinitely other is "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable" (ED 168, WD 114). As soon as one says it, one has given up the game. But is this claim sufficient to enclose, in the sense of limit and define that against which it is limited, Levinas' sense or meaning of an infinitely other? It is suggestive to think that at least one strong impetus behind *Otherwise than Being* is to interrupt this enclosure. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas interrupts Derrida by suggesting ambiguity, equivocation, and ambivalence, that is to say, that, despite the fact that the experience or cognition of a sense beyond being and logos must remain ambiguous, it nonetheless comes to pass concretely in nonphilosophical experiences like giving to another selflessly, or sacrifice. The ambiguity, equivocation, or ambivalence Levinas embraces in *Otherwise than Being* is different from the ambiguity of eros in *Totality and Infinity*, where an ambivalent movement comprises love. Love, or the erotic, the "equivocal *par excellence*", touches the particular, empirical other in order to return to the self in enjoyment (the movement of need), on the one hand, and preserves the non-totalized transcendent exteriority of the beloved (the movement of desire), on the other hand (TI 232-33, TaI 254-55). In *Otherwise than Being*, by contrast, Levinas embraces ambiguity, equivocation, or ambivalence in several more important claims concerning a sense or meaning beyond being and logos. Let me mention only three: the-one-for-the-other of signification (substitution as ethical subjectivity), the name of God, and the distinction Levinas calls Said and Saying. First, Levinas twice states that enjoyment is the "condition" of the-one-for-the-other or signification (substitution) and later adds that there is an "insurmountable ambiguity" in signification (AE 93, OB 74 and AE 100, OB 79-80). This ambiguity leads one to the conclusion that ethical subjectivity *itself* should constantly be placed under suspicion: all too easily, it falls into enjoyment or complacency (each forms of egoism). Second, the "name of God", as a statement of the beyond being, remains an "ambiguity or an enigma" in the mouth that states it (AE 199, OB 156). Against an ontotheological conception (or, as Levinas would say, reduction) of God, illeity conceives an an-archy of the Infinite that resists the conditions by which it is stated without resorting to negative theology. The name of God is an "event [*coup*]" that comes to mind through an overwhelming "...avowal [*aveu*] of the 'stronger than me' in me..."[translation modified]". To say *God* is an event that overwhelms any semantic content. But I do not arrive at it by negation. *God* comes to pass in the "extreme proximity of the neighbor" where the subject "confesses or contests it". That is to say, a God beyond being and logos is enunciated by my mouth in the ordeal subjectivity puts me through: an incessant running up against myself *for* another, wherein, in my very *contesting* the other, I *confess* his hold over me. Put to the

4. J. (i.) First Feature: Non-Coincidence

Already in seeing the solitary subject “slackening [from] itself” as the kernel of the later proximity we have come across the first two features of the identity of ipseity. That the present is evanescent, that my effort to bear my languishing body is extinguished in an instant that I cannot fully capture, means that I never coincide with myself. To be an I means *non-coincidence*. The coincidence of the I with itself would mean that further effort to accomplish being was no longer necessary. This is how, according to Levinas, the structure of knowledge safeguards an identity claim: a synchronic correlation of knowing (in this case, the I) and its object, the known (self) (DEE 148-49, EE 87-88). The I would possess and master existence by preserving an uninterrupted personal identity. Time would mean continuous forward flow like the image of the river. At the heart of this image, however, is the I’s agitation or disturbance by the existence to which it is tied, like the fatigued body. Fleeing myself is futile. But I also lack the power to assume myself entirely. The self is for Levinas embodied. The body is a surplus over the I.

test of subjectivity (not experience) in staking my claim in being, I avow a third, *God*. But I make no accompanying assertion as to his essence, only to the fact of finding myself in the trace of illeity. Finally, the ambiguity in Saying is the basic insight that supports these first two examples. In every Said, or, every logos (insofar as Levinas understands Derrida’s use of the term), there remains an “insurmountable equivocation” (AE 216, OB 170). Saying resists the simultaneity of meaning, i.e., its reduction to a being and the categories that describe being. Rather than synchrony, Saying is evidence for diachrony, the time of a past that never traverses the present of experience, where the ontological gravity of the other in me can only be expressed in ethical terms like subjectivity, proximity, and substitution. Nonetheless, preventing the sclerosis of Saying in the Said requires the infinite task of the phenomenological reduction (AE 56-58, OB 43-45). This is an interruptive approach to philosophical discourse, which has a propensity “to encircle [*encercler*]” the saying of a meaning beyond being and logos (AE 215, OB 169). I will return to ambiguity, equivocation, or ambivalence in ethical subjectivity and Said and Saying in discussing *Totality and Infinity* in the next chapter. Here I only want to underscore how each is wrought under the pressure of the problem in “Violence and Metaphysics” that makes the most impact on Levinas, namely, how to conceive infinity beyond being and logos when philosophy has, for the most part, only ever known beings and statements about beings. Levinas takes philosophy at the closure of metaphysics in a different sense than Derrida suggests. The Said and Saying distinction that sustains the first of the two claims above is a response to how he reads the closure. As Levinas says in the final remarks of the opening chapter of *Otherwise than Being* with regard to the philosopher’s reticence or suspicion of opening a discourse (he has Hegel and Heidegger in mind), “Should we not think with as much precaution of the possibility of a conclusion or a closure [*fermeture*] of the philosophical discourse? Is not its interruption its only possible end?” (AE 24, OB 20; see also Levinas’ “*Jacques Derrida: tout autrement*” in NP 79-89, PN 55-62).

Undergoing corporeal affections, it is bound to the self asymmetrically. That is to say, in fatigue, the self draws along the I, like a prisoner on a rope (DEE 150,EE 89). The non-coincidence of the I and self means not only that existence is a kind of duality, affirming separation, but that to be an I means to be exposed to another, oneself. “The instant is like a breathlessness [*essoufflement*], a panting [*halètement*], an effort to be [translation modified]”, where the I dies in each instant because it has nothing more to avail (DEE 135,EE 78; cf. AE 138,OB 109). Because the self recurs incessantly, i.e., because the present is evanescent, born anew to be born again by the I, the exposure characteristic of non-coincidence is incessant and excessive. From non-coincidence, we find that to be an I means to be incessantly and excessively exposed to another with whom the I cannot, as it were, catch up. Thus the non-coincidental duality of I and self in no way dramatizes a tautology.

4. J. (ii.) Second Feature: Recurrence on This Side

The self recurs incessantly on *this side* (or *inside: en deçà*) of existence. This is the second feature of the identity of ipseity or of the oneself, as Levinas will put it later in “Substitution”. Recurrence evinces discontinuity and a staccato-like existence. The demand to give more in order to be—a formulation that already dissimulates the irreducible fact that one *has to be*—is the discreteness of the instant. The struggle with the corporeal self continually recommences. It is an exponential demand to muscle discrete instants into existence without let up, which Levinas compares to the occasionalism that prevails on Cartesian time (DEE 27,EE 8 and DEE 128-29,EE 73-74; cf. also DEE 136-37,EE 79-80). While effort aims to get out from under the burden of being without any destination in mind, the I has already taken on a new instant and

collapsed under its weight, heavier with every recurrence of the self. Thus the languishing efforts of a fatigued body remain on this side of existence, that is, on this side of an existent looking to flee to who knows where but immediately frustrated by no other than itself, evincing escape's impossibility (DEE 45,EE 20).

Levinas comments further of the instant's dialectical movement that its "...point of departure is contained in its point of arrival, like a shock of returning [*choc en retour*; translation modified]" (DEE 131,EE 75). He will press this further in essays after the 1964 publication of "Violence and Metaphysics". What Levinas retrieves in those works is the driving thought of his philosophy in the earlier period, the need for escape. The thought is that the I, despite its need to escape, is consumed on this or inside of itself, prior to the immanent movement of transcendence that characterizes cognition. But, where Levinas sees the this side as an account of the effort to make existence personal in *From Existence to the Existent*, he will come to argue that ontological terminology fails in expressing the bind in which the I finds itself. The patience of the self is in the first place intelligible through ethical terms like subjectivity, proximity, and substitution.²⁰⁸

In the analysis of the instant in *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas is opposing a "...being whose very advent is a folding back upon itself [*un repli en soi*]..." to Heidegger's description of Dasein's existence (see DEE 138-39,EE 81-82). Taking a position implies remaining on this side of existence, where the sense is that one is defeated in the attempt to escape it. In *Being and Time*, by contrast, what makes Dasein's ontico-existential experience synthetic and uninterrupted is the unity of its ontologico-existential structures. On account of this unity, Dasein *ek-sists*, i.e., understands itself

²⁰⁸ Incidentally, it is with these later developments, from an ontological account of the I or same to ethical meaning, that I have introduced the term proto-ontology to characterize the structures of escape-frustration and transcendence.

through its possibilities. To *ek-sist* means to be the sort of being who takes being as an issue (SZ 12,BT 32). But, more immediately, it is Dasein's ability to stand out from the immediateness of its circumstances, shaped and meaningful on account of what they (*das Man*) do, in order to comprehend itself as a whole. Death is its ultimate limit: it is the evidence that testifies to Dasein's being-a-whole. In taking charge of what is most properly Dasein's own, its death, or the possibility of its impossibility, Heidegger finds the source of all possibility (SZ 264,BT 309). The thinking in *Being and Time* is ultimately that the analytic of Dasein's existence is a way to access the forgotten question of being.

By contrast, in the extreme throes of embodiment that *From Existence to the Existent* describes, the I is thrown back under the weight of its having to be itself. The instant disables possibility: I find myself consumed, wiped out, on the inside, as it were, of Dasein's existence. Further, that the I is consumed this side of its existence means Heidegger's sense of transcendence—where Dasein accedes through its radical individuation (i.e., of its possibility of impossibility) to the “*transcendens pure and simple*”, being, as a question forgotten for transcendental knowledge—is for Levinas only an *immanent* transcendence (SZ 38,BT 62). It follows the structure, according to Levinas, that characterizes understanding (*verstehen*), namely, the movement of an interiority toward an exteriority, where interior and exterior are illuminated by care (*Sorge*) (DEE 74,EE 40). Knowledge of being issues, like all phenomenological knowledge, in themes. The this side or inside, where the I is consumed in an instant, does not imply an internal-external structure. On this side, the existent is individuated by its *impossibility* to escape

rather than by the possibility of finding refuge in what they do or getting back behind what is most properly its own, its impossibility (death).

Thus, in the instant of fatigue, the I never gets off the ground, so to speak, as Dasein does. Rather, the I is individuated by the fact that it remains riveted to itself. Nor, however, does the solitary subject accomplish transcendence as excendence, i.e., the movement that departs from being and the categories that describe it while maintaining a foothold in being. Transcendence, in this latter sense, is the thought of an exteriority that is not contingent on the medium of light or care that intentionality and understanding, respectively, presuppose. Without this medium, there is no interiority-exteriority distinction. This represents a major shift in how Levinas conceives transcendence from Husserl's and Heidegger's respective positions. Transcendence as excendence belongs to the this side or inside existence prior to light and the interiority-exteriority distinction. The I for Levinas is individuated by its inability to take refuge or flee. Derrida is right to say in "Violence and Metaphysics" that Levinas' thought calls us toward an infinitely other beyond being, or an exteriority that is not contingent on an interiority (ED 168, WD 114). When he problematizes how this is thinkable, possible, and how it can be said, Levinas will be drawn to the resource of the this side or inside of the instant, prior to the interiority and exteriority of lived experience, prior even to the thought of the ontological difference, in order to articulate transcendence. The body's sensations, like fatigue, show that the I this side of existence—where my identity is wrought under the failed attempt to escape myself—is fractured or discontinuous, not a synthesis and uninterrupted.

4. J. (iii.) Third Feature: Concern, Despite Myself, For Another

Non-coincidence and recurrence, two features of the I's identity, suggest that the I separates from its being, but only in the sense of having "...given more rope to a prisoner without untying him [translation modified]" (DEE 150,EE 89). Fatigue, the "slackening itself", preserves these two movements, rupture from being and refastening to another, which are characteristic of the instant's internal dialectic. I detailed how above using the ethical structure Levinas makes thematic only later, proximity.

But having "...given more rope to a prisoner without untying him" does not cover entirely *how* the I approaches, or is approached by, the self. Already in *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas is conceiving how the excessive exposure to the oneself is a susceptibility to *concern, despite myself, for another*. This is the third feature of what Levinas will call in the "Substitution" essay the identity of ipseity. His method in that work is more explicitly to overbid the ontological account of the I to the brink at which the self has the sense, for-the-other, without regard for my safety or even for my return. In giving to or sacrificing for another, I am at once my being and beyond it.

In *From Existence to the Existent*, the existent approaches the other, the oneself, out of "concern [*souci*]" (DEE 36,EE 15). This is not, Levinas explains, as in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, the concern that issues from a being facing its own death (*Sorge*). It is rather the concern of a being who hesitates and even resists in the face of its having to be. Consumed this side of existence, each instant is for the existent "like a breathlessness, a panting" (DEE 135,EE 78). This description is figurative. But it reveals a deeper truth to which Levinas, in his description of the instant's internal dialectic, is committed. The I trapped in the solitude of undergoing its body dies in each instant. This is because, unable to take itself on half-heartedly, it has nothing more to avail. Its "death in the empty

interval”, however, “will have been the condition for a new birth” (DEE 157,EE 94). The I is not *only* riveted to its being without escape. The “‘I’ [‘je’]” is an “exigency for the non-definitive” (DEE 159,EE 95). This means that the I is a fecund being, accomplishing in the very affirmation of its identity its orientation toward and dependence on others. Non-definitiveness comes in isolated moments, like another’s caress or pardon (DEE 156,EE 93 and DEE 161,EE 93). These neither redeem pain nor negate the past to which the I has born witness. They do not, in other words, unmake the definitive. They do, however, offer a departure for the I from its definitiveness toward a more authentic sense of the future while preserving the I’s identity.

Conclusion

I will come to the production of infinite time within the I’s finite life when I discuss the pardon in greater depth in the next chapter. To close and also create a bridge from these analyses of the identity of ipseity to *Totality and Infinity*, I want only to underscore how concern for the other, despite myself, is produced *in* the very tragic solitude of the I, from which there seems no way out.

In Chapter 3, I explained that Levinas is after developing identity in ways that respond to Hitlerism’s simple-minded logic, *I is body*, and that indemnify themselves against the spread of eugenics over social and political life. Levinas finds these resources in the family, where the I is a fecund being, and not merely left to its solitude. To be a fecund being, as Levinas puts it in *Totality and Infinity* (1961), is to be a being capable of another’s fate (TI 258,TaI 282). In *From Existence to the Existent*, Levinas briefly mentions how this transcendence is concrete with the father’s love for his son (paternity). While we should not excuse Levinas’ sexism, the idea is that, as a father, there was never

a point at which I freely contracted with someone to assume responsibility for my son. I have already substituted myself for him in a time that has permanently passed. There is a strong sense in which I *am* my son, yet without being maintained there in identity, as Levinas will later put it (TI 254, TaI 277). As a father, my *self is another* who concerns me. The pronominal construction of the French *me concerner*, which Levinas will favor in *Otherwise than Being* over the inappropriate *souci* of *From Existence to the Existent*, underscores this: where I am concerned despite myself, for another, the English *me* is not straightforwardly the equivalent of the French disjunctive pronoun *me*. This applies even to the stranger, where I would rather be left alone (AE 150, OB 117). As a father, I am responsible for my son despite (and often against) my interests. We will see in my next chapter in what sense Levinas breaks with the tribalism that this seems to imply with the notion of fraternity. This will bring the relation between Levinas' ethics and his notion of justice into view.

What is evident is that the thought of fecundity follows that of the trace: my concern and responsibility for another has already passed before my free choice to assume it. Levinas does not make the trace an explicit theme until the essay "The Trace of the Other" in 1963, as I mentioned above. But it is suggestive to think that it is the I, structured as a fecund being, in *From Existence to the Existent* that leads Levinas to it. Derrida himself makes it a point to highlight the trace in an addition to the 1967 republication of "Violence and Metaphysics" that I already quoted above:

The notion of a past whose meaning could not be thought in the form of a (past) present marks the *impossible-unthinkable-unsayable* [*impossible-impensable-indicible*] not only for philosophy in general but even for a thought of being which would seek to take a step outside philosophy. This notion, however, does become a theme in the meditation of the trace announced in Levinas' most recent writings [translation slightly modified] (ED 194, WD 132).

In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas retrieves fecundity and deepens it through the thought of the trace. His argument is that the structure of human identity—not just the father’s—is that not only of egoism but of embodied ipseity, which we now understand through the three features I presented above. The meaning of ipseity is one-for-the-other, or substitution.

Before I present that argument, however, I want to return to the context of the political themes that were formative for Levinas’ thought in the 1930s-40s. These were Hitlerian racism and the worry over social and political life as a laboratory for racial eugenics. These political concerns, which most commentators neglect, provide the proper reception for the notions Levinas develops in section IV and in the Conclusions of *Totality and Infinity*. These concretions of transcendence, where I am both my being and beyond it, are produced in the family. This is my focus in my final chapter.

CHAPTER 5.

FROM FECUNDITY TO FRATERNITY:

THE RESOURCES IN THE FAMILY FOR RESPONDING TO

HITLERIAN ANTI-SEMITIC RACISM AND TOTALITARIANISM IN *TOTALITY AND INFINITY*

The foregoing analysis makes the case that Levinas retrieves the identity of the I in *From Existence to the Existent* to develop the identity of ipseity in the “Substitution” essay just over two decades later in 1968. Whereas in *Totality and Infinity* he argues that fecundity is the model for the I’s identity, in the “Substitution” essay Levinas replaces fecundity with the notion of substitution. Indeed, “*fécondité*” drops almost entirely from the philosophical vocabulary of works he publishes between *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise than Being* (1974).²⁰⁹ I explain why below. With substitution, Levinas argues that the I’s identity is one-for-the-other, or responsibility. In claiming that the I’s identity is substitution, Levinas is deepening the analyses of identity first blazed in *From Existence to the Existent* to respond to Derrida’s challenge to transcendence in his “Violence and Metaphysics”. Substitution, as difficult a thought as it is, is not unfamiliar.

²⁰⁹ Levinas mentions “fecundity” in the same breath as he mentions the “face to face” and “proximity” in the 1968 essay “*Un dieu homme?*” (“A God-Man?”), a moment that speaks of a transition from the vocabulary of the first major work to the second (EN 71, ENTO 55). The only other reference to “fecundity” during the period between the major works that somewhat resembles how Levinas understands the term in *Totality and Infinity* occurs in an untitled commentary on four passages from the final chapter of the Tractate Sanhedrin. There are two references to fecundity in one of the commentaries on these Messianic texts (DL 94, DF 67-67-68). Levinas does not date this commentary exactly in his foreword. He only says that, along with three other commentaries he groups alongside it, it was delivered to French section of the Jewish World Congress in 1960 and 1961. So the text is a contemporary of *Totality and Infinity*. (“Fecundity” appears in the 1967 book *En découvrant l’existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* in the essay “*La philosophie et l’idée de l’infini* [EDE 171, CPP 53], but that essay was originally published in 1957 and, further, the term is not meant in its ethical sense.)

If one is to understand the “germ” of *Otherwise than Being*, and if I am right to view the book as in part a set of responses to “Violence and Metaphysics”, one must reckon with its forerunner, fecundity.

In this chapter, I examine fecundity more closely in *Totality and Infinity* with the aim of showing how it leads to substitution in *Otherwise than Being*. In section 4. H. (ii.) above, I outlined the reading of fecundity that has become canonical in the literature, father-son. Commentators have rightly criticized Levinas’ sexism and his penchant for the biological relation.²¹⁰ The first criticism should be acknowledged. However, placing fecundity in the proper context for its reception, totalitarian politics, proves that it should not be the last word. Moreover, commentators generally neglect that fecundity is a concretion of transcendence as excendence, the desideratum of Levinas’ philosophy. This is because their attention falls on the face to face, whereas the structures Levinas describes in section IV of *Totality and Infinity*, as he himself puts it, “Beyond the Face”. This leads to the unsavory conclusion that the bulk of the book is irreconcilable with its final section. In fact, the face could never unsettle my egoism were I not, first, capable of working for another’s future, one that I will never experience. The description of the *I*’s fecundity—that is to say, any *I*, and not merely a father’s—already significantly erodes the biological limitations in which commentators believe Levinas locks it. Fecundity structurally involves political participation and struggle on behalf of those oppressed by unjust institutions. Levinas calls this fraternity. In the drive to reform institutions on

²¹⁰ Among many fine commentaries, see first Luce Irigaray’s *Éthique de la différence sexuelle* 173-99 (*An Ethics of Sexual Difference* 185-217) and her “Questions à Emmanuel Lévinas” in *Critique : revue générale des publications françaises et étrangères* 911-20 (“Questions to Emmanuel Levinas” in *The Irigaray Reader* 178-89). See also several essays in the volume edited by Tina Chanter, *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas*.

behalf of those for whom they were established, the I relates concretely to a beyond being, accomplishing transcendence.

Given the groundwork I laid in the previous chapter, we are in a position to begin straightaway in the section 5. A. with the first of the “Conclusions” Levinas offers in *Totality and Infinity*. According to Levinas, externalist accounts of personal identity neglect its internalist production. This identity of the “*same*” is responsibility for another (TI 265, TaI 289). Fecundity, sketched at the end of *From Existence to the Existent*, cues Levinas into this formal structure, a forerunner of substitution. 5. B. re-contextualizes the identity of the same in an essay contemporaneous with *From Existence to the Existent*, “Being Jewish”. In “Being Jewish”, Levinas develops an internalist account of identity in contrast to Sartre’s externalist account, the gaze. This joins the I’s identity in *From Existence to the Existent* to the identity of the same in *Totality and Infinity* in a common atmosphere, the concern that social-political life has become a project for racial eugenics.

My thesis in 5. C. is that fecundity involves, as a necessary condition, social and political participation on behalf of others, even strangers, who are being oppressed by the state’s institutions. In short, the concretion of transcendence brings the relation between ethics and justice in Levinas into view. I take several steps to get there. First, I contextualize the concrete relations in which Levinas develops the I’s fecundity, those of the family. They respond to the political concerns, dating back to his works from the mid-1930s, over the rise of state racism, wherein politics means the application of eugenics from which no form of social life can take distance. Second, I analyze fecundity through the thought of the trace to bring it closer to *Otherwise than Being*’s substitution. Finally, commentators have tried to explain the transition or hinge from Levinas’ ethics to his

politics.²¹¹ This language is misleading. The dialectic of filiality and fraternity, as I call it, shows that responsibility for the stranger oppressed is no less a part of the conceptual architecture by which Levinas describes a father's responsibility for his son. Ethical responsibility, how I can genuinely be for another, is inseparable from the problems of justice, how I can be for many others: fecundity is concrete in fraternity. In this way, we bring within our scope the relation of Levinas' ethics to his notion of justice.

5. A. The First Conclusion of *Totality and Infinity*: "From the Like to the Same [*Du pareil au Même*]"

If not for the fourth section of *Totality and Infinity*, the first of Levinas' "Conclusions" would be appear abrupt with regard to the rest of the book. To the reader of *From Existence to the Existent*, however, the shift to a proto-ontological account of identity is familiar. In that book, being has an emergent- or event-character. The subject of being, the I, is not there right off. Lagging behind itself, identity must be accomplished through effort. This consists in struggling to get a grip on the body and position oneself with regard to neutral, anonymous existence. Affections attest to I-self as a pseudo-duality or a fissured oneness, where the I is a passivity encumbered with its embodied self. One may say that the primary theme in this early book is not, despite Levinas' claim to the contrary, the *there is*, but the *self*. Analyzing identity by way of embodied ipseity shows that to be an I means to be for another, even if this other is, in the I's tragic solitude, oneself. Nevertheless, the important point is that to be for another is part of the very drama of the I, and that the self is not straightforwardly mine. The basic claim of personal identity—that this embodied self is *mine*—presupposes the I's exposure and susceptibility to another, weaving it into a plot beyond themes. The I produces its own

²¹¹ See Caygill's *Levinas and the Political* (2002).

individuation: I am one and unique not on account of the calm equilibrium ‘I am I’ but because I have, in a past I never experienced, been elected to serve another. Having a son, briefly mentioned at the end of *From Existence to the Existent*, means to show concretely in what sense the self *is* another without evacuating its identity entirely. It shows, in other words, in what sense the I is for another in giving and sacrifice beyond (and often against) its own concerns.

In the “Conclusions” to *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas writes,

The identity of the individual does not consist in being like to itself, and in letting itself be identified *from the outside* by the finger that points to it; it consists in being the *same*—in being oneself, in identifying oneself from within. There exists a logical passage from like to the same; singularity logically arises from the logical sphere *opposed to the gaze* [original emphasis] and organized into a totality *by the reversal of this sphere into the interiority of the I [moi]*. . . . *The entire analysis of interiority pursued in this work describes the conditions of this reversal* [translation modified; my emphasis—PJG] (TI 265, Tal 289).

That this is the first conclusion with which Levinas wants to leave his reader is telling of the importance he accords to his discussion of personal identity in *Totality and Infinity*. Few commentators have noticed that identity pilots the main conceptual thrusts of the preceding section IV, and fewer have ventured an explanation as to why. The explanation is critical: whereas *Totality and Infinity* announces itself as a work on exteriority,²¹² leading Derrida to inquire as to the status and meaning of claims like an infinity that remains wholly exterior to a totality or an other that remains wholly exterior to the same, in the first conclusion Levinas underscores the work’s “analysis of interiority”. He will devote his second major work, *Otherwise than Being* (1974), to this analysis almost entirely. The identity of the same connects the two major works strongly, even if

²¹² One need only glance at its subtitle, *An Essay on Exteriority*. Commentators by and large take the notion of exteriority to be Levinas’ principal philosophical contribution.

Levinas' vocabulary in the second major work returns to *From Existence to the Existent's* self and ipseity from that of *Totality and Infinity's* I and the same.

The identity of the same follows on the heels of what I referred to in this section's opening paragraph and in the last chapter as the identity of ipseity. Identity that consists "...in being oneself, in identifying oneself from within" accomplishes "singularity", what Levinas often refers to as the unicity or uniqueness of election. Election to responsibility, older, to adopt a trope of the trace, than any a priori personal identification, identifies and individuates the I. I do not individuate myself in a spontaneous act of consciousness; I am chosen interiorly and so first individuated. To another's malevolent "gaze" and the "totality" (i.e., the hermeneutics of an existential situation) that gives it meaning, Levinas responds with the I's "interiority". The I's interiority is the "reversal" of the logical sphere and the totality that organizes it in this sense: even there, in the face of another's malevolent gaze, there still remains my responsibility for her.²¹³

The persecuting gaze of Hitlerian racism, for instance, does not succeed in reducing the Jew to a pseudo-biological racial category. The identity of the same does not deny the effect of the racist's gaze. Rather it affirms the burden of responsibility, self for another. This is the product of a relation with a beyond being and themes, or infinity *in* what the finite gaze captures. The binding with a beyond being or a relation with infinity without correlation draws Levinas' identity of the same closer to what he is missing conceptually, proximity, as I presented it in the last chapter. According to the description of interiority that commentators typically follow in *Totality and Infinity*, the I's

²¹³ In Levinas' 1988 interview with Jacques Message and Joel Roman, "*L'autre, utopie et justice*" ("The Other, Utopia, and Justice"), Levinas says that even an "SS man" has what he means by a face (EN 262, ENTO 232 or IRB 208). In other words, the question he considers is whether there is responsibility even there, face to face with an SS officer. He replies affirmatively, even if it is "painful each time!"

enjoyment and habitation in the second section of that work affirms its atheism as a separated being. My egoism is what individuates me. The other's face, entering my scene in the third section, puts me under judgment and dispossesses me even of how I personally identify myself. The model of the I in these descriptions from the start follows that of Enlightenment liberal theory, where an I derives its responsibilities from the free contracts it strikes up with others.

The "analysis of interiority" in *Totality and Infinity*'s first conclusion, by contrast, argues for an I that breaks with the themes it intends in finding itself already bound to another's fate. The identity of the same individuates me before another enters my scene, even if his hateful gaze captures me otherwise. On my interpretation, one need not travel so far from the identity of the same in *Totality and Infinity* to striking claims in the 1968 "Substitution" essay such as "The word 'I' [*Je*'] means to be answerable for everything and for everyone", and, even more severely, I am "...absolutely responsible for the persecution I undergo..." all the way to the point that I am "substitutable for the persecutor" (RPL 500, BPW 90; RPL 501, BPW 90; and RPL 506, BPW 94).

My discussion of the identity of the same has shifted terrain from the formal to the empirical concrete, specifically, to Levinas' response to the persecuting gaze of racism. This is not for the purposes of illustration, merely, nor is its import into the discussion careless. That the racial eugenics of totalitarian states, with its basis in dubious racial biology, hygiene, and anthropology, is one Levinas' chief early concerns is clear from his 1934 essay "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism", from his 1935 essay "On Escape", and from the *Carnets de captivité* that he wrote from 1940 to 1945 during his Nazi internment as a French-Jewish prisoner of war. I gave analyses of these texts in

Chapter 3. There I argued that these early works and Levinas' engagement with Carrel in particular set a political trajectory for his notion of transcendence with which few commentators have reckoned. Levinas finds the major western religious tradition, Christianity, and Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment political theories like liberalism and its dialectical partner, Marxist communitarianism, bereft of resources to combat racism's founding proposition, *I is body*, and, in some cases, troubling in themselves. These early political concerns establish identity as the problem and the key to responding to Hitlerian racism.

At least as late as *Totality and Infinity* in 1961 Levinas continues to grapple with the question of whether social-political life has become a project for racial eugenics. This is the politically charged context in which fecundity and more generally the other family structures he develops (paternity, maternity, filiality, and fraternity) should be understood. Before I get to my contextual analyses of these structures, however, I want to examine one of Levinas' first forays into question of Jewish identity after the Second World War, "Being Jewish" (1947). Because it is a work contemporaneous with *From Existence to the Existent*, it serves as a bridge from the account of the I's identity in that book to *Totality and Infinity's* identity of the same.

5. B. The "Jewish Question", 1946-47

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas seems to oppose the identity of the same to the identity of the like. By identity of the like, he means the view that human identity, particularly for non-European, non-white racial and ethnic minorities, is the product of the other's gaze (*regard*). The production of identity is external. The racist who captures the Jew with her malicious gaze does so on the basis of what the Jew looks like: he shares

the physical features, behaviors, or the ways of life of other Jews. Thus identity of the like takes seriously the grounding proposition of Hitlerism, that *I is body*. But it is an intellectual instrument by which one can analyze the practices of racism and the way of being-in-the-world that inform them beyond the crude reduction of a person to his body. This reductive proposition exists, in phenomenological existentialist terms, in inhabiting a concrete situation. What Levinas means by the identity of the like arises from his interpretation of Sartre's 1946 essay *Réflexions sur la question juive* (translated as *Anti-Semite and Jew*). Sartre had occasion to give summary lectures of *Réflexions sur la question juive* at the invitation of the Paris-based *Alliance israélite universelle* (AIU) in June of 1947.²¹⁴ It is to this book and to Levinas' two responses in 1947, "*Existentialisme et antisémitisme*" ("Existentialism and Anti-Semitism") and "Being Jewish" that I turn to deepen my reading of the identity of the same in *Totality and Infinity* by placing it once again in the framework of the fundamental thought that exercises Levinas during this period, the ontologico-existential structure of escape-frustration.

My analysis of the "Jewish Question", as Levinas puts it in "Being Jewish", is led by two questions (EJ 99, BJ 205). First and immediately, if he means to oppose the identity of the like to the identity of the same, then it must be that Levinas finds Sartre's analysis of anti-Semitic racism, in particular, of *how* the Jew's identity is produced, wanting. Why, then, in the passage I quoted above from *Totality and Infinity* does he say that there exists a "logical passage" from like to the same? Second and within the greater context of my work, how does Jewish facticity already represent an intellectual resource

²¹⁴ For historical background of the lecture, see Jonathan Judaken's *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006): 242.

for responding to Derrida's challenge that a relation with infinity beyond being is "impossible, unthinkable, unutterable"? (ED 168, WD 114)

5. B. (i.) Sartre's Response to the Jewish Question in *Réflexions sur la question juive*:

The Identity of the Like

In *Réflexions sur la question juive*, Sartre argues that the Jew understands himself as a product of the anti-Semite's gaze. Anti-Semitism for Sartre is a synthetic choice, a

...free and total choice of oneself, a comprehensive attitude that one adopts not only toward Jews but toward men in general, toward history and society; it is at one and the same time a passion and a conception of the world (RQJ 18-19, ASJ 17).

The anti-Semite adopts this racist "passion" and its correlative "conception of the world" in order to evade the responsibility for taking charge of his own future. There is less anxiety and more comfort in being among a group of racist thugs than in authentically deciding to act according to one's conscience alone. Thus the anti-Semite lives in bad faith. He regards not only the Jew as a mere thing, i.e., identical in itself,²¹⁵ but indeed regards himself as a thing in order to avoid the responsibility to secure his own place in the world.²¹⁶ By reducing the Jew to a being-seen, the anti-Semite creates, maintains, and ensures his own social and personal identity. This identity gives a stable locus for meaning and an orientation in the world: "If the Jew did not exist...", Sartre comments, "...the anti-Semite would invent him" (RQJ 14, ASJ 13).²¹⁷ The externalist production of identity by another's gaze in *Réflexions sur la question juive* is what Levinas in the first conclusion of *Totality and Infinity* refers to as the identity of the like.

²¹⁵ I mean this in the sense Sartre gives being in itself in EN 29-34, BN 24-30.

²¹⁶ "[The anti-Semite] chooses the permanence and impenetrability of stone, the total irresponsibility of the warrior who obeys his leaders—and he has no leader" (RQJ 63, ASJ 53).

²¹⁷ Later Sartre expresses the same thought. "The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: that is the simple truth from which we must start. In this sense the democrat is right as against the anti-Semite, for it is the anti-Semite who *makes* the Jew" (RQJ 84, ASJ 69). Again, the "...Jew is in the situation of a Jew because he lives in the midst of a society that takes him for a Jew" (RQJ 88, ASJ 72).

In Europe's recent past, public intellectual discussions of the Jews approached them as a problem to be solved by integration, assimilation, or more severe means because they did not have a place in the modern world. The values at play ranged from those of Enlightenment liberalism to racism. Levinas will argue that Sartre keeps this opposition—Jew and modern world—in place but updates the methodological tools with existentialist analysis. It is an admirable step forward, but it fails to account for the meaning of being Jewish that goes beyond the anti-Semite's gaze. This meaning is only accessible through the escape-frustration structure. On Sartre's account, meanwhile, it is evident that the very reason that there is a Jewish question in the first place is anti-Semitic racism.

Yet the anti-Semite's gaze, while principally responsible, is not solely responsible for creating the Jew. Others are integral to the plot. There is the democrat and his liberal theory. He defends the Jew against racial taunts and subjugation on the grounds of the universal principle that the Jew is a man, with the same rights of other men. He advises the Jew to hush up about his religious and cultural particularity so that, as an abstracted, atomic I, he might more smoothly assimilate into wider society.²¹⁸ There is also the Jew himself. He responds to his situation in one of two ways, either authentically—i.e., with lucid clarity of his oppression and taking charge to change it—or inauthentically—i.e.,

²¹⁸ In order to make this case, the democrat's "...defense is to persuade individuals that they exist in an *isolated state*. 'There are no Jews', he says, 'there is no Jewish question'. This means that he wants to separate the Jew from his religion, from his family, from his ethnic community, in order to plunge him into the democratic crucible whence he will emerge *naked and alone, an individual and solitary particle like other particles* [my emphasis—PJG]" (RQJ 67, ASJ 57). Sartre's description of the democrat's values, particularly, that the Jew shed the particular characteristics of his embodied identity and religious and cultural heritage and embrace instead the abstract atomism of the I shares ground with Levinas' critique of liberalism in "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism". I detailed this critique of liberalism's response to Hitlerism in Chapter 3 above.

the myriad ways of evading or forgetting his responsibility and living in bad faith.²¹⁹

Finally, there are the secondhand anti-Semites who, while they do not possess the passion of anti-Semitism, they are not innocent bystanders, either. Rather, they share blame for anti-Semitism in choosing to do nothing (RQJ 59-60, ASJ 50-51). Each of these actors is responsible for the racially oppressive situation in which the Jew finds himself.²²⁰

That is the key term in Sartre's essay. It is a phenomenological analysis of the Jew's existential *situation*. The Jew's situation is constituted by others, foremost the anti-Semite, and simultaneously constituted by the Jew himself, whether by his authentic facing up to the situation or by various inauthentic flights from it. In his analysis, Sartre follows the circle of the understanding in the analytic of Dasein in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (SZ 148-53, BT 188-95). In Heidegger's terms, the circle of the understanding is the interplay, on the one hand, of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*, the operation of the ontologico-existential structure of situatedness or *Befindlichkeit*) and, on the other, of projection (*Entwurf*, the operation of the ontologico-existential structure of the understanding or *verstehen*). This interplay constitutes Dasein's facticity (*Faktizität*) or its being in a factual situation (the "that-it-is"). It is in this factual situation that Dasein's set of possibilities and concerns manifest themselves to Dasein, if not yet as objects of reflection. In other words, Dasein understands itself and its potential choices by finding

²¹⁹ Of this heroic courage in the face of racial violence, Sartre comments, "Jewish authenticity consists in choosing oneself *as Jew*—that is, in realizing one's Jewish condition. The authentic Jew abandons the myth of the universal man; he knows himself and wills himself into history as a historic and damned creature; he ceases to run away from himself and to be ashamed of his own kind. He understands that society is bad; for the naïve monism of the inauthentic Jew he substitutes a social pluralism" (RQJ 166, ASJ 136). In contrast to the authentic Jew, who faces up to his situation with fatal acceptance and courage, "What characterizes the inauthentic Jews is that they deal with their situation by running away from it; they have chosen to deny it, or to deny their responsibilities, or to deny their isolation, which appears to be intolerable to them" (RQJ 112, ASJ 92). Sartre goes on to describe various "*avenue[s] of flight*" that the inauthentic Jew takes to evade responsibility for his situation.

²²⁰ "In this circumstance, there is not one of us who would not be totally guilty and even criminal; the Jewish blood that the Nazis spilled falls on all our heads" (RQJ 164-65, ASJ 135-36).

itself already *in* the limits or restrictions of its circumstances. A human being's essence lies in her existence, which is determined by the integration of these three ontologico-existential structures.

Sartre applies Heidegger's circle of the understanding to the Jew's situation, remarking,

For us, man is defined first of all as a being 'in a situation'. That means that he forms a synthetic whole with his situation—biological, economic, political, cultural, etc. He cannot be distinguished from his situation, for it forms him and decides his possibilities; but, inversely, it is he who gives it meaning by making his choices within it and by it. To be in a situation, as we see it, is *to choose oneself* in a situation, and men differ from one another in their situations and also in the choices they themselves make of themselves (RQJ 72, ASJ 60).

“*[W]ho*” the Jew is, i.e., how to define her or any other's identity, means to inquire into her *present situation*. His racial oppression explains why the inauthentic Jew puts his effort into fleeing the identity to which he is enchained by trying to “...prove *in his person* that there are no Jews” (RQJ 115, ASJ 95). He over-determines his associations, gestures, interests, sentiments, speech, style, etc., because he has internalized the anti-Semite's oppressive and critical gaze. These over-determinations aim to prove to the world that there is, in fact, no Jewish essence, not in him, nor in any Jew. Yet the very fact that the Jew *assumes* this unceasingly self-critical attitude proves for Sartre that at the most primal level he *accepts* the perspective through which the Other sees him. He is thus doubled in his consciousness and alienated from himself. His bad faith, his play at not being a Jew, is evidence that the Jew knows the truth of his present situation precisely in his taking flight from it. While the authentic Jew does not live in this degree of bad faith, the same conclusion applies: at a basic level, he accepts the other's picture of him. Jewish identity is the external product of the anti-Semite and his world.

In each case, inauthentic and authentic Jew, what impresses Levinas are the intellectual instruments existentialism brings to bear on the Jewish question. Who the Jew is lies outside her, namely, in the ensemble of conditions, limits, and restrictions that form her understanding. We can list these conditions abstractly for purposes of analysis: anxiety over the future or over death, having to work, having to share intimate and social spaces with others, etc. But in the concrete, there is no distance or distinction between the Jew's identity and her material situation. Unlike Christianity or liberalism, Sartre's existential analysis takes seriously Hitlerism's crude proposition on human identity that equates I and body. That is the beginning of a response to racism.

Inquiring into the Jew's present situation is, moreover, the only way to answer “*who*” the Jew is because Sartre denies that the Jews are a historical people.²²¹ For Sartre, a community can define itself on the basis of a collective memory, of familiarity with a land of its own, and on the basis of national and religious identity. Pogroms, ghettoization, diaspora, and a long martyrdom have eroded any sense of a historical Jewish identity.²²² The greatest force, in Sartre's assessment, binding Jews into a common identity, sympathy, and solidarity is the anti-Semitic racism that reduces the Jew's identity to a being-seen. He finds no a meaning for Jewish identity beyond being-seen. To put it in Levinas' terms in “Being Jewish”, Sartre reserves no place for being

²²¹ Sartre summarizes, “Thus the facts of the problem appear as follows: a concrete historical community is basically *national* and *religious*; but the Jewish community, which once was both, has been deprived bit by bit of both these concrete characteristics. We may call it an *abstract historical community* [my emphasis—PJG]. Its dispersion implies the breaking up of common traditions, and it was remarked above that its twenty centuries of dispersion and political impotence forbid its having a *historical past* [original emphasis]. If this is true, as Hegel says, that a community is historical to the degree that it remembers its history, then the Jewish community is the *least historical of all*, for it keeps a memory of nothing but a long martyrdom, that is, of a long passivity [my emphasis—PJG]” (RQJ 80-81, ASJ 66-67).

²²² Religion is not a strong candidate for what binds Jewish identity, either, because Sartre takes it (at least in among the French Jews) as largely “symbolic” and as having been exteriorly defined by Christianity (RQJ 80, ASJ 66).

Jewish within the “economy of being”. His analysis remains beholden, then, to starting from a discourse of abstract rights that would ground the Jew’s place in social-political life, even if Sartre himself avoids liberal theory’s conclusions.

In sum, the strong interpretive emphasis on the present situation by which the anti-Semite makes the Jew externally occludes any other way by which the Jew would construct an identity. Yet the Jew is nonetheless responsible for his racial oppression. He is at every moment free to struggle against his limits in order to forge new possibilities of defining himself. The authentic Jew, Sartre remarks, “...*makes himself a Jew*, in the face of all and against all” (RQJ 167, ASJ 137). He chooses the heroic virility that begins in the consciousness that even in the most restrictive circumstances, the human being who assumes responsibility for his situation demonstrates his freedom. It is precisely on these terms—that the anti-Semite’s gaze casts the Jew into a racially oppressive situation; that responsibility commences in a consciousness of the present oppression; and that commitment to revolt against the situation demonstrates freedom—that Levinas plants his response in “Being Jewish”.

5. B. (ii.) Levinas’ Dialectical Response and the Displacement of the “Jewish Question”

In “Being Jewish”, Levinas’ focus is not, actually, on the “Jewish Question” (EJ 99, BJ 205).²²³ It is not that this question is unimportant; it is rather that it gets mired in identity politics debates and fails to consider Jewish existence as itself an ontologico-existential structure. Reflecting on being Jewish could not be more pertinent in the wake of the Second World War, when a response to state racism is still wanting. It remains a

²²³ Several commentators offer commentaries for “Being Jewish”. See, inter al., Judaken’s *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question* 257-59 and Benny Lévy’s “*Commentaire*” in *Cahiers d’Études lévinassiennes* 1 (2003): 107-17.

live, undecided question, moreover, if politics just means applying eugenics to social life, from which no one can take distance.

As I remarked above, historically the question treats Jews as a problem to be solved: they seem not to fit very well into the modern world, so what is to be done with them? In exclusively social-political terms, then, the question refers to a "...right of the Jew to live, without seeking a reason for being" (EJ 99,BJ 205). This sort of "rhetoric", Levinas comments further, already reduces Jews or the Jewish event to a "purely natural fact". Notice that this reduction can go in distinct directions: either the Jews, abstracted from their racial, cultural, and religious particularity, are endowed with the same dignity and rights as any other human group, considered baldly; or the Jews, tied up irremissibly to their racial, cultural, and religious particularity, are objects of anti-Semitic discrimination and persecution. In liberalism, at one end of the spectrum, and Hitlerism, at the other end, the Jewish question is posed with reference to greater politics and society, begins with the assumption that the Jew's identity is a "purely natural fact"—for liberalism, she is in fact a human being; for Hitlerism, she is in fact only her body—and ends up drawing radically different responses. And yet, the positions condition one another: each presupposes the "purely natural fact" of the Jew's freedom in the present, a freedom either to affirm an I who contracts with others or a freedom to accept the fate to which her biological being enchains her. Levinas' strategy is to displace the debate over how Jews should be integrated into or partitioned from politics and social life by avoiding this presupposition altogether. His aim is articulate what it means to "...feel for oneself a place in the economy of being" as a Jew. It is not, How do Jews fit?, but rather, Why do Jews exist?

This is where Sartre errs. He considers only the former question, long framed by the values of Enlightenment liberal theory at one extreme and anti-Semitism at the other. While he rightly reorients the Jewish question with an ontologico-existential analysis, Sartre continues to consider the Jews as a problem that needs solving in the terms of justifying how *they* fit into *our* world, i.e., as a social-political problem. He does not see the meaning of being Jewish that escapes these conditions. Even as he rejects each, liberalism and anti-Semitism, his analysis remains beholden to the Jewish question's basic framework. It outlines a certain kind of response: flight from the world, whether by assimilation, willful ignorance, or insularity, or combat against its anti-Semitism. What the existentialist response presupposes, on Levinas' interpretation, is that a fact, like a Jew's identity as an anti-Semite has defined it, can be converted into a free and self-determinative act (even inauthenticity is an act of freedom). In any given present there is the full potential to break with the past.

Alongside freedom and the fullness of the present is the interplay in Sartre's essay of materiality and bondage to a past. In "Existentialism and Anti-Semitism", his first response to Sartre's summary of *Réflexions sur la question juive* at the AIU, Levinas praises Sartre: the intellectual tools existentialism provides allow one to oppose the "commitment [*engagement*]" to anti-Semitism without reducing it to "materiality" (EA 3, EAS 28).²²⁴ Sartre does not dismiss the Jew's materiality entirely; rather, his concrete situation, as we saw above, defines the Jew. To be sure, the anti-Semite's notion of materiality has its basis in pseudo-biology, scientific paganism, and racial myth, where these prescribe fate, whereas Sartre's concrete situation is an ontologico-existential

²²⁴ The English translators have "pure materiality". There is no "pure" in the French text, nor does the context suggest it.

interpretation of facticity, where one is utterly free to alter one's conditions. Nonetheless, to define the Jew by his concrete situation takes Hitlerism's grounding proposition with regard to human identity, *I is body*, seriously.

According to his assessments in the 1930s, as I showed in Chapter 3, liberalism fails to do this. It fails to develop, specifically, the "feeling of identity" between I and body, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the need to escape from it (QRPH 18, RPH 68). Up until Sartre's *Réflexions*, Levinas continues in "Existentialism and Anti-Semitism", thinkers who have affirmed that man is his materiality "...contested at the same time the rights of man and advocated anti-Semitism" (EA 3, EAS 31). For these "theoreticians of belonging", not only is there no escape from materiality; on this basis, they can argue that materiality prescribes the individual's fate. Meanwhile, Sartre accepts that fleeing one's concrete situation is akin to trying to jump over one's shadow. But the steely-eyed look at how it determines and restricts one's commitments and possibilities already evinces separation from the fact of being in a situation. Sartre affirms the present in its fullness, that is, my resolute decision to rebel against the conditions that restrict me with the aim of altering them, at the same time that he maintains that there is no escape from one's material conditions, limits, and restrictions. Freedom is unthinkable without them.

Thus Levinas translates Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive* into the fundamental thought that by and large directs his philosophical writing in 1930s-40s, the ontologico-existential structure of escape-frustration. It means, concretely, the impossibility of being what one is and the impossibility of fleeing oneself. Sartre's is a considerable advancement over liberalism because he takes seriously, *mutatis mutandis*,

the reductive and simple-minded logic of Hitlerism's definition of human identity. But it remains mired in the identity politics of the "'Jewish Question'". Sartre fails to see the import of being Jewish beyond the simple fact of *there is being* (read: *there is a Jew*) because the "ontological meaning" that characterizes the existence of the non-Jewish world prevents it (EJ 101,BJ 206).

The "ontological meaning" that characterizes the non-Jewish world is a "kinship" between two forms of existence that at first glance seem contradictory, Christianity and paganism (EJ 101,BJ 207). The reconciliation of the opposition of freedom and materiality in Sartre's essay, if one follows Levinas' reasoning, has its intellectual precursor in this kinship. I have already detailed in Chapter 3 how, on Levinas' account, Christianity, through its political institution, the church, has over time compromised itself by assimilating elements of paganism to keep up the fight, paradoxically, against barbarism. Because Judaism does not enter world history through politics like Christianity, Levinas claims that it is anti-paganism in the fullest sense. On the one hand, the Christian form of existence is "absolutely free" from constraints because it has at its disposal all the resources of interior life (EJ 101,BJ 207). Each present is full of the potential of a deliverance from sins and break with the chains of the past by the inward embrace of God, the Christian's contemporary and brother (EJ 102,BJ 208). Where Levinas says that the mediation of the incarnate Son between God the Father and believer constitutes Christianity's "originality", his implication is that in Judaism the Father absconds from the world he creates.²²⁵ On the other hand, the pagan form of existence unfolds "...like something eternal: a human nature defined for ever...", classifiable into

²²⁵ One must accept that Levinas speaks broadly of Christianity and does not consider the tradition of *Deus absconditus* in Christian thinkers like Nicolaus Cusanus.

“stable kinds” like races amid a world of “...regular rhythms, of pre-existing forms, of implacable laws” (EJ 101, BJ 207). Freedom and materiality are not contradictory. They are for Levinas the “dialectical essence of the [non-Jewish] world”. On Levinas’ interpretation, this dialectical essence is pregnant in the very fact of each present. It is from the present that Christianity and paganism start: the Christian seeking her new birth, the anti-Semite seeking the other’s enchainment (no less than his own).

The dialectical interpretation of non-Jewish world’s essence outmaneuvers the “Jewish Question”, even Sartre’s admirable ontologico-existential contribution to it. So long as the world presupposes the “purely natural fact” of the Jew’s freedom in the present, it remains mired in the identity politics to which this question has traditionally led. This represents less progress than one would like in responding to the anti-Semite’s malicious gaze. Institutions that guarantee equal rights for all on the basis of a common human dignity, the recourse of retributive justice for those harmed, and education aimed at contesting anti-Semitic practices, speech, and ideas are unquestionably important. Levinas’ argument is that their orientation in the dialectical essence of the world prevents these valuable institutional arrangements from seeing the meaning of Jewish existence *beyond both* the logic by which the anti-Semite reduces the Jew to one kind of brute, purportedly natural fact and the logic by which liberalism uplifts the Jew into another.

5. B. (iii.) The Meaning, Beyond the Fact of Being, of Jewish Facticity: Reference to Another Who Pardons. A Bridge to *Totality and Infinity*’s Identity of the Same

Levinas approaches being Jewish from the feeling of being trapped in one’s skin and the need to escape. It warrants repeating that this ontologico-existential structure drives Levinas’ philosophical output in the first two decades of his publishing career. In

the 1934 essay “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”, we get its context, politics, and encounter its source, racism; in the 1935 essay “On Escape”, we learn how it is more fundamental than Dasein’s structures of existence in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*; in the 1940-45 *Carnets de captivité* entry on Carrel, we observe Levinas continuing to grapple with the question of whether, given the rise of racist fascist regimes, social-political life is just a laboratory for eugenics from which no one can take distance; finally, in the 1947 book *From Existence to the Existent*, we see how, through the proto-ontological armature of I and self, the need for escape culminates in the formal desideratum of his philosophy, transcendence, and its concretion, fecundity. In fecundity, developed in far greater depth in the 1961 major work *Totality and Infinity*, a father substitutes himself for his son. If the anti-Semite reduces the Jew’s identity to a being-seen, the father’s identity in fecundity represents a model for how the Jew escapes this capture *because* he is responsible for another. Being Jewish does not owe itself to a Jewish pride or particularism, Levinas remarks (EJ 105,BJ 210). It is rather one more model, like fecundity, for the concretion of transcendence. Hence it is evident, as it was from my interpretation of Levinas’ earliest political essay on Hitlerism, that identity is the problem—Hitlerism’s *I is body*—and the key—Levinas’ *self for another*—to fulfilling transcendence.

In “Being Jewish”, Levinas does not yet make this argument. There is little indication that he is thinking of transcendence as, concretely, responsibility for another, and that the Jew lives this transcendence in her facticity.²²⁶ Transcendence is rather another’s pardon. The Jew, martyr to the violence and suffering of racial persecution, finds respite from—without altogether forgetting—the anti-Semite’s gaze because in his

²²⁶ Indeed, he remarks toward the end of “Being Jewish”, “To exist as a creature is *not* to be crushed beneath adult responsibility [my emphasis—PJG]” (EJ 105,BJ 210). I discuss this term, “creature”, below.

very facticity, he refers to another in this way.²²⁷ He is already, formally speaking, another self. Concretely, this means that he is not captive to a tragic solitude because another lifts this weight of being.

Levinas' more developed response to anti-Semitic racism will come in *Totality and Infinity*, where, as I sketched above, the Jew escapes the anti-Semite's capture *because* he is responsible for another, and *not only* because the waves of youth after the Holocaust inaugurate the infinite time that pardons his having survived the horrors of the past. Responsibility for another requires an understanding of human identity structured as one-for-the-other. The farthest-reaching consequences of this identity, where I am responsible even for my persecutor, come in Levinas' second major work, *Otherwise than Being*. Meanwhile, we have to distinguish the I's fecundity notionally according to two concrete structures: pardon and responsibility. In "Being Jewish", Levinas focuses almost exclusively on the conditions in Jewish existence that make the former actual.

Jewish facticity does not rest on a theology (EJ 103,BJ 208 and EJ 105,BJ 210). The Jew is the "...very entrance of the religious event into the world; better yet, he is the impossibility of a world without religion" (EJ 104,BJ 209). One must qualify this introduction of the "religious". Religion must be taken, first, in its ethical sense without the presupposition that a divinity exists. For Levinas, my religious being or the revelation of a religious truth is my egoism under another's judgment. He thus finds a place for guilt of a *certain sort* in ethics, which I have already mentioned in section 4. H. above and to which I will have occasion to return in my further discussions of his two major works

²²⁷ Recall that in "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" Levinas notes briefly that Judaism bears the "magnificent message" of the pardon. He has not yet developed it with regard to transcendence, since he only defines transcendence 13 years later in *From Existence to the Existent*. "Being Jewish" is one of its first uses of the pardon in this regard. See my 3. C. (ii.) above.

below. In “Being Jewish”, in particular, the religious event will mean the Jew’s suffering and, beyond it, pardon. Second, one ought to bear in mind “Being Jewish’s” audience, the AIU, and the historical context, two years removed from the end of the Second World War. It appeals far more to the future of the survivors (construing this broadly) of the Holocaust rather than to their responsibility. The Jew’s entry into the world as a religious event bears a message of hope for a time beyond the times the survivor has witnessed and beyond those she will witness.²²⁸ As I mentioned above, Levinas will not make his fullest argument for the responsibility of the one who undergoes racial persecution—her responsibility even for her persecutor—until *Otherwise than Being*. Finally, recall that in *From Existence to the Existent*, a book contemporaneous with “Being Jewish”, Levinas conceives the human existent as an emergence or event of being: to have a personal identity, make the primal claim that this body is *mine*, entails effort to position oneself and establish a hypostasis. This proto-ontology Levinas adapts to Jewish facticity.²²⁹ As a “religious event”, its meaning is found neither in a formal theological structure nor in an ontological theme. The meaning is inseparable from the concrete experience where the Hitlerian anti-Semite corners the Jew. Levinas says,

The experience of Hitlerism was not sensed by everyone to be one of those periodic returns to barbarism which, all in all, is fundamentally in order, and about which one consoles oneself by recalling the punishment that strikes it. The recourse of Hitlerian anti-Semitism to racial myth reminded the Jew of the *irremissibility of his being*. *Not to be able to flee one’s condition—for many this was like vertigo* [my emphasis—PJG] (EJ 103, BJ 208).

If this—“not to be able to flee one’s condition”—were all there was to Jewish facticity, then Sartre’s analysis would suffice. He had already shown that the Jew was this sort of

²²⁸ For further explanation, see my discussion of Levinas’ interpretation of rational hope in Kant in section 4. J. (i.) above.

²²⁹ This is clear in passages like, “The past that creation and election introduce into the economy of being communicates to the present *the gravity of a fact, the weight of an existence, and a sort of base* [my emphasis—PJG]” (EJ 104, BJ 209).

fact: an I who *is* its concrete situation, that situation being defined externally by the anti-Semite's gaze. This understanding of facticity neglects Jewish existence as a religious event. It is not only that one must bear the look of racial persecution from which fleeing is impossible; it is that this look refers the one persecuted to *another* who would bear her existence and offer pardon.

A closer look at the passage will help note the difference. Hitlerian anti-Semitism was for many like “vertigo”, Levinas remarks. “Vertigo” has a precise sense in his writings during this period. A passage in *From Existence to the Existent* links it to emotion: all emotion is “fundamentally vertigo”, the disintegration of the hypostasis while holding onto it (DEE 121,EE 68). Under the anti-Semite's gaze, the Jew is identified in this way and at the same time is unable to gather himself up. No freedom can shoulder this capture—it has already *passed*. But the Jew is also the entrance of the religious event into the non-Jewish world. He has to take a position vis-à-vis his religious being and establish a Jewish hypostasis.²³⁰ This is what Levinas means when he says in “Being Jewish” that the Jew lives the “emotional schema of personhood [*personnalité*] as son and as elected” (EJ 105,BJ 210). “Personhood” refers to the structure of identity that *From Existence to the Existent* shows: I is definitively oneself, and oneself means for another. Like “vertigo”, it refers to this structure in a precise sense. Personhood refers to the I's fecundity in the sense of hope for non-definitiveness. In *From Existence to the*

²³⁰ Incidentally, this should remind one of why the term *proto-ontology* is more appropriate for the ontological structure that primarily exercises Levinas' philosophy in this period: like transcendence, the “religious event” of Jewish existence is entirely intra-worldly, taking place on the ontico-existential plane where material conditions are scarce. But its *sense* or *meaning* (*sens*) is not found in being. The understanding of being belongs to themes. The relation with a beyond being or the infinite, as soon as it is spoken, translates it into a theme. The sense or meaning of the Jew as the “...entrance of the religious event into the world...” is beyond being. What begins as an ontological account of escape-frustration culminates in transcendence, where the I gives or sacrifices itself for another, like a father substituting himself for his son while maintaining his identity as a father. The meaning of transcendence is inexplicable in the traditional language of philosophy, ontology, even if it takes place there. Hence, my term, proto-ontology.

Existent, Levinas says, “*The ‘personhood’ of a being is its very need for time as for a miraculous fecundity in the instant itself, by which it recommences as other [translation modified]*” (DEE 159,EE 95). The strongest precursor to the thought of the trace is in the “*‘personhood’ of a being*”, or the I’s fecundity, in these final pages of *From Existence to the Existent*. In the “*‘personhood’ of a being*”, specifically, the absolute past to which it refers, one has the basis for, as Levinas puts it in “The Trace of the Other”, an “...‘eschatology without hope for the self or without liberation in my time’”, 16 years later (ED 142,WD 95).²³¹ Meanwhile, rather than recommencing as one responsible for another, “Being Jewish” aims to show how Jewish facticity involves hope for untying the identity to which Hitlerism binds the Jew and retying his identity to another who forgives him.

That the Jew bears herself as a *religious* event, not merely an event of *being*, consists, then, in recommencing with one’s past across the break of another’s pardon. In this sense, it follows the model I described in 4. H. (iii.) that makes the relation with a beyond being intelligible, identity without identity. The Jew as a religious event calls for conceiving a fact in an “absolutely passive manner” (EJ 104,BJ 209). Existentialist discourses are unable to do so. They convert the passivity of finding myself in a situation into action: in the tightest chains, there remain my possibilities. What accounts for this on Levinas’ interpretation, as I detailed above, is what he calls the dialectical essence of the world: a present conceived without origin, i.e., full of the potential to be born newly by a free act. Sartre takes responsibility to commence from a free power of choice to embrace

²³¹ The citation is Derrida’s from “Violence and Metaphysics”. Between the 1964 and 1967 publications of the essay, Derrida was intrigued enough by the trace, as I detailed in Chapter 2, to move this passage from a footnote to the body proper of the essay (see also my footnote 179). He fails, as I argued in 4. H. (ii.) above, to connect trace back to fecundity.

one's facticity. This presupposes that human identity has the structure of an I freely choosing its commitments (*engagements*). It leaves egoism intact. Egoism for Levinas follows a transactional model: what I do, even if it is on another's behalf, I do because I get something in return. The return is what makes it meaningful.

Levinas' primary thesis, in sharp contrast, is that there is a responsibility before free choice and that cannot be assumed. It is explicable in the formal ontological terms of identity as the structure one-for-the-other. This is why the Jew is not only the entrance of the religious event into the world but "...better yet, the impossibility of a world without religion", namely, because identity is not *only* structured as egoism, a world of commerce and intercessions of peace between wars, even if modern philosophy, on Levinas' reading, by and large conceives it this way. Acts of giving and sacrifice, like the son's election by his father's love, indicate otherwise. One does not choose to be loved, nor does one choose one's loved ones. But one finds oneself nevertheless responsible for them, which neglect or refusal does not attenuate.

That this is Levinas' primary thesis will be clear from my presentation of the concretions of identity of the same in *Totality and Infinity* like fecundity below. To return to the first question that motivated my analysis of the Jewish question above: How is one to understand Levinas' claim in the first conclusion of that book that there is a "logical passage" from the identity of the like to the identity of the same? In "Being Jewish", the passage is concrete in another's pardon for the one who survived. This outlines an answer to my second question concerning Derrida's challenge to the relation to infinity in Levinas' thought. In the pardon, the Jew's identity is tied to another who forgives, even as the suffering witnessed is not negated. At once, I am my being and beyond it.

Levinas uses two themes from the Jewish tradition to conceive a fact as a “total passivity” (EJ 104,BJ 209). In these themes he finds important intellectual resources for the account of the I’s identity in *From Existence to the Existent*. First, a fact is a “creature”.²³² To be a creature is to follow a command. As a creature, the Jew’s reference to others, i.e., to other created beings, is built in, as it were, to her facticity prior to her freedom to contract with them. The command is not errant, furthermore. It chains the Jew to a past origin in the Father. Through the Father’s love, the Jew learns monotheism. For Levinas, the truth of monotheism is the father’s abstention or hiddenness. Second, Jewish facticity is an “election”. In election there is a rupture from the Jew’s origin without severing ties altogether. For instance, the structure he names paternity in *Totality and Infinity* is not causal, which binds the effect irremissibly to its origin, but describes a relation between terms (father-sons) without a correlation. As a religious event in the world, the Jew’s election in “Being Jewish” does not command her merely to venerate the Father. This proved ineffectual during the long night of Hitlerism during which God hid himself.²³³ Rather, election is that of a child among siblings equally loved by their father. It commands the Jew to go toward others, or better, evinces an orientation toward others *within* the Jew’s facticity. That is the meaning of entering the world as a religious event: to “...refer in one’s very facticity to someone who bears existence for you, who bears sin, who can forgive” (EJ 105,BJ 210).

This passage ought to be understood in context of the emotion, in the sense I detailed above, of one who bears the irremissibility of being a Jew. The power of anti-

²³² In *A Covenant of Creatures*, Fagenblat puts the notion of the creature and the covenantal bond between created beings at the heart of Levinas’ ethics. He argues informatively that Levinas draws the notion of creature from a phenomenological hermeneutics of certain sources in the Judaic tradition. Levinas ultimately expropriates the ethical covenant to all nations, not just Israel.

²³³ Responsibility in this absence of God is the topic of Levinas’ 1955 essay “*Aimer la Thora plus que Dieu*” (“Loving the Torah more than God”) in DL 189-93,DE 142-45.

Semitism, which it shares with all racisms, is to make the Jew suffer *from being Jewish*. Being a Jew is the problem. It is also the key to Levinas' response to anti-Semitic racism. The anti-Semite fails to imprison the Jew once and for all in her hateful gaze *because* he has already been oriented ethically toward another. Suffering testifies to this orientation. It is contracted by a past origin. But the one who "bears existence for you, who bears sin", is not the Father nor certainly, as in Christianity, the Father incarnate in the Son. It is another human being. Levinas makes no claim that this other human being must be a Jew. He only claims that Jewish existence entails that the meaning of one's identity is beyond the fact that one *is* a Jew and is rather in the fact that one is *another*, whereby this definitiveness is lightened. Martyr to racial persecution and suffering serves to testify to an identity structured in this way, just as the pain I undergo testifies to the other in the same. The other human being alone "can forgive" the survivor of the Holocaust (EJ 105,BJ 210).

A religious event, the Jew enters the non-Jewish world tied to another who pardons her past. There is a utopian message in Jewish facticity for Levinas, prompting him to conclude (rather uncharacteristically) that it gives a new sense on what it means to be free (EJ 105,BJ 210). It is not that the I freely goes out and seeks another's forgiveness. A pardon is not contract and exchange for Levinas. That is egoism. Egoism is tied to finite time, whereas pardon inaugurates what Levinas will call in *Totality and Infinity* infinite time. Besides, how could one seek forgiveness for having survived the unforgiveable? Jewish existence rather retains election to racial persecution.

Through pardon the Jew gains a new orientation, however, on that to which he bore witness. The orientation is toward a more authentic future, beyond the mortality of

his Jewish being, since the racial myths of Hitlerian anti-Semitism had already proven this irremissible. This is evident in *Totality and Infinity*, where Levinas comments,

The future does not come to me from a swarming of indistinguishable possibles which would flow toward my present and which I would grasp; it comes to me from an absolute interval whose other shore the Other absolutely other [*Autrui absolument autre*]*—though he be my son—*is capable of making, and of connecting with the past [my emphasis—PJG] (TI 260, Tal 283).

Similarly, in “Being Jewish”, Levinas says that the Jew lives not only the “emotional schema of personhood” as “elected” but as “son”. It is the son, not the I, who is capable of opening a future beyond the fate to which Hitlerism’s hateful *I is body* reduces the Jew. This is because he is both *me*—in his responsibility for him, the father *is* his child—and *not me*—to pardon, he must not be bound to his father’s fate.²³⁴ But in what sense is “*my son*” “Other absolutely other”? While we should not overlook or excuse Levinas’ sexism, the son is for Levinas the actual, not figurative, generations of Jewish youth after the Holocaust. They will not be beholden to their parents’ past. In finite time, infinite time is produced, the hope for a future beyond the I’s hope.²³⁵ In pardon, the I is fecund, beyond being and themes, while maintaining its identity. We thus arrive at a resource for the second question that motivated my retrieval of “Being Jewish”, Derrida’s challenge that a relation with infinity beyond being is “impossible, unthinkable, unutterable” (ED 168, WD 114). It happens in pardon.

We also have a response to the first: there is a “logical passage” from the identity of the like to the same because the inclusion of another in the I does not annul how the I is identified externally. At least as late as *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas remains faithful to

²³⁴ For the thought that the father is and is not his child, see TI 244-45, Tal 267, TI 249, Tal 271-72, and TI 254, Tal 277.

²³⁵ Levinas characterizes hope this way in *From Existence to the Existent*, while avowing the definitiveness of the present “To hope... is to hope for the reparation of the irreparable; it is to hope for the present” (DEE 56, EE 93). For the relation between the absolute future or infinite time and fecundity, see TI 245, Tal 267 and TI 246, Tal 268.

the thought that governs his philosophical output in the 1930s-40s, the ontologico-existential structure of no escape. His acceptance of the identity of the like affirms this: bearing witness to suffering is never eliminated, nor can it be negated by the power of the I, just as a sensation, like the aching of pain (*dolence de la douleur*), must be endured patiently (see my section 4. I. above). He integrates the identity of the like into his own view. It amplifies, in fact, the internalist production of identity, a self that refers ethically to another. In “Being Jewish”, Levinas’ response to Sartre is that the anti-Semite fails to capture the Jew in his gaze because the survivor of racial persecution has *already* been pardoned by others, even if they arrive in a future in which she will not take part.

“Being Jewish” offers one sense of the I’s fecundity, the pardon. It is visible through the racial persecution that the Jew endures and suffers. Having displaced the “Jewish Question”, Levinas finds an answer in this way to the question of why Jews exist. More broadly, he finds a place in the “economy of being” for a factual community whose identity, reduced by racist hatred, does not have its meaning only there. That is the wisdom, if one may be allowed to conjecture for a moment, that the survivor imparts. It begins from his responsibility for having been pardoned for surviving.

Jewish facticity concretizes an alternative model of identity to that found, by and large, in modern philosophy, egoism. Formally, the I is not only *me*—whether in calm equilibrium with myself or identified externally by my sex, skin color, culture, ability, etc.—but is a one-for-the-other. I move presently to show that Jewish facticity is not the *only* concretion of the one-for-the-other. The child’s pardon of the parent’s definitiveness leads to the parent’s responsibility for her and, further, to the child’s responsibility for those who are not its kin. We can distinguish, as I mentioned above, the I’s fecundity

notionally according to these two concrete structures, pardon and responsibility. While each is present in *Totality and Infinity*, section IV of that book focuses on the concretions of responsibility in the structures produced in the family, particularly the I's fecundity and its break with the family in fraternity, or service on behalf of the welfare and fate of those one does not know. By linking these structures to the texts of the earlier period, as I have been doing, what comes into view is that identity is both the problem and the key to responding to Hitlerism's reductive logic and, after the fall of Hitlerism, more broadly to the model philosophy presupposes for personal identity, egoism.

I understand Levinas' philosophy as a singular deepening of this line of thought. It corresponds with how Levinas *reconceives and expands* transcendence under Derrida's challenging reading in "Violence and Metaphysics". It culminates in Levinas' second major work in 1974, *Otherwise than Being*, the most emphatic exposition of the one-for-the-other through the notion of substitution. Substitution means that the structure of the I, or human identity, is *nothing other than responsibility for others*.

5. C. "...[P]olitics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself": The I's Fecundity as a Response to Hitlerism and also to Totalitarianism

Recall the failed responses to Hitlerism of leading political philosophies that Levinas discussed in his 1934 essay "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism". Liberalism and Marxist communitarianism fail to challenge the basic proposition by which Hitlerism, as any racism, determines human identity, *I is body*. Hitlerism uses this proposition to classify individuals into categories like races. Racial biology and hygiene are the justification that prescribes an individual's fate. For its part, liberalism starts from the narrative of an I or ego that freely contracts with others, when beneficial, to secure

itself and its property. It emphasizes separation or independence. Self-determination is the crux for the construction of my personal identity. Marxist communitarianism, meanwhile, begins with a narrative of egos overlaid by conditions of material scarcity and ideologies that put one into solidarity with others who are similarly exploited and alienated. It emphasizes binding or cohesion. Having been alienated from myself, I get my identity from the group. On the one hand, liberalism abstracts the I from its material conditions and takes it that responsibility is largely a matter of the I's freedom and knowledge; on the other hand, Marxist communitarianism, by promoting the task of raising levels of class consciousness, bakes in tribalism. Neither develops the meaning of the identity one feels between oneself and one's body very deeply.

Due to the respective vantage points from which liberalism and Marxist communitarianism begin, each fails to see the ontologico-existential structure of escape-frustration. It affirms the I's tragic fatalism, namely, that, despite one's effort to get out, one is powerless to flee one's most intimate material reality, as the Jew persecuted by the anti-Semite's gaze knows well. Given that this is Levinas' description of how racism coopts an individual's identity in the 1930-40s, as I detailed in Chapter 3, the burden is on him to show how identity on his rendering meets the conditions he sets out and attaches to a structure unforeseeable in state racism or liberalism. This structure, formally, is transcendence as excendence, as I showed in Chapter 4, where the inability to escape from the corporeal self evinces a relation with a beyond being that is integral to its concretion, the I's fecundity.

In *Totality and Infinity* (1961), the address of Hitlerian anti-Semitic racism and social life as a laboratory for eugenics is at play within a broader political critique, that of

totalitarianism. In totalitarianism, persons are identified on account of their place in an ordered whole: I and other are judged according to “universal rules, and thus in absentia” (TI 277, TaI 300). The outcries of a first personal experience and the chance to show mercy are purged by an unchecked universalist proceduralism and the abhorrent outcomes to which it can lead. In this register, Levinas comments that “...politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself...”. Political totalitarianism, which may or may not evolve into a state racism, is the proper context for understanding the various structures of the family that Levinas first introduced with fecundity in *From Existence to the Existent* and that he deepens in section IV and in the Conclusions of *Totality and Infinity*. It is in the family that the I’s fecundity is first concrete and translates into solidarity with and responsibility for others against the tyranny a “politics left to itself” bears.

I have been arguing that Levinas’ mature response to the threat state racism poses, the way it envisions politics and social life as the point of application for eugenics, and the way this reduces distance, collapsing exteriority and threatening war, comes in the first conclusion of *Totality and Infinity*, the identity of the same. Levinas’ thesis is: the racist fails to capture the persecuted one in his gaze *because* he has already been individuated in his responsibility for another. I, in short, is already another, even as it remains itself. What makes this account quite different from that of the earlier “Being Jewish” is that Levinas does not rest on a phenomenological hermeneutics of Jewish facticity to defend this claim. Rather, Levinas conceives the oneself, identifying itself from within as another, more broadly: it is produced in the “marvel of the family” (TI 283, TaI 306). The backdrop for the family is the spread of totalitarian politics.

In the family, the I is fecund in adopting another's fate without interest in its own. To adopt genuinely another's fate is impossible, as the very language I must use to describe such a set of relations readily attests: I remain myself. It would seem that, insofar as I remain myself, my interest is at play. And yet, this relation with an infinitely other who remains exterior to my being happens, as the father who substitutes himself for his son: the "...I [*moi*] is, in the child, an other. Paternity remains self-identification, but also a distinction with identification—a structure unforeseeable in formal logic" (TI 244-45, TaI 267). Paternity is intelligible on the formula I presented above in 4. H. (iii.), identity without identity. In the father's love for his child, he is an identity—a being devoted to another who exceeds themes, such as those defined by power or knowledge—without identity—that is, without interestedness in his own being. Often, in fact, the father's responsibility for his child runs his own interests aground. As with the pardon above, in responsibility I am at once my being and beyond it, fulfilling what in *From Existence to the Existent* Levinas names excendence. But the identity produced in paternity raises a new question we must pose to Levinas: does it let in tribalism through the back door? The I's fecundity, in that case, would mean for *my* child. In the claim, the "I [*moi*] is, in the child, an other", is the child *too* much like the father to do the work Levinas wants it to do?

Above I examined the I's fecundity through the production of infinite time. Pardon for being definitive, like having survived the Holocaust, requires infinite time. It opens a relation to an absolute future beyond the one that I can envision or control. This utopian message in *Totality and Infinity* has its fulfillment only when the son breaks with the father and rebels in solidarity with strangers against the oppression of others by the

institutions of the state. This is fraternity. I return to how it is produced in what I call the dialectic of filiality and fraternity in 5. C. (ii.) below. This analysis will address the question I raised above, whether the resources that Levinas finds for a production of identity outside the state endorse tribalism.

Before I take up that analysis, however, I want to examine the I's fecundity as a tie to an already past, or the trace, in *Totality and Infinity* rather than through the absolute future it opens.²³⁶ Whereas *Totality and Infinity*, following fecundity through one line of thought, culminates in the absolute future, what is striking about *Otherwise than Being* is the absence of such a future with regard to substitution.²³⁷ Rather, the irremissible disturbance or obsession of the other's trace in me, a past never captured in a present (diachrony) or theme (anarchy), dominates the description of the identity substitution involves, the one-for-the-other. If fecundity is indeed the forerunner of substitution, as I claimed at the outset of this chapter, then one must reckon with how the I's fecundity pushes Levinas toward the thought of the trace, a past never present, and not only a future beyond my time. The thought of the trace attracts Derrida's attention in "Violence and Metaphysics", as is evident from the revisions he made to the 1967 version (see 2. C. and the Conclusion to Chapter 2 above). Already in 1964, in fact, he acknowledges in Levinas' latest essays that the encounter with the other is "*present* at the heart of experience" not, Derrida continues, as "total presence" but as a "*trace*" (ED 142, WD 95). On the one hand, the trace is a resource for responding to the problem of the closure. On the other hand, Derrida's assessment in 1964 is that it "...*must not be possible either to think or state* this call" of an infinitely other beyond being and logos toward which

²³⁶ Once again, this is a notional dissection for what in Levinas' thought of transcendence, at least in terms of where the emphasis falls in *Totality and Infinity*, is really inseparable.

²³⁷ The sole exception is AE 113, OB 89, and it is arguable.

Levinas' thought directs us (ED 168,WD 114). But already in the Preface of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas states that infinity or the “beyond” the totality and objective experience, as I have mentioned previously, “...is reflected *within* the totality and history, *within* experience” (TI xi,TaI 23). While Derrida points to the significance of this structure only later,²³⁸ we must seek in the following exposition the concrete sense or meaning of the “*impossible-unthinkable-unsayable*”, as Derrida adds in the 1967 republication of “Violence and Metaphysics”, in a trace woven into experience of a *certain* sort (ED 194,WD 132).

5. C. (i.) The Problem of the Closure Revisited: Trace and “Infinite being, that is, always recommencing being...”

Trace is seldom used in *Totality and Infinity*.²³⁹ Nonetheless, there is clearly an effort to develop what we, from the vantage point of Levinas' later philosophy, can call the thought of the trace. There is, for one, the well-known formal structure of the “idea of Infinity in us” (TI 52,TaI 79). Here, the ontological idea of infinity in Descartes' *Meditations* guides the thought of the trace. There is, furthermore, the concrete responsibility that relations, such as those Levinas describes between family members, accomplish. Here, “Infinite being, that is, always recommencing being...is produced in the guise of fecundity [translation slightly modified]” (TI 246,TaI 268). Whereas much attention has been given to the former, commentators have not fully appreciated how fecundity, as a concretion of responsibility for another, deeply integrates *Totality and Infinity* with the thought of the trace and the ethical language it leads Levinas to develop in *Otherwise than Being* and other later works.

²³⁸ See A 57,AEL 27 and my footnote 52 above.

²³⁹ Levinas uses the word six times. Only one puts it into a lineage with the meaning it takes on later in the 1963 essay “The Trace of the Other” (TI 77-78,TaI 104-05).

V. C. (i.) § 1. Trace and the “Idea of Infinity in Us”

Levinas seeks to develop in *Totality and Infinity* an alternative to several logics that operate in modern philosophy: one he calls formal logic; another, dialectical logic; and the third, the logic of the genus. What these have in common is that, on his interpretation, they sacrifice absolute difference for totality. This means that they nullify the thought of a beyond being, such as infinity.²⁴⁰ Transcendence (as ex-cendence) thus never gets off the ground. Formal logic, for one, presupposes a symmetry of independent terms. A contradiction is irreconcilable. Difference is only *other than* when one compares two terms, and so conceived negatively (TI 229, TaI 251). Dialectical logic, meanwhile, absorbs difference into immanence (TI 124, TaI 150). Negativity results in positivity: dialectic thinks through the contradictions that trip up formal logic to the point of their correlation within a greater structure (TI 24, TaI 53). The logic of the genus, finally, conceives difference as the specification of terms on the basis of their presupposed community (TI 168, TaI 194). To summarize, each logic conceives what Levinas calls exteriority (absolute difference) on the basis of the ontological category of the same. The relation with a beyond being is a correlation and becomes a theme. They cannot, in Levinas’ estimation, adequately explain how I can give to or sacrifice for another while maintaining my identity except for reasons of my own interest.

By contrast, the “idea of Infinity in us” provides the formal model for transcendence (TI 52, TaI 79). The trace, in the sense of affection by a past never present, guides it, even if Levinas does not yet make it a theme in its own right. The “idea of Infinity in us” describes a relation of the same separated from an other, or infinity.

²⁴⁰ Levinas’ characterization of modern philosophy in his 1976-77 lecture course “Death and Time” is again apt: “Since Kant, philosophy has been finitude without infinity” (DMT 45, GDT 36).

Infinity affects the same but maintains exteriority—it is absolute in the etymological sense of the word. Negativity results not from the same’s mortality, as Derrida argues in “Violence and Metaphysics” when he speaks with the voice of a philosophy of finitude, but from the “...very idea of infinity, or in subjectivity as the idea of infinity” (DMT 250, GDT 216). The thought is one that I have already mentioned with regard to enduring sensation patiently. As Levinas says two years after *Totality and Infinity* in “The Trace of the Other”, infinity “ousts [*déçarsonne*]” any idea that I can have of it (EDE 196, DC 354). That is the birth of negation in the subject.

In *Totality and Infinity*, the thought of the trace guides several readings of the causal argument for God’s existence in the third of Descartes’ *Meditations*.²⁴¹ This is the philosophical resource Levinas primarily uses to discuss the “idea of Infinity in us”. What is common to these readings is what Levinas calls the “posteriority of the anterior” (TI 25, TaI 54).²⁴² Each instant it thinks establishes the *cogito* as its own existential condition. It discovers its a priori cause, God, only a posteriorly in a reflection on reflection. Descartes maintains a rigorous separation of two orders, the order of reasons, on the one hand, and the order of discovery, on the other. Infinity for this reason remains exterior to any conception I can have of it. Levinas reads these orders through Heidegger’s circle of the understanding in *Being and Time*. The *cogito* both constitutes the idea of infinity and is constituted by it. It is anterior and posterior at once. As one commentator concludes, quoting Levinas from *Otherwise than Being*, “What is both anterior and posterior? The

²⁴¹ I do not rehearse these here. Many fine commentaries exist. Among them, see Robert Bernasconi’s “The Silent Anarchic World of the Evil Genius,” in *The Collegium Phaenomenologicum: The First Ten Years*, edited by G. Moneta, J. Sallis, and J. Taminiaux (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988), 257-272.

²⁴² Cf. TI 144, TaI 170.

answer is an anteriority “older’ than the a priori’—the trace”.²⁴³ For Heidegger, the unity of constituting-constituted is more originary than the a priori (the ontologico-existential formal structures of existence) or the a posteriori (the ontico-existential concrete) considered singly. Levinas takes it in another direction than a reflection on what is most Dasein’s own, its death. The meditator’s reflection on reflection produces its own rupture with what it cannot conceive, infinity. Concretely, this is my awakening, whether in reflection or in existence, to another’s judgment. In *Totality and Infinity*, this arouses my desire for the other, which never reaches its term.

That my very reflection awakens me to another’s judgment demonstrates not only the rupture with what I cannot think but that I have already been bound to another in concrete terms, specifically, through my embodied ipseity. No representation recalls this: it is already passed, or, is a past that the form of the living present cannot contain. Derrida’s effort in “Violence and Metaphysics” is to show how the ontological language Levinas must use to reopen the thought of positive infinity, absolutely exterior to the same, undermines his efforts. As soon as one says *infinity*, formal or dialectical logic or the logic of the genus, to adapt Levinas’ terminology, makes it determinate. This is the test to which Derrida puts Levinas’ transcendence. One cannot achieve a “breakthrough” toward a beyond of philosophy except by “...*formally and thematically posing the problem of the relations between belonging and breakthrough, the problem of the closure*” (ED 163, WD 110). Transcendence should mediate philosophy and nonphilosophy, finitude and infinity, same and other. It raises the problem of the closure as a demand for philosophical reflection. What Derrida neglects, however, is to integrate

²⁴³ Bernasconi’s “The Trace of Levinas in Derrida” 21.

transcendence with the trace even as he recognizes it as a resource fecund for his own thought, as I showed in 2. C. above.

Aware of this challenge to transcendence, Levinas says in the 1968 “Substitution” essay,

The ‘beyond’ loses its proper signifyingness [*significance*] and becomes immanence as soon as the logos interrogates, invests, presents, and exposes it, although its attachment in proximity is absolute exteriority. Without any common measure with the present, proximity is always ‘already past’, above the ‘now’ which it troubles and obsesses. This way of passing, troubling the present, without allowing itself to be invested by the *arche* of consciousness, this striation of rays across the clarity of the exposable, we have called ‘trace’ (RPL 488-89, BPW 81).²⁴⁴

One must show how my existence produces not only separation, as Levinas emphasizes with the *cogito*’s reflection on reflection. One must also show how in *Totality and Infinity* my existence produces an exteriority that disquiets or obsesses me. What does Levinas mean when he says that, “Infinite being, that is, always recommencing being...is produced in the guise of fecundity?” Is it not the case that the very terms of this proposition swallow up the beyond it names? There must be nonetheless an experience of “Infinite being, that is, always recommencing being...” of a *certain* sort. What commentators neglect is how fecundity inflects the thought of the trace differently from the “posteriority of the anterior”. This integrates it with the ethical language Levinas develops in his later work.

5. C. (i.) § 2. Trace and the “Always” of Time

I explained in my analysis of “Enigma and Phenomenon” that the trace signifies ambiguously or equivocally. The affective residue of another who departed without intending to leave a sign, like the disturbance that affects me when I wonder if someone actually rang my doorbell (see 4. G. [i.] above), has an ongoing and indefinite temporal

²⁴⁴ Levinas reproduces this passage without change six years later in Chapter IV *Otherwise than Being* (AE 127, OB 100).

sense. Experience itself thwarts the tendency toward synthesizing experience.

Nonetheless, there is yet an experience of a beyond being in this testing or ordeal (*épreuve*) of the subject. This is disturbance. It takes the form of my questioning: “did anyone ring?” Questioning in this case does not outline its response, as it does when one takes up a theoretical attitude. Another’s trace is an enigma that escapes appearance. Infinity flashes ambiguously in the I in a sense I characterize below. Because it does not prefigure a response, questioning recurs like an echo. This is its temporal dimension. Keeping in mind my analysis in Chapter 4, one should understand it as the recurrence of the self who is another.

Levinas develops questioning’s temporal rather than theoretical dimension on the basis of an experience of time as a patient awaiting of that which cannot come to pass. In the 1976-77 lecture course “Death and Time”, this proceeds against the backdrop of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, originary time opens through a radical reflection on my death. I seize my death as my ownmost (*mir eigenes*) possibility, or that alone which is in each case my possibility (*je meines*). Reflection on the nothingness of death, i.e., a radical imagining of the possibility of my impossibility, is the source of possibility, or possibilization (*Ermöglichung*), and so of temporality (SZ 264-66, BT 309-11). By contrast, Levinas understands time on the basis of patience of what does not come to term and not of anticipating my death. The task is to see how temporal phenomena like questioning put the I into a relation with a beyond being that it cannot seize or contain. “A fission or a putting into question of the one who questions. That would be temporality” (DMT 126, GDT 110). The earlier ontologico-existential structure of escape-frustration undergirds the presentation. What is beyond my being is *never* a

correlate because, in self-recurrence, it overwhelms me. The “never” of patience, as Levinas remarks earlier in the course, is the “always [*toujours*]” of time (DMT 38,GDT 29).

This *always* of time is a clue to understanding what Levinas means in *Totality and Infinity* when he says that fecundity produces “Infinite being, that is, always [*toujours*] recommencing being”. It also marks the passivity of the subject who endures an identity—oneself, as another—rather than one who takes charge of it (see 4. I. above). In the later lecture course, Levinas takes the “always” as a modality of certain kind of being. The interested ego that has no ears for another’s hardship is awakened to itself by an internalist production of identity along the lines I described in 5. A. above with the identity of the same. A responsibility owing to no empirical encounter first individuates me as a self for another. “To be identified thus,” Levinas states,

...is to be identified without being identified, is to identify oneself as ‘me’ [*moi*]; it is to identify oneself internally without thematizing oneself and without appearing” (DMT 125,GDT 109).

Nonetheless, we must understand this internalist production of identity as an experience of a certain sort. In a description similar to many in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas goes on to say that the thought of infinity, which confronts me concretely through another’s trace, “would tear itself apart [*se déchirerait*]. Always.” (DMT 126,GDT 110). To wit, in *Otherwise than Being* Levinas conceives sensibility in relation to alterity, where the I undergoing sensations or affections has the primary sense of persecution. Levinas brings out the temporal dimension of sensation from the other—where no other appears—with questions that would not leave me alone:

On this side of the zero point that marks the absence of protection and cover, sensibility is affection by non-phenomenon, a being put into question [*mise en cause*] by the other’s alterity, before the intervention of the cause, before the other’s appearing; a pre-original

not-resting on oneself, the restlessness of the persecuted—Where to be? How to be? (AE 95,OB 75).²⁴⁵

To get some handle on this difficult language, one may remind oneself of the description from “The Trace of the Other” that I mentioned above in my discussion of the “idea of Infinity in us”: greater than my thought can contain, the infinity I find, on reflection, placed in me always “ousts” any conception I can have of it. In this way, the experience of infinity would always tear itself apart.

Yet this line of interpretation does not fully account for Levinas’ probing into the composition of the I’s interiority by means of fecundity. That I find myself questioning, like Descartes’ meditator, how the idea of infinity got in my mind, indicates that another has *already* penetrated my interiority. In questioning, I already desire the other who has passed without leaving a sign, like the stranger who rings my doorbell and withdraws. Fecundity leads to a deeper sense of the trace whereby my putting myself into question, “Where to be? How to be?”, signifies that I am *already* at fault for being late in response to another’s appeal, or for my part, even absent that appeal, in her oppression.

5. C. (i.) § 3. Trace and the *Experience* of Infinity: From the I’s Fecundity to the Ethical Language of *Otherwise than Being*

We must go further into fecundity to specify the sense or meaning of this experience of a beyond being. To see in the very description of fecundity the ethical language of *Otherwise than Being*, particularly, proximity and substitution, I want to

²⁴⁵ One may also see Levinas’ description of the internalist individuation of the I (the “one assigned”) through Saying (*Dire*), where tearing away from oneself recurs indefinitely. “The limit of this stripping bare, in the punctuality, has to continue to tear itself from itself [*s’arracher à soi*], that the *one* assigned has to open itself all the way to separating itself from its interiority adhering to *esse*—it has to be dis-interested. This tearing from oneself, at the heart of one’s unity, this dia-chrony of the instant, signifies by way of the *one*—penetrated-by-the-other [translation modified]” (AE 64,OB 49). The idea is that the indefinite tearing away from oneself strips the I of *what* it is and leaves only *who* one is. One is an other. In this passage, Levinas favors *arracher* over *déchirer*. In *Otherwise than Being* and *God, Death, and Time* alike, he uses the former far more often. In any case, the thought is the same. “To continue to tear away from oneself” is what I understand above as the thought of infinity that “would tear itself apart [*se déchirerait*]. Always.”

show the adequate form of this always tearing itself apart in *Totality and Infinity*. This is desire for infinity.²⁴⁶ A sense or meaning beyond being flashes *in* the I's very existence, where this is a questioning that gnaws away at it and disturbs its egoism. From 5. B. (iii.) above follows one meaning of "Infinite being, that is, always [*toujours*] recommencing being". Pardon produces "absolute youth and recommencement", i.e., the break of real generations of youth in the direction of an absolute future across the definitiveness in which the past generation is locked (TI 259, TaI 282). Fecundity in the sense I want to describe shifts Levinas' discourse in section IV of *Totality and Infinity* from utopianism and to a more radical notion of the trace. The aim is to see how fecundity weaves transcendence into experience. That responds to Derrida's problem of philosophy at the time of the closure.

In addition to pardon, the identity of the same pilots the description of the father's responsibility for his child. Taking our orientation from *Otherwise than Being*, "Infinite being, that is, always recommencing being" is one who has always already approached another, whether aware or unaware, in aid or harm, for the other or for itself. The approach must be conceived on the level of proto-ontology. I cannot establish a hypostasis, make a personal claim on existence (that it is *mine*), without impacting

²⁴⁶ In *Otherwise than Being*, desiring the infinitely other, the stranger in the neighbor, burdens the subject: "In a sense nothing is more burdensome than the neighbor. Is not this desired one the undesirable itself? The neighbor who could not leave me indifferent—the undesirable desired one..." (AE 111, OB 88). Levinas goes on to describe it in the "Substitution" chapter in the following ways: "Assignment to a non-erotic proximity, a desire for the non-desirable, a desire for the stranger in the neighbor..." and "...desire for the non-desirable, this responsibility for the neighbor—this substitution of hostage—is the subjectivity and unicity of the subject" (AE 157-58, OB 122-23). On the reading I am offering, one need not travel far from these passages in *Otherwise than Being* to understand the meaning of desire for the other in *Totality and Infinity*. Thus one sees how Levinas can conceive desire as a "disturbance" beginning in the 1965 essay "Enigma and Phenomenon" and as an "obsession" in the 1968 essay "Substitution". Each of these is an adequate form of the experience of infinity in *Otherwise than Being*. To make the connection firm, see also the "insatiable desire" engendered by the divergence of the neighbor's presence and absence in the 1967 essay "Language and Proximity" (EDE 230, CPP 120). This is a passage that bridges desire between the two major works. Whereas in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas strongly attaches desire to the erotic relation, in *Otherwise than Being* he disengages this, as some of the passages I just quoted indicate.

another or absent her appeal to me. For this reason the I “always” has another response to give, to “answer for his [read: another’s] very responsibility”, as Levinas puts it forcefully in *Otherwise than Being* (AE 106,OB 84). What the description of a father’s fecundity in *Totality and Infinity* shows is how Levinas drives the I’s responsibility back all the way to the account of the I’s identity as he described it in *From Existence to the Existent*.²⁴⁷ To locate responsibility, a concretion of transcendence, in the very production of the subject’s identity is a central focus of *Otherwise than Being*. In the important fourth section of Chapter 2, “Saying and Subjectivity”, this is Levinas’ thesis:

One must show in Saying—as approach—the de-positioning [*dé-position*] or the de-situating [*dé-situation*] of the subject who nonetheless remains an irreplaceable unicity and, remains as the subjectivity of the subject [translation modified] (AE 61,OB 47-48).

At the same time, responsibility is inconceivable absent another’s judgment.²⁴⁸ Ipseity—the identity I bear as a self—is a relation to an infinitely other I cannot assume.

²⁴⁷ Levinas goes further into the description of taking a position that de-positions the subject, undoing the ego’s identity and capturing the one in responsibility, later in the section by linking saying with corporeality: “Denuding all the way to the *one* that cannot be qualified, to the pure *someone*, unique and elected, that is to say, exposure to the other, without any possible slipping away, Saying, in its sincerity of a sign given to the other [*Autrui*], absolving me of all identity that would rise again like a clot coagulating for itself, that would be self-coincidence [*coniciderait [sic] avec soi*]. Absolution that reverses essence: not negation of essence but *dis-interestedness*, an ‘otherwise than being’ that vanishes into [*s’en allant*] ‘for the other’, burning for the other, consuming the bases of any position for oneself, consuming even the cinders of this consummation—where everything risks being reborn. Identity in complete patience of the one assigned who, patient—despite himself—dies unceasingly, lasts in his instant, ‘whitens under the harness’. The reversal of the I [*Moi*] into Self [*Soi*]—the de-position [*dé-position*] or de-situating [*dé-situation*] of the I is the very modality of dis-interestedness by way of corporeal life devoted to expression and to giving, but devoted and not devoting itself: a self against itself, in incarnation as the very possibility of offering, of suffering, and of traumatism [translation modified]” (AE 64-65,OB 50).

²⁴⁸ In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas says that proximity, “...as the closer and closer’, *becomes* the subject [my emphasis—PJG]” (AE 103,OB 82). It is in the sense of being judged by another internally for staking my claim on existence that the commentary following this provocative statement should be read: “Does the relation [of a subject who approaches another] become religion? It is not simply a passage to a subjective ‘point of view’. One can no longer say what [*ce que*] the Ego [*Moi*] or I [*Je*] is. Henceforth one must speak in the first person. I am a term irreducible to the relation and nevertheless in recurrence, which empties me of all consistency [translation modified]” (AE 103-04,OB 82). There is a demand to speak in the “first person” because, under another’s accusation or judgment, the Ego or I has been stripped of every property upon which its identity rests. To account for oneself, however, puts one in an impossible position. I cannot meet the demand to respond in the first person fully: in my very response, I already mount an apology. That is why, as an I, I am irreducible to what approach entails, where proximity “becomes the subject”. I evade responsibility. Yet my very being, taking a position, cannot help but approach others, tying me to their

In many passages in *Otherwise than Being*, *approach* is ambiguous.²⁴⁹ Am I for my child because I am for *myself*? Has my egoism crept in, such that I give on account of what I get in return? At a deeper level, in merely maintaining myself as an existent (which I cannot help *not* to do, as *From Existence to the Existent* shows), have I not harmed my child? What presupposes such questions is that I find myself under another's judgment, even if my son never makes actual claims like these on me. In merely furnishing a place for myself, i.e., in being an *I*, I bear them as a *self*. That is the ethical bind into which the identity of ipseity puts me in *Otherwise than Being*. It argues for the thesis that, *in my very ipseity* (a past I cannot recall), *I am at fault for having oppressed someone*.

The I's fecundity is the forerunner to this thesis central to proximity and substitution. Putting myself in question, the fissuring or tearing away of the I that Levinas describes, is epiphenomenal. Levinas writes,

Why does Another [*Autrui*] concern me? What is Hecuba to me? Am I my brother's keeper?—These questions have meaning [*sens*] only if one has already supposed that the I [*Moi*] cares [*souci*] only for itself, is only care for itself. In this hypothesis, in effect, it remains incomprehensible how the absolute outside-the-I [*Moi*]—Another—concerns me [*me concerne*]. However, in the 'prehistory' of the I posited for itself speaks a responsibility. The self is through and through a hostage, older than the Ego [*Ego*], prior to principles. What is at stake for the Self, in its being, is not [the question not to be or] to be. Beyond egoism and altruism is the religiosity of self [translation modified] (AE 150,OB 117).²⁵⁰

oppression and the role I play in it. That is why in the approach I am also a term "in recurrence", a self for another, not just an I that evades. Cf. AE 107-08,OB 83-84.

²⁴⁹ For example, "It is through the approach, through the-one-for-the-other of Saying, related through the Said, that the Said remains insurmountable equivocation, sense refusing simultaneity, not entering into being, not composing a whole [*tout*]. The approach or Saying is relation with what is not understood in the *whole* [ensemble] with what is outside the series, subversion of essence, overflows the theme that it states, the 'everything together [*tout ensemble*]', the 'everything included' of the Said. Language is already skepticism [translation modified]" (AE 216,OB 170).

²⁵⁰ On the distinction between *avoir souci* and *me concerner* in the descriptions of the identity of ipseity, as distinction that Levinas maintains throughout his discussions of ipseity in *Otherwise than Being*, see 4. J. (iii.) above.

Questions like those that open this passage do not outline a response into which I can settle. If they did, I would already mount an apology for my existence. Ambiguity, where I cannot settle into an answer but am held in question, lends them a temporal dimension that always awakens or tears me from my complacency. It is in this sense that for Levinas guilt of a *certain sort*, which I mentioned above, is admissible in ethical relations. This is not merely *feeling guilty*, where guilt would be an attitude I assume in brooding or in anxiety; there is a sense or a meaning of being guilty *without* the feeling of guilt, outstripping my freedom of choice.²⁵¹ Thus the responsibility that speaks in the “‘prehistory’ of the I posited for itself” would mean being bound to another’s oppression merely in personalizing existence. This drives a deeper sense of the other’s trace in me. I am *already* guilty because I am *late* to respond to her.²⁵² Levinas writes:

In the approach, I am from the start servant of the neighbor, already late and guilty of being late. I am as ordered from the outside—commanded traumatically—without interiorizing by representation and concepts the authority that commands me. Without asking myself: What then is it to me? From where does his right to command come? What have I done to be from the start in debt? [Translation modified] (AE 110,OB 87)

²⁵¹ In the “Substitution” chapter of *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas mentions my “irremissible guilt” with regard to the neighbor in describing what he calls the “schema of corporeality” (AE 139,OB 109). By this he means to show is how my body is tied to others even as I undergo the process of claiming it as my own. In 4. H. (ii.) above, I gave the groundwork for this thesis, which *Otherwise than Being* over and again attempts to show. That groundwork is how proximity underwrites the identity of ipseity in *From Existence to the Existent*. Thus the guilt Levinas admits into ethical relations is not a product of a psychological complex but goes more deeply. It is a product of embodied ipseity. Insofar as I am an I or ego, I cannot eliminate it. Levinas rules out interpreting a psychological interpretation of guilt directly (AE 160,OB 124). The reason is that a psychological complex presupposes freedom. The guilt that afflicts me would be the result of a voluntary or involuntary choice I made (or avoided) in my dealings with others. Guilt would be a kind of self-alienation. Once I recognize that, I could work to overcome my guilt. The “irremissible guilt” that follows from the mere fact that I must furnish a spot in the sun for myself, by contrast, does not alienate me from myself. Under another’s judgment, I rather find that I cannot flee myself. Thus the early ontologico-existential structure of escape-frustration is still live in Levinas’ second major work where I cannot evade a responsibility I never contracted.

²⁵² *Otherwise than Being* sustains and deepens the line of thought in “Enigma and Phenomenon”: the other is not straightforwardly a phenomenon but has already passed. Another’s face, the cardinal ethical rule that prohibits my murderous egoism, resists my reduction. The face is never *just* a face: a “...trace of itself, a trace in the trace of an abandon, where equivocation is never cleared up, obsesses the subject without maintaining a correlation with him, without equaling me in a consciousness ordering me before appearing...” (AE 119,OB 94). My explanation of the deeper sense of the trace above should account for this markedly different description of the face in *Otherwise than Being* from the one on which commentators typically lean in *Totality and Infinity*.

A father does not have the privilege, or indeed the time, to ask himself such questions. Indeed, we would think it immoral if he did—responsibility to his son is not a matter of reciprocity, comparison, and calculation. A father is held in relation to his child by a different sense of temporality where he is always late. Like the other who has already withdrawn from presence but nonetheless continues to disturb my egoism, a father finds himself already judged for his egoism by his child, even if his child never levels such an accusation. He is in accusative position rather than that of an I who freely chooses his obligations.²⁵³

The importance that Levinas lays on how the family identifies itself “*outside*” the State comes down to this: how one finds oneself, on account of an internalist production of one’s identity, under another’s judgment without mediation by the State’s laws or institutions. That the “I [*moi*] is, in the child, an other” means to maintain an infinitely recurring relation with alterity inasmuch as one is a oneself (TI 244, TaI 267). Paternity makes this more than mere word play: to my child, I have always already given an affective response that is not bent on return to me. A father—or, indeed, to extend reasonably Levinas’ example, a mother or a guardian—has already substituted him- or

²⁵³ *Otherwise than Being* takes over the I’s production of identity in *From Existence to the Existent* and argues further that, merely in taking a position in being, the subject finds itself responsible for others. In this regard, see the following passage: “This coinciding in the *same*, where I would be origin—or recovery, through memory, of the origin—this presence is, from entry into the game, undone by the other. The subject resting on itself is ousted [*désarçonné*] by an accusation without words. In discourse, in effect, it would have already lost its traumatic violence. Accusation, in this sense persecuting, to which the persecuted one can no longer respond—or, more exactly—accusation to which the persecuted I cannot respond—but for which I cannot decline responsibility. The position [*position*] of the subject is already de-position [*dé-position*]...from the start substitution of the hostage expiating for the violence of the persecution itself. We have to conceive up to that point the de-substantiation [*dé-substantiation*] of the subject. Its de-reification, its disinterestedness, its subjection—its subjectivity. Pure self, in the accusative, responsible before freedom...[translation modified]” (AE 163, OB 127). I am claiming that this argument in *Otherwise than Being* arises from an experience such as being a father, where by virtue of his identity he finds himself under his child’s judgment even where no accusation is leveled. This is not the *only* such experience whereby identity is produced under accusation or in the accusative position, I hasten to add.

herself for his or her child.²⁵⁴ As a *self*, not an ego, the parent lives what the language of ontology, on Levinas' view, either deems illogical or cannot express: she is another while maintaining her identity. One sees why *From Existence to the Existent's* analysis of the I's identity, in which a beyond being flashes *in* taking a position in being, is vital to understanding section IV of *Totality and Infinity*. Clearly fecundity is a concretion of transcendence in the first major work. It is also the ethical language into which philosophy is forced in order to express what ontology cannot: the one-for-the-other of substitution. That is how fecundity, conceived through the structure of the trace, leads to the major ethical notion of *Otherwise than Being* and how substitution responds to the problem of the closure as Derrida sets it out in "Violence and Metaphysics".

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas describes how an I discovers its freedom in shame under another's judgment. An early passage demonstrates how the formal idea guiding transcendence, the "idea of Infinity in us", has an ethical meaning. Using an element of the ontological argument in the fifth of Descartes' *Meditations*, Levinas argues that it is necessary, under another's judgment, to have the idea of the perfect in order to measure one's own imperfection (TI 56, TaI 84). The idea is realized as shame where another is present as my interlocutor: "...qua I [*moi*], I [*je*] am not innocent spontaneity but usurper and murderer". A late passage occurring in the book's

²⁵⁴ Indeed, one can describe other relations where the self is concretely for another that do not involve child rearing. Teaching, more particularly, being taught, which Levinas mentions several times in *Totality and Infinity*, is particularly suitable. To wit, "A being *receiving* the idea of Infinity, *receiving* since it cannot derive it from itself [original emphasis], is a being taught in a non-maieutic fashion, a being whose very *existing* consists in this *incessant reception* of teaching, in this *incessant overflowing* of self (or time) [my emphasis—PJG]" (TI 178-79, TaI 204; see also TI 22, TaI 51, TI 146, TaI 171, and TI 271, TaI 295). Not only is it the case that this passage is fitting for Levinas' description of infinite time, which I covered in 5. B. (iii.). It is also the case that this passage fits desire for the other, which I am describing above by means of the affective experiences of being a self in *Otherwise than Being*. The claims I make about the structure of paternity concerning ipseity and transcendence can with equal justification be made, on my view, about the structure of teaching. Derrida recognizes the notion of the trace implicit in *Totality and Infinity's* descriptions of teaching in 1997, three decades after the publication of *Writing and Difference*, in his *A Word of Welcome* (see A 57, AEL 27).

penultimate conclusion brings out the temporal dimension of this experience.

Commenting on the encounter with another in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, it is not her threat to my freedom that I experience, but the

...problem of the justification of freedom: does not the presence of the Other put in question the naïve legitimacy of freedom? Does not freedom appear as a shame for itself? And, reduced to itself, as a usurpation? (TI 280, TaI 303)

Shame engenders a desire for the other who exceeds themes. This is not a reduction of infinity to a mere desire for it, where infinity would become the correlate of a tendency; rather, desire is the adequate form by which I experience infinity.²⁵⁵ On Levinas' interpretation, desire is born from the object, not from the subject (TI 33, TaI 62). Moreover, desire never reaches its term. It waxes insatiably on account of the inordinateness of its object (TI 34, TaI 63). This makes desire quite different from need, which originates in the subject, is represented as a lack or insufficiency, and obeys a logic of satisfaction or non-satisfaction. Recall Husserl's Idea in the Kantian sense, which I presented above in 1. B. (i.). One can draw the conclusion that Levinas conceives, in the form of a desire for the other, an actual infinity in experience for which experience gives us inadequate evidence. In desire for the other, my shame *is bound up with* transcendence. Where can the ordeal of subjectivity, like a questioning born from my part in the other's oppression, be found except in *certain* experiences?

The passages above have this shortcoming: they imply that shame depends on another's presence. It is as if one is to imagine a narrative in which an I, cocooned in its freedom and enjoyment, finds itself suddenly assailed by the image of another's destitution. Likely under the influence of Derrida's philosophy, Levinas makes every

²⁵⁵ See Tengelyi's *Welt und Unendlichkeit* 279-86 and also his „Experience of Infinity in Levinas“ in *Levinas Studies* 4 (2009): 111-125, each of which informs my reading.

effort, sometimes tortuous, to undercut the narrative form in *Otherwise than Being*, eliminating with the trace any last vestige of a metaphysics of presence while constantly acknowledging, again under Derrida's influence, that the very language he must use undercuts this attempt. He develops the I's identity, exposed and susceptible to a past (the corporeal self) never present, in *From Existence to the Existent* into the identity of ipseity.²⁵⁶ We already saw above where *Totality and Infinity* paves the way for this: the identity of the same, an internalist production of the *who*, is not tied contingently to another's presence nor to the a priori spontaneous act of the I. Rather the *who* follows from an election to responsibility: one is oneself, where this self means bearing and giving to another. Long before Derrida points in "Violence and Metaphysics" to his interest in the trace, the identity produced in ipseity does not enter the form of a living present (cf. ED 142, WD 95).

The ethical language Levinas develops, like fecundity and fraternity, shows in what relations self for another is accomplished concretely. The experience of infinity, desire, is, then, inseparable from the formal description of the structures. As if with Derrida in mind, in *Otherwise than Being* he comments, "A description that knows from the beginning only *being* and *beyond being* turns into ethical language" (AE 120n.35, OB 193n.35). What we must apprehend, following the trace, is the ambiguity or equivocation in the experience of infinity. It is irreducible. A questioning that does not outline a response, always recurring to tear me from my complacency, aims to capture this.

²⁵⁶ To wit, part of Levinas' effort in the Chapter IV "Substitution" of *Otherwise than Being* is to show that the relation to one's body, ipseity, is the very crux of susceptibility to others: "The body is neither the obstacle opposed to the soul, nor the tomb that imprisons it, but that by which the Self is susceptibility itself. Extreme passivity of 'incarnation'—being exposed to sickness, to suffering, to death, is being exposed to compassion and, Self, to the gift that costs. This side of the zero of inertia and of nothingness, in deficit of being, precisely without place upon which to lay [*poser*] its head, in no-place and, thus, without condition, the oneself will be shown as bearer of the world—bearing it, suffering it, check on rest and fatherland, and correlative of persecution—substitution for the other (AE 139n.12, OB 195n.12).

5. C. (i.) § 4. Trace and Ambiguity: An “Affectivity *that is Transcendence*”

In the “Substitution” chapter of *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas denies that the ethical language he develops owes to a “special moral experience”, like another’s dispossessing presence, which would be “...independent of the description hitherto elaborated. The ethical situation of responsibility is not comprehended on the basis of ethics” (AE 154,OB 120). Two thoughts here are noteworthy. First, there is the striking claim that responsibility cannot be understood through “ethics”.²⁵⁷ The basic presupposition of liberal theory is an I who freely contracts with others, as I explained in 3. C. (iii.). To start from an I that derives its responsibilities from a process of negotiations misses entirely the production of a self that is individuated by its inability to escape another’s call. Self is already for another, and that, rather than my interests, makes me singular or unique. Second, ethical language, Levinas at least implies here (but shows throughout *Otherwise than Being*), is tied to the descriptions, formal and concrete, themselves. The tropes of ethical language are “adequate”, he goes on to say, to “certain structures of the description” (AE 155,OB 120). These structures develop primarily the identity of ipseity. We must conceive the self in its ambiguity or equivocation: me *and* another. It is at once a being that does not leave the plane of interestedness and is bound up with a beyond being in being for another. Indeed, it is in my egoism that my desire for the other, the adequate form by which I experience infinity, engenders itself in *Totality and Infinity*.

A parent’s desire for the child maintains contrary movements. The formula I offered above in 4. H. (iii.), identity without identity, makes them intelligible. What

²⁵⁷ Among commentators, Perpich’s *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas* is an admirable attempt to construct an ethics on the basis of Levinas’ notion of responsibility.

cannot be eliminated, on the one hand, is the movement whereby “...one not only is, one *is oneself*”, as Levinas puts it in *From Existence to the Existent* (DEE 38,EE 16). In 4. J. I explained that the I’s identity in that book has three features: non-coincidence, self-recurrence this side (or inside) of existence, and concern, despite myself, for another. First, trying affective experiences, where the body is a surplus over the I, confirm that human existence is a quasi-duality or fissured oneness. The I exists in an asymmetrical relation with another, the corporeal self. Second, overpowering the need to escape, the self recurs. The I does not first, as Heidegger would say of Dasein in *Being and Time*, *ek-sist*; it is rather consumed this side of existence, where existence exacts effort of it. Prior to an immanent movement of transcendence (understanding, intentionality, or cognition), what individuates the I is its powerlessness. Finally, the excessive exposure to the oneself is a susceptibility to concern, despite myself, for another. To be a one means to have already been implicated in an intrigue involving others and beyond one’s own interests. Being fecund, which *From Existence to the Existent* sketches as “having a son”, sutures the first two features with the third (DEE 165,EE 100). These features outline what it means to exist reflexively for Levinas. Inasmuch as “...one not only is, one *is oneself*”, the I can understand the world through shared meanings, maintain a personal identity, and nourish its needs and interests.

The meaning of the “*oneself*” thus alters. This is the contrary movement in the parent’s desire for the child whereby the “*oneself*” means *another*. Transcendence as ex-cendence requires an identity—being for another who exceeds themes—without identity—that is, without interestedness in one’s own being. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas captures these contraries in describing paternity as a “...relation with a stranger

who while being Other...*is* me..." (TI 254, TaI 277). Being a parent or guardian is a way to conceive how another can be closer to me than my body's needs and my interests, evincing a different sense of non-coincidence that takes its meaning from proximity. It shows, further, how the impossibility of escaping myself—the child is a stranger, who, while being another, "*is me* [my emphasis—PJG]"—individuates me this side of existence. It is not on account of thematically apprehending my child as an object of knowledge, as my work, property, or creation that I find myself responsible for him (*ibid.*). Finally, being a parent suggests a model of concrete responsibility in which an I is for another without being for (and often being against) its own interests. The thought is that one desires a future beyond one's definitive identity not only for oneself. One desires because a past beyond any recallable past, a responsibility never contracted, would not leave one alone.

Given an experience like being a child's parent or guardian, one can no longer understand proto-ontology through the solitary and ultimately tragic account that abstracts the I from others. Ipseity, which I labeled proto-ontology provisionally, turns out to have an ethical meaning. Levinas' claim with paternity is that "*In existing itself* there is a multiplicity and a transcendence [my emphasis—PJG]". One should not pass such lines lightly. In taking a position with regard to anonymous existence, establishing a hypostasis to return to and enjoy or suffer from my needs, have I not already oppressed another by usurping his place?²⁵⁸ Fecundity makes the claim that I introduced in 4. H. (ii.) meaningful: one cannot take a position without having already approached others, welcoming, harming, or—*ambiguously*—both. A parent knows this acutely. In having to

²⁵⁸ Here I am again adapting what Levinas says in an interview from 1981 with Salomon Malka: "In being has one not already oppressed someone?" (LL 108, IRB 97). See my footnote 190 above.

be *oneself*, one is always tearing oneself from one's egoism even as one is establishing and preserving its conditions. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas uses proximity to make the claim that one is bound to another even before being bound to one's body (AE 97,OB 76). One experience from which a claim like this can arise is that of being a guardian for a child or a parent. Paternity, part of the I's fecundity, describes this experience concretely in *Totality and Infinity*.

Otherwise than Being reconceives and expands transcendence under Derrida's challenging reading in "Violence and Metaphysics". It shows how by ipseity identity involves a questioning always tearing me from my egoism no less with regard to those I do not know, describing the form of the experience of infinity alternately as disturbance, obsession, remorse, and other ongoing sensations. The self bears these sensations; it is, in one sense, nothing other than these sensations originating from the other. To show this, Levinas retrieves his earlier response to Hitlerian racism and adapts it to the closure. Those who have endured racial persecution know that there is responsibility even for one's persecutor: the one persecuted escapes the racist's hateful gaze *because* of his responsibility for her.²⁵⁹ That is a disturbance that would not leave him alone. Levinas' method in *Otherwise than Being* overbids the ontological account of the I to the point at which the self has the sense *for-the-other* without regard for any return to me. In giving to or sacrificing for another, I am at once my being and beyond it, or, am an identity without identity, individuated not by *what* I am but *who* I am: another. Therefore, *in* existing, subjectivity flashes as infinity.

²⁵⁹ On the burden of responsibility that the persecuted know, see Bernasconi's article "'Only the Persecuted...': Language of the Oppressor, Language of the Persecuted" 77-86.

It is in this sense that the following striking claim about transcendence, which Levinas makes in a work nearly contemporaneous with *Otherwise than Being*, is to be understood. Whereas in consciousness transcendence remains immanent, he says, an

...affectivity can break out [*éclater*] that does not conform to this sketch of consciousness and that tears us [*arrache à*] out of experience; this is an affectivity that, otherwise put, does not reduce to experience: an affectivity *that is transcendence* (DMT 247,GDT 214).²⁶⁰

In understanding transcendence as an “affectivity”, Levinas responds to Derrida’s closure. Responsibility in the sense of giving to another across scarce material relations remains the model guiding the formal structure of transcendence. That is something that Derrida largely neglects in “Violence and Metaphysics”. This notwithstanding, by conceiving transcendence as an affectivity Levinas means to weave a beyond being into the very fabric of everyday experiences. We saw above how shame for my egoism is bound up with transcendence. The desire it produces in me for another is not merely the product of a theoretical attitude but the adequate form that my response to her claim on me takes. The effort in *Otherwise than Being* is to show how ethical language reflects a beyond being in formal and concrete ontological descriptions. “*Not to philosophize would not be ‘to philosophize still’ ...*”, as Levinas remarks in reply to Derrida in another work from this period, “God and Philosophy”, because philosophical discourse, ontology, is already bound up with non-philosophical experiences (DVI 126,BPW 148 or GCM 77). The *saying and said* is the primary distinction that structures Levinas’ ontological descriptions in his two major works to show in what sense a beyond being flashes in experience, such as in fecundity and substitution above or in subjectivity and proximity in

²⁶⁰ Levinas makes this remark in the 1976-77 lecture course “God and Onto-theo-logy” in *God, Death, and Time*. Cf. DQVI 103,GCM 61.

Chapter 4. In light of Derrida's problem of philosophy at the closure, one can see why saying and said becomes a theme of exposition in its own right in *Otherwise than Being*.

It is thereby not altogether without precedent to understand transcendence as an affectivity that fissures the I in *Totality and Infinity* and in works earlier (see 4. H. above, in particular). In *Totality and Infinity*, a parent knows that his existence does not go unquestioned. To the contrary, his very egoism engenders desire for the other. This is in the fullest sense the adequate form of the experience of infinity in the first major work. Regardless of how he raises (or neglects) his child, being a parent shows, when one interprets it through the identity of ipseity, in what sense an I has already substituted itself for another, how it is, in other words, afflicted by an infinitely other who is, nonetheless, me. That is the ambiguity of being a *self*. In this sense, the remark in *Totality and Infinity* that "The fecundity of the I is its very transcendence" has an affinity with the later description of an "affectivity *that is transcendence*" (TI 254, TaI 277). Fecundity engendering desire shows that, for Levinas, responsibility runs that deeply into the I's identity.²⁶¹

Is it not the case, however, that the structures that take their inspiration from giving and sacrifice outside the State and among family members, like paternity, fail to break the hard crust of egoism? Where Levinas admits ambiguity into the account of being a self, one must admit that nothing prevents responsibility from evolving into a transactional model. The danger that this runs is the break up of social and political

²⁶¹ No commentator, to my knowledge, has developed transcendence from the formal structure of excedence in *From Existence to the Existent* (1947) to that of fecundity in *Totality and Infinity* (1961) to proximity and substitution in *Otherwise than Being* (1974) and finally to affectivity in *God, Death, and Time* (1976-77).

relations on the grounds of kinship. A father is responsible for *his* child. Is it not the case, then, that fecundity endorses tribalism?

This reasoning makes an appeal to nature. It takes the father-son relation literally as the site of transcendence, whereas it is only one of many such articulations.

Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume the specter of an ethics arising from a “special moral experience”, as he puts it later in *Otherwise than Being*, worried Levinas (AE 154, OB 120). This may be a reason that, as I mentioned at this chapter’s opening, *fécundité* drops from his philosophical vocabulary in works published after *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and through *Otherwise than Being* (1974), appearing only in scattered references after the second major work’s publication.²⁶² What is necessary is to see how fecundity *itself* breaks with tribalism and attaches the biological to a higher structure. I have discussed fecundity primarily from the perspective of the father’s responsibility for his son (paternity). I now take up the son as a fecund being. What I call the dialectic of filiality and fraternity erodes the biological limitations in which commentators worry fecundity locks Levinas’ account of transcendence. By *dialectic*, I mean that filiality and fraternity are moments of fecundity. If my account is persuasive, then what comes into scope is how Levinas conceives the relation of responsibility for another and justice for the oppressed.

5. C. (ii.) The Dialectic of Filiality and Fraternity

Recall Levinas’ assessment of politics left to its own devices with which we began 5. C.: it “bears a tyranny within itself”. In a totality, each individual gets her identity laterally in relation to others, from the works she produces, and with regard to the

²⁶² The most important of these references are in the dialogues Philippe Nemo conducted with Levinas for Radio France (EI 63ff., EaI 62ff.). In these passages, Levinas returns entirely to the language of *Totality and Infinity*’s fourth section, “Beyond the Face”, and the 1948 book *Time and the Other*.

universal ideas, laws, and procedures that institutions keep. Identity is produced exteriorly. Meanwhile, practically speaking, justice in the liberal state would mean equal access to the distribution of goods, services, and opportunities and equal access to retribution for harms. Whereas the enlightened society would take reciprocal equality for granted, it is not lost on Levinas that classical liberal theory theorizes it to be the result of the bloody march of history where justice arises from a mutual limitation on violence.²⁶³ This notwithstanding, in the case of the liberal state, justice has its basis in a symmetrical account of persons. But when the state's institutions apply the same rules to everyone, some suffer, and what is worse, their suffering goes unheard.²⁶⁴ Moreover, where each is formally the same as the other, nothing identifies *me* as uniquely responsible for those who suffer. The identity of the like arises in this way, from symmetry, comparison, and reciprocity. In the seventh of *Totality and Infinity's* "Conclusions", Levinas says,

In political life, taken unrebuked [*sans contrepartie*], humanity is understood from its works—a humanity of interchangeable men, of reciprocal relations. The substitution of men for one another, the primal disrespect, makes possible exploitation itself (TI 274, TaI 295).

While he does not undervalue of the language of rights and respect in liberalism, Levinas' contention with identity that applies to persons exteriorly in a liberal state is that it does not prevent politics from developing into exploitation and even tyranny.

To reconstruct Levinas' reasoning, the problem with this rough sketch of justice in a liberal state is twofold. First, it takes justice as formal equality. The "pathos of liberalism", he says, "...lies in the promotion of a person inasmuch as he represents nothing further, that is, is precisely a self" (TI 92, TaI 120). As I mentioned, despite the

²⁶³ Levinas often has Hobbes in mind. One can also add Locke and arguably Rousseau and Kant, among others.

²⁶⁴ In this regard, see Levinas' remark in dialogue with respondents after he delivered his paper "*Transcendence et hauteur*" ("Transcendence and Height") in 1962 concerning the "...tears that a civil servant cannot see..." (CH 105, BPW 23).

workings of justice, some suffer silently and nothing identifies *me* as singularly responsible for it. Second, it lacks resources to combat the progression of totalitarianism and its descent into war. In *Totality and Infinity*, where Levinas embeds his critique of state racism (a “philosophy of life or of race”) in a wider critique of totalitarianism, state racism occupies for Levinas the liminal space between beings in a totality and beings in war (*ibid.*).²⁶⁵ The “pathos of liberalism”, the formal equality of persons, does not prevent—it may even accommodate—the identity of the like. Above I argued that, better than a quarter-century after “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”, Levinas responds to racial persecution by adapting to it the way in which identity is produced in concrete relations between family members. Formally, this is the identity of the same; concretely, fecundity. With regard to totalitarian politics, Levinas says, “The irreplaceable unicity of the I which is maintained against the State is accomplished by fecundity” (TI 277, Tai 300). The thought is that, as a fecund being, I am uniquely responsible for the silent suffering of others. How is it that the family, identifying itself “*outside*” the state, as Levinas says in *Totality and Infinity*’s final conclusion, preserves the asymmetry he sees in the ethical relation? We must examine filiality and fraternity as dialectical moments that the I’s fecundity involves.²⁶⁶

5. C. (ii.) § 1. Fraternity in *From Existence to the Existent*: The Need for Filiality

Whereas *filialité*, the son’s responsibility for the father, appears in print only with the first major work in 1961, *fraternité*, or solidarity with others, is already in use in the 1935 essay “On Escape” and in Levinas’ earliest political commentaries.²⁶⁷ In 1947, he

²⁶⁵ On these distinctions and their relations, see 3. D. above.

²⁶⁶ Nothing can excuse, once again, the sexism these terms imply. But I leave that problem to one side for the purposes of my exposition.

²⁶⁷ For background and discussion, see Caygill’s *Levinas and the Political* 7ff.

argues in *From Existence to the Existent* that fraternity is an “outcome [*aboutissement*]” of family relations rather than a “point of departure” arising from civil life (DEE 164,EE 99). These are very different views. As a point of departure, fraternity arises from an enlightened civilization that affirms the “reciprocity of relationships” between persons. If that is the case, then I would enter into solidarity with others in order to limit harm so that we can protect our mutual interests, like commercial or cultural ones. With Kant in mind, Levinas adds that, each individual, formally the same as the other, is “both end and means”. That is a different way of expressing the “pathos of liberalism”, the “promotion of a person” baldly, of which he speaks in his first major work in 1961 (TI 92,TaI 120). This symmetrical view, however, is a “leveling [*nivellement*] of the idea of fraternity” (DEE 164,EE 99). As an outcome, Levinas implies that my solidarity with another must be produced or accomplished rather than given. It is a matter of an internalist production of identity. What the reciprocity of relationships presupposes is an externalist view or third person scope of atomic individuals related by a formal equality.

Fraternity begins, by contrast, in the asymmetry of individuals bound by responsibility, love, and first personal judgment. These are some of the important modes that bind members of a family. Rather than *choose* to be responsible for my son, to love my mother, or obey my guardian’s judgment, I am *already invested*. Giving or sacrifice among family members gives us concrete examples of an absolutely passive subject who never freely contracted her responsibilities and partly for this reason cannot assume or discharge them.

Levinas continues that the “intermediary of a father”, who is not simply a “cause or a genus”, is necessary for fraternity (DEE 164,EE 99). If, on the one hand, one takes

the father straightforwardly as a cause, then it is unclear how to conceive the child as at once his father and stranger to him, as Levinas maintains; if, on the other hand, one takes the father as a genus, then nothing prevents fraternity from taking itself as a tribe or race. To conceive fraternity, then, the relation of son to father is necessary.²⁶⁸ This is the concrete structure Levinas names filiality in *Totality and Infinity*. Furthermore, to postulate a father, a “heterogeneity of the I [*moi*] and another [*autrui*; translation modified]” is necessary according to Levinas’ sketch of fraternity in *From Existence to the Existent*. Problematically, he goes on to characterize this heterogeneity as the erotic relation between the genders in order to set up fecundity, which he promises to discuss in a forthcoming work (*Time and the Other* was published one year later).

Levinas’ sexism and problematic hetero-normativity should be acknowledged. To understand the political context of the I’s fecundity as solidarity with others—that is to say, as fraternity—we must see why filiality appears structurally necessary to a dialectical account of fecundity in *Totality and Infinity*. There, the erotic relation between genders is not the last word on the “heterogeneity of the I [*moi*] and another [*autrui*]”. There is the heterogeneity of the son in relation to strangers whereby he breaks with *and* refastens his relation to the father. Moving toward the dialectic of filiality and fraternity, however, we come upon a troubling passage with which we must reckon, if not resolve.

5. C. (ii.) § 2. Refastening to History “in a Nation”: A Troubling Passage in *Totality and Infinity*

In 5. B. (iii.) above I suggested one sense in which this breaking with and refastening is the case. This is pardon for the Holocaust that older generations have

²⁶⁸ This is half of the explanation. In describing the relation of father to son above, I already gave the other half, the concrete structure of paternity.

witnessed in the very waves of Jewish youth who break this past definitiveness while retying Jewish community. This is one way to read an otherwise troubling claim Levinas makes in his dialectical discussion of filiality and fraternity. He says that the son's recourse to the father's past "...defines a notion distinct from continuity, a way of refastening [*renouer*] the thread of history, concrete in a family and in a nation [translation modified]" (TI 255, TaI 278). What is troubling is the inclusion of "nation", wherein one may read an endorsement of nationalism. Filiality would unfold into fraternity for a certain tribe, a nation (in this case) of Jews. Levinas does not suggest, however, how this nation is to be defined (religiously, culturally, linguistically, etc.). My interpretation runs through the paradox of the pardon, a formal structure that arises from the concrete experience of being definitive—not being alone, merely, but *having to be*, i.e., having to be a survivor and having to live with the fact of guilt only a survivor can know. "Nation" does not necessarily imply nationalism. It implies the unforeseeable future of the Holocaust's descendants that is distinct from and not contingent on the encroachments of the racist state, even as that state depends on a classification of races in order to identify itself. As I explained in 3. D., the conceptual schema of a relation between terms without contingency or without a correlation is central to the formal structures that describe transcendence. The relation of a nation and a racist state, where the latter depends on the former but not the inverse, would fit this schema according to this line of reasoning.²⁶⁹ The nation in this case would be an extension of the family:

"Fecundity engendering fecundity accomplishes goodness: above and beyond...the

²⁶⁹ One can find further evidence that Levinas may be, however briefly, trying to harness the power of the word "nation" with regard to racism more generally in the epigraph to *Otherwise than Being*. There he dedicates his second major work to the memory of those "closest" among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists and to the "millions and millions of all confessions and all nations" who are victims of the same "hatred of the other man, the same anti-semitism [*sic*]" (AE v, OB v).

conception of the child” (TI 247, TaI 269). That is to say, one’s children bear children, proliferating desire as the adequate form of the experience of infinity in one’s finite time.²⁷⁰

One may also take nation in a more generic sense, which its etymology indicates and, more persuasively, the immediate context suggests. Here one need not rest on a specifically Jewish experience of Hitlerian anti-Semitism. In its basic etymological sense (*to be born*), it can refer to an entry into or formation of group solidarity for those being harmed. A responsibility I cannot evade is born from contingent encounters with others’ oppression. Here a nation forms on the basis of understanding fraternity as an “outcome” of an internalist production of identity and not as the abstract “point of departure” that civil life presupposes, to put it in the terms of *From Existence to the Existent*.

This pertains to the term’s immediate context, which makes the case more compelling. That Levinas puts refastening the thread of history in a nation on the same footing as how this is accomplished in the family is telling. Prior to contracting my services for others who are undergoing harm, which my interests would motivate, there is my unique responsibility for another’s harm. In taking a position in being, thereby securing my place and property, is it not the case that I have oppressed others? My very identity, by way of ipseity, confirms this, as I showed above in 5. C. (i.) § 3 and § 4.

Levinas goes on after the passage in question to explain that, “The originality of this

²⁷⁰ My presentation aims to offer some plausible interpretations with respect to Levinas’ mention of “nation” in one passage in *Totality and Infinity*. It does not claim to resolve it. I do not enter the thorny issues of Levinas’ views on the state of Israel or Zionism. They are beyond the scope of this work. To begin to do justice to these topics, one would first have to consult the essays “*L’état de César et l’état de David*” (1971; “The State of Caesar and the State of David”), “*Politiques après!*” (1979; “Politics After!”), and “*Assimilation et culture nouvelle*” (1980; “Assimilation and New Culture”) in ADV 209-20, BV 177-87, ADV 221-28, BV 188-95, and ADV 229-34, BV 196-201, respectively. One would also have to consult Shlomo Malka’s interview of Levinas’ and Alan Finkelkraut shortly after the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres in West Beirut, “*Ethique et Politique*” (“Ethics and Politics”), in *Les Nouveaux Cahiers* 18:71 (1982-83): 1-8, which appears in English in LR 291-97.

refastening [*renouement*], distinct from continuity, is attested in the revolt or the permanent revolution that constitutes ipseity [translation modified]” (TI 255, TaI 278). He lays his claim on the identity of ipseity. In one movement bound by contraries, the I produces itself as distinct from inchoate and anonymous being by claiming the self as its own, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, as retied to the oppression of others, individuating it as one responsible beyond any memory. The novelty of the I’s fecundity is to show how the identity of ipseity binds me not only to the fact that ‘I am I’, *this* being; rather it is to show how by ipseity I am bound to another’s fate across an absolute interval, where I cannot locate my accountability but am nonetheless responsible.

Nonetheless, family suggests kinship, real or metaphorical. On analogy with the family, nation would as well. One must admit that nothing, in fact, prevents a nation—defined by an historical identity, by a class of workers, by a common language, etc., or by any contingent circumstances of oppression—from hardening into a nationalism of the worst kind or tribalism.²⁷¹ It is the risk a fraternity built on the unforeseeable and contingent proliferation of desire for the other takes. Even as one admits this, what one must bring into view is how the dialectical account of the I’s fecundity through filiality and fraternity breaks the bonds of kinship and is not, at least in the first place, the rise of a tribalism.

5. C. (ii.) § 3. How is the Family Possible? Paternal Love and the Meaning of Asymmetry in Filial Being

To see how a son breaks with his father’s past definitiveness and joins with others to demand justice from the institutions of the state, one should first recall that Levinas

²⁷¹ Moreover, nothing eliminates my coopting the oppression of others for my benefit in demanding justice for them.

wants to develop relations within the family that are modes of being passively invested without the power to assume them. A daughter does not *choose* to be loved by her parents, to be responsible for her father, or obey her mother's judgment. Certainly, she may dismiss an obligation to her parents, ignore a specific command, or neglect counsel. But it is not as a particular ego that Levinas considers her. He rather undertakes the description of a certain mode of being, namely, filial being (an ontico-existential structure of existence, in Heidegger's terms). In her very identity as daughter, she has already substituted herself for members of her family.

In this regard, Levinas says that the son owes his "unicity" first to the "paternal *Eros*" (TI 256, TaI 279). This love, and not a causal account, elects him to be a son. As a child, his "unique" being for himself depends on his being unique for his father. What this means is that a child relies on being brought up and cared for by another in order to be a self-sufficient and self-determining ego. Formally, therefore, unicity for Levinas means that the son is one (I) and another (his father). This is concrete in that the son is, by altogether contingent factors, singularly responsible for another, which is to say, himself a fecund being. One sees once again how Levinas considers the I's fecundity a concretion of transcendence: the I, as child, is individuated neither by being caused by his parents (a straightforward biological account) nor by a spontaneous act of freedom but by a responsibility for another that he never contracted. It is not, moreover, that a son first hears his father's command to responsibility and then obeys it; it is rather that, on account of the love that brings him up and cares for him, he has *already* obeyed the command. Just as having a child disturbs a father's egoism, a son awakens to himself under his father's judgment, even absent an actual accusation.

The son's ability to determine himself, or, in Levinas' language, to be one who can command and be commanded by others, owes to this election to the mode of filial being, that is, to responsibility for his father, concretely understood (TI 189, TaI 213).²⁷² Recall that the primary criticism of existential philosophy Levinas had in his 1947 essay "Being Jewish" is its blind faith in a present without origin. To this he opposes the thought of a present that remains shackled, without escape, to a past. Applying this to filiality, one can draw the conclusion that the son is responsible even for the father's past definitiveness, that is, for his free choices, his faults, and misfortunes. There is nothing to prevent responsibility for another from being a persecution, as Levinas will claim with regard to substitution in the 1968 essay of the same name and repeat in *Otherwise than Being* (RPL 491, BPW 82 and AE 130, OB 102). I may, as a self-sufficient and self-determining I, take leave of this burden in projects and other social relations. But it remains that, as a filial being, just as I do not get to choose my parents, I do not get to pick and choose those parts of them for which I am responsible.

For Levinas, then, "paternal *Eros*" is severe. It is not like the love between partners in an erotic relation that he describes. In voluptuosity, the I loves the way the other makes it feel: it is a "love of the love of the Other" (TI 244, TaI 266).²⁷³ To be invested by paternal eros, by contrast, is the burden of being an I who is already for another. Vulnerability and needs do not exhaust the meaning of the asymmetry that nurturing and raising a child involves. Parents' love rather proliferates the child's desire

²⁷² One may also put this in terms that, while foreign to Levinas, a wider philosophical audience uses: a son's responsibility for his father is a source of normative ethical agency.

²⁷³ In bringing up voluptuosity to contrast with "paternal *Eros*", I am not condoning, nor in any way endorsing, Levinas' account of the former. This is for at least two reasons: first, the sexism and heteronormativity voluptuosity clearly implies; second, because I think Levinas' is an insufficient description of erotic love. It need not be case that erotic love fails as a concrete category of transcendence because this "regime of tenderness" remains a regime of *two*, deaf to others in the world, as Levinas' criticism goes (TI 233, TaI 256). I am not convinced that it reinforces egoism.

for them beyond their finite definitiveness. Levinas' claim is that the very fact of being loved and raised preserves the asymmetry in the son-father relation, where there is a responsibility for another and a discovery of oneself under another's judgment that cannot be fully assumed. A son is a unique being for himself, a self-sufficient and self-determining ego, *because* he is uniquely responsible for his father. That, and not merely a biological account, is how the "strange conjuncture of the family is possible" (TI 256, TaI 279).

5. C. (ii.) § 4. From a Father's Son to Solidarity with Others: Equality Wrought from Asymmetry

To be loved, commanded, and reared by parents or guardians establishes an irreducible ethical asymmetry in filial being. Levinas' claim is that one constitutes oneself as a self-sufficient and self-determining ego, or, as he puts it, one who has the ethical authority to command and obey the commands of others, because of this asymmetry. But to conclude that it is because the child becomes an adult with agency that it breaks from the asymmetry of filial being does not do justice to the dialectical account of filiality and fraternity. The asymmetry of I and another who commands me to responsibility remains: I never stop, in a strong sense for Levinas, being my father's son and bearing the burden of that responsibility. Filiality is surpassed but also preserved in a wider set of social relations in which self for another means joining in solidarity with others on behalf of someone in need. The I forms a solidarity, or fraternity, with others because he is an equal. How is it that equality is wrought from asymmetry and not from formal symmetry, as in a classical liberal view of justice?

One should bear in mind two broader points in the course of constructing this account. Firstly, Levinas wants to articulate relations within the family as sites for the production of identity where the self is for another without return to itself. The totalitarian state cannot coopt this, on the one hand, and the liberal state, on the other hand, has no precedent for it. He makes no claim that it is, however, the *only* such site. What motivates the articulation of specifically biological relations, secondly, is the continued concern Levinas has with Hitlerian racism's grounding proposition with regard to human identity, *I is body*, where biology determines one's fate. This dates back twenty-seven years before *Totality and Infinity* to "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism". If there is a way out, so to speak, of this irrefutable fact of having to be, it must be sought *in* the biological structures themselves, where a relation with a beyond being flashes. Levinas comments,

If biology furnishes us the prototypes of all these relations, this proves, to be sure, that biology does not represent a purely contingent order of being, unrelated to its essential production. But these relations free themselves from their biological determination (TI 257, TaI 279).

The shift of political landscape by 1961 from the overtly racist to the totalitarian state has not mitigated the concern that social and political life is in danger of being reduced to the experiments of racial eugenics.²⁷⁴ That is the proper context for understanding why Levinas insists on developing biological relations into concretions of transcendence.²⁷⁵

Asymmetry in a family relation invests the I with the authority to command others on behalf of those vulnerable, violated, or otherwise oppressed. One primary site out of

²⁷⁴ By characterizing this as a *shift*, I by no means am saying that totalitarian states do not tacitly or overtly accommodate or support racist institutions.

²⁷⁵ That the biological determination is still a chief concern is evident from his comments in the 1968 "Substitution" essay: "The fundamental concept of ipseity, while tied to incarnation, is not a biological concept. [...] It outlines a schema in corporeality which permits us to attach the biological to a higher structure" (RPL 497, BPW 87). That he retains this thought to respond to Derrida in *Otherwise than Being* six years later tells further of its significance (AE 139, OB 109).

which to develop this asymmetry is the relation with the father. The I's equality with others is neither given nor merely formal, as with the reciprocal symmetry of persons in liberalism, but must be wrought from the asymmetry Levinas sees in an ethical relation such as this one. To grasp the dialectic at work in the account of filiality and fraternity, the following statement may serve as a guide: "The human I [*moi*] is *posited* [*se pose*] in *fraternity*: that all men are brothers is not added to man as a moral conquest, but *constitutes his ipseity* [my emphasis—PJG]" (TI 257, TaI 279-80). As I have argued throughout these last three chapters, the identity that my ipseity thrusts on me is that of being a one for the other, without evasion. In having to be a separate I, I have already fastened myself to another's fate. The primary meaning of the self is to be substituted for another human being. This accomplishes transcendence, as with responsibility. The question is how the asymmetry in the concrete relation of son and father is surpassed and preserved in the broader social relation of equals who in solidarity demand justice for another or others in need or otherwise oppressed.

My father is me but also a stranger. As paternity is a "...relation with a stranger who while being Other...is me...", the same is true of filiality (TI 254, TaI 277). I cannot escape the fact that I am his son, that is to say, unique for him through his love. But, as stranger to me, my father, too, has a face: this is the command, beyond any particular content of what he says, not to leave him alone.²⁷⁶ In asymmetry to another, I am a

²⁷⁶ The meaning of the face is the absolute ethical commandment, "'you shall not commit murder'" (TI 173, TaI 199). Levinas explains how he understands this in several places. Particularly clear are later interviews. It is not merely the prohibition of the violent act. For instance, in a 1986 interview with François Poirié, he says, "Ethically I cannot say that the other does not concern me. The political order—institutions and justice—relieve this incessant responsibility, but for the political order, for the good political order, we are still responsible. If one thinks this to the limit, one can say that I am responsible for the death of the other. I cannot leave him alone to die, even if I cannot stop it. This is how I have always interpreted the 'Thou shalt not kill'. 'Thou shalt not kill' does not signify merely the interdiction against plunging a knife into the breast of the neighbor. Of course, it signifies that, too. But so many ways of being

hostage, even if the captor is one of those familiar and closest to me. This rests on the ontologico-existential structure of escape, where the asymmetry of being chosen by another motivates transcendence as ex-cendence. It is out of this asymmetry, and not out of reciprocity, that the son equals his father as a self-sufficient and self-determining I, breaking from his definitiveness. Concretely, it can mean that I give aid and comfort to him when he is vulnerable, suffering, or lonely. I do this not because I am fulfilling my end of a bargain or because of an obligation biology or cultural mores would explain. I do this out of a responsibility I have already obeyed (which even my begrudging, neglect, or refusal does not diminish).

In this regard, Levinas comments, “Equality is produced where the other commands the same and reveals himself to the same in responsibility; otherwise it is but an abstract idea and a word” (TI 189, TaI 214). A stranger to the I—though he is my father—commands the I to his service as master. This entails taking mastery of myself, or as Levinas puts it, the other’s “command commands me to command” (TI 188, TaI 213). It is through taking mastery of myself to serve another that I have the normative ethical authority, to put it in language not found in Levinas’ presentation itself, to call on others and organize his aid. Levinas comments, “I am I [*Je suis moi*] and chosen one, but where can I be chosen, if not among other chosen ones, among equals?” (TI 256, TaI 279). In saying this, Levinas affirms that to be an I means to posit oneself in asymmetry to another and to have the same rights as others. Yet equality conceived reciprocally does not provide cover from my real responsibility. An equality that is not merely an “abstract idea and a word” comes into view from an experience of a certain sort, such as that of a

comport a way of crushing the other” (EL 99, IRB 53). See also “Being-Toward-Death and ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill’”, where Levinas elaborates on “killing with a good conscience” (IRB 132).

son's relation to his father. Here equality is wrought from the asymmetry of being commanded to command others to the aid of the one in need: the human I, to remind us of our guiding passage, "*is posited in fraternity*". Being a son, qua unicity, preserves these contraries, "self-sufficiency of being", on the one hand, where I enter into solidarity with others equal to me, and "...partialness, my position before the other as a face", on the other hand, where I find myself singularly responsible for someone (TI 189, TaI 214).²⁷⁷ Thus in filiality I am and am not one among many: I am in the sense that I enter into equality and cooperation with others through my obedience to another's command, and I am not in the sense that I bear more responsibility than everyone else.²⁷⁸ Equality wrought from asymmetry signals a different sense of justice, one that would depart from the classical sense without abandoning it entirely. The totalitarian state, on the one hand, cannot smother fraternity because it is produced in human ipseity itself; justice in the liberal state, on the other hand, cannot account for it.

5. C. (ii.) § 5. Transcendence, Justice, and the "Unjustifiable" Identity of Ipseity in *Otherwise than Being*

This account gives us a purchase on the meaning of Levinas' proposition, "The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other—language is justice", where "language" means the ethical relation with another that he will develop into the saying and said distinction in *Otherwise than Being* (TI 188, TaI 213). Commentators typically focus on this passage to explain the transition or hinge from his ethics to politics. The mistake is to view responsibility and justice as operating in two distinct orders. The reasoning behind

²⁷⁷ Cf. also Levinas' comment that, "The I as I....remains turned ethically to the face of the other: fraternity is the very relation with the face in which at the same time my election and equality, that is, the mastery exercised over me by the other, are accomplished. The election of the I, *its very ipseity*, is revealed to be a *privilege and a subordination*...[my emphasis—PJG]" (TI 256, TaI 279).

²⁷⁸ Levinas is fond of quoting Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* to express this: "'Each of us is guilty before everyone and for everyone, and I more than the others'" (AE 186, OB 146).

this is understandable: Levinas himself sometimes follows this distinction. Whereas in *Totality and Infinity* justice is, strikingly, often another word for the ethical relation, in *Otherwise than Being* it belongs more often the order of symmetry, comparison, and calculation, all the political considerations that, out of fairness, serve to put limits on the responsibility for another's destitution or oppression that runs in my very ipseity.²⁷⁹ What the dialectic of filiality and fraternity shows, however, is how in being among equals Levinas preserves the asymmetry in a son's relation to his father. Thus, while there is a justice that Levinas distinguishes from responsibility, formal equality, there is another justice, as he will say in *Otherwise than Being*,

...older than itself and than the [formal] equality implied by it, [where] justice passes justice in my responsibility for the other, in my inequality in relation to the one whose hostage I am. Another [Autrui] is from the start brother of all other men [translation modified; my emphasis—PJG] (AE 201,OB 158).²⁸⁰

The concrete experience of being my father's son aims to articulate that at the bottom of the equality by which I enter into fraternity is being hostage to an asymmetry. This is the line of thought that Levinas will develop to argue for his main thesis concerning fraternity (or solidarity) seven years later in the "Substitution" essay and continuing in *Otherwise than Being*:

...persecution, a placing in question anterior to questioning, a responsibility beyond the logos of the response, *as though persecution by the other [autrui] were the basis of solidarity with the other* [my emphasis—PJG]" (RPL 491,BPW 82 and AE 130,OB 102).

²⁷⁹ In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas says, "*We call justice this face to face approach, in conversation*" (TI 43,TaI 71). In *Otherwise than Being*, meanwhile, he says, "The third party introduces a contradiction in Saying whose signification before the other until then went in one direction. It is of itself the limit of responsibility and the birth of the question: What do I have to do with justice? A question of consciousness. Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling, order, thematization, the *visibility* of face, and thus intentionality and the intellect, the intelligibility of a system, and thence also a copresence on an equal footing as before a court of justice. *Essence*, as synchrony: *togetherness-in-a-place* [translation slightly modified]" (AE 200,OB 157).

²⁸⁰ Cf. Levinas' remark in *Totality and Infinity*, "In reality, justice does not include me in the equilibrium of its universality; justice summons me to go beyond the straight line of justice, and henceforth nothing can mark the end of this march..." (TI 224,TaI 245).

The structures he describes using family relations as his models in *Totality and Infinity* are integral to pursuing a justice “*older*” than the formal “*equality*” that the concept traditionally implies. What *Otherwise than Being* makes plain is that I do not thereby depart from the plane of calculating just deserts.

Levinas thereby rebuffs the classical liberal view that justice is the result of an enlightened society of egos and tribes that has learned from history’s bloody march. The idea in this case is that the institutions that administer it arise from the mutual benefit to individuals and groups who limit violence to secure their persons and property. He does not deny the liberal view outright; he rather rejects that the matters of and demands for justice are born exclusively from the political calculations that limit violence. In the 1975-76 lecture course “God and Onto-theo-logy”, nearly contemporaneous with *Otherwise than Being*, he addresses the difference in these views with noteworthy lucidity:

Can we deduce institutions from [Hobbes’] definition of man as ‘a wolf for man’, rather than the hostage of the other man? What difference is there between institutions arising from a limitation of violence and those arising from a limitation of responsibility? There is, at least, this one: in the second case, one can revolt against institutions in the very name of that which gave birth to them” (DMT 214,GDT 183).

It is in another’s name, not my own, that I protest against the instruments of her oppression, whether these are the machinery of the totalitarian state or the procedures of justice in liberal institutions where someone’s suffering goes unheard. That an I happens to form a solidarity with others for the one oppressed is a remarkable event. It is evidence of human identity structured as for another *because* one remains oneself, without consideration of how my involvement will benefit me (egoism) and without the utter loss of myself in the cause (altruism).

What comes into view, then, in beginning from the concrete experience of being a self for another—impossible, unthinkable, unutterable as it is—is a meaning of justice that demands more than the classical one and the categories that describe it while reconceiving the meaning of those categories, like equality. In reverting in many passages in *Otherwise than Being* to its classical sense, Levinas is not curtailing his more radical thrusts in *Totality and Infinity*. He is rather arguing, in light of Derrida’s challenging double reading in “Violence and Metaphysics”, that ipseity catches an I between the symmetry, comparison, and calculation whereby it judges how much aid to give or what it owes and the recurrent demand to occupy another’s place after this judgment. It is for this reason that he calls the identity of ipseity in *Otherwise than Being* “unjustifiable”: there is always another consideration of what is just or merciful inasmuch as, in being a *self*, I have already substituted myself for another (AE 135,OB 106; cf. also AE 162-63,OB 126-27).²⁸¹ The ontological account of ipseity that Levinas describes in *From Existence to the Existent* cannot but take on a primarily ethical meaning after Derrida’s double reading. Further, taking fraternity to be constitutive of ipseity, that is, conceiving it through the trace’s structure, rather than something added on by a society that has achieved a heightened moral awareness, to refer once again to the passage above that

²⁸¹ The latter passage in the parenthetical reference I have in mind reads: “But it is me [*moi*]*—me* [*moi*] and not an other—who am the others’ hostage; in substitution my being is undone to me [*moi*] and not to an other; and it is through this substitution that I am not ‘an other’, but me [*moi*]. The *self* in being is exactly the ‘inability to steal away’ from an assignment that aims at no generality [original emphasis]. There is no ipseity common to me [*moi*] and others, me [*moi*] is the exclusion of this possibility of comparison, as soon as comparison is set up. Ipseity is consequently *a privilege or an unjustifiable election* that elects me [*moi*] and not the Ego [*Moi*; translation modified; my emphasis—PJG]” (AE 162-63,OB 126-27). There is a striking resemblance between this thought and the following remark in the dialectical account of filiality and fraternity in *Totality and Infinity*: “The I as I....remains turned ethically to the face of the other: fraternity is the very relation with the face in which at the same time my election and equality, that is, the mastery exercised over me by the other, are accomplished. The election of the I, *its very ipseity*, is revealed to be *a privilege and a subordination*...[my emphasis—PJG] (TI 256,TaI 279). On the interpretation I am offering, a concrete precursor for the “unjustifiable” identity of ipseity is the dialectic of filiality and fraternity.

guided my account, shows how for Levinas transcendence is bound up even with the scales of justice.

To close this chapter, the broader point I made at the outset of this dialectical account of filiality and fraternity warrants repeating. For Levinas, it is not that the identity of ipseity and the mode of being responsible for another have no foundation in social life outside the family, as in political life. It is that the family, identifying “*outside*” the state, is one powerful locus for the production of selves for others that the totalitarian state’s advance cannot extinguish (TI 283, TaI 306). That is the connection from filiality to fraternity through the I’s fecundity, and therefore the proper context for understanding and developing these concrete structures of transcendence. Furthermore, on account of the sketch of justice in the liberal state I offered to open 5. C. (ii.) and my interpretation of liberalism through Levinas’ early political commentaries in Chapter 3, we may add on Levinas’ behalf that the family has a similar value with regard to the shortcomings of the liberal state as well.

CONCLUSION

The motivation behind this work was to develop the notion of justice that emerges from Levinas' two major works, *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise than Being* (1974). It is through exposition and analysis of Levinas' notion of human identity that one can bring the relation of justice and ethics in his mature philosophy into view. The final chapter went some way toward describing how he conceives justice in relation to certain ethical structures he elaborates in the first major work and integrating these structures with the conceptual innovations in the second. It serves as a prolegomenon to future research to develop his understanding of justice in *Otherwise than Being*.

By way of concluding, I would like to offer a brief summary of the main claims of each chapter.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I presented the key interpretive framework through which Derrida reads texts around the time of his 1967 volume *Writing and Difference*, the problem of philosophy at the time of the closure of metaphysics. This is the view that every metaphysical text by necessity transgresses metaphysics and, by this very transgression, is recaptured by metaphysics. Against some commentators, I argued in Chapter 2 that his systematic exposition of Levinas' thought in the 1964 essay "Violence and Metaphysics" (republished, with revisions and additions, in 1967) should not be taken, despite appearance to the contrary, as a standard work of criticism. Rather, that Derrida writes, with one hand, of the problem of conceiving an infinity beyond being

and, with the other hand, of Levinas' notion of the trace, testifies to a double reading of Levinas' texts. This is the case even if Derrida himself does not fully understand how the trace operates implicitly in Levinas' philosophy until later. Through the double reading, Derrida discovers the problem of the closure and, in some measure, the resources he will cultivate to respond to it.

In Chapter 3, I showed how human identity is the problem and key that drives Levinas' philosophy through an exposition of his early philosophical and political commentaries. In these works, Levinas engages the philosophical underpinnings of Hitlerian anti-Semitic racism. The desire to develop an alternative account of identity than those found in liberalism and Hitlerism, on the one hand, and to respond to the threat racial eugenics poses to social and political life, on the other hand, is the context for the structures of the family Levinas develops in *Totality and Infinity*. These are descriptions that many commentators have hitherto either criticized or undervalued. My main claim in Chapter 4 was that Derrida's challenging reading in "Violence and Metaphysics" draws Levinas back to his earlier descriptions of the I's identity and the meaning of the embodied self in his 1947 book *From Existence to the Existent*. These descriptions are integral to understanding how the major ethical notions that *Otherwise than Being* uses to drive its argument reply to the framework Derrida imposes on Levinas. Finally, in Chapter 5 I integrated the two major works by showing how fecundity in *Totality and Infinity* leads to substitution in *Otherwise than Being*. Key to this argument was to conceive fecundity through the very notion Derrida identifies as a response to the problem of the closure, the trace. The trace served as a guide to developing Levinas'

notion of justice in the two major works through a dialectical account of filiality and fraternity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Literature

- Aristotle. *Physics*. Trans. Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- . “Aristotle: Protrepticus, Or Exhortation to Philosophy”. Ed. and trans. D.S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson. Accessed 14 May 2016, <http://www.protrepticus.info/protreprecon2015i20.pdf>
- Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution*. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998.
- . *L'évolution créatrice*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014.
- Carrel, Alexis. *L'homme, cet inconnu*. Paris: Plon, 1935.
- . *Man, the Unknown*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935.
- Derrida, Jacques. “Violence et métaphysique. Essai sur la pensée d’Emmanuel Levinas” (*Première partie*). *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69e Année, No. 3 (July-September 1964): 322-54.
- . “Violence et métaphysique. Essai sur la pensée d’Emmanuel Levinas” (*Deuxième partie*). *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69e Année, No. 4 (October-December 1964): 425-73.
- . “‘Genèse et Structure’ et la Phénoménologie”. In *Entretiens sur les notions de Genèse et de Structure*. Eds. Maurice de Gandillac, Lucien Goldmann, and Jean Piaget. Paris: Mouton, 1965. 243-60.
- . *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris, France: Seuil, 1967.
- . *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Minuit, 1967.
- . *Marges de la philosophie*. Paris: Minuit, 1972.
- . *Positions*. Paris: Minuit, 1972.
- . *Edmund Husserl: L'origine de la géométrie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974.
- . *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- . *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- . *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- . *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*. Trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
- . *La voix et le phénomène*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989.
- . *Adieu: À Emmanuel Lévinas*. Paris, France: Editions Galilée, 1997.
- . *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- . *De l'hospitalité*. Paris, France: Calmann-Lévy, 1997.
- . *Psyché. Invention de l'autre*. Paris: Galilée, 1998.
- . *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

- . *Of Hospitality*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- . *Psyché. Invention de l'autre*, volume II. Paris: Galilée, 2003.
- . *Psyche: Invention of the Other*, volume I. Eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- . *Psyche: Invention of the Other*, volume II. Eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- . *Voice and Phenomenon*. Trans. Leonard Lawlor. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011.

- Descartes, Rene. *Œuvres de Descartes*, volume XI. Eds. Ch. Adam and P. Tannery. Revised edition. Paris: Vrin/C.N.R.S., 1964-76.
- . *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, volume I. Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- Heidegger, Martin. *Wegmarken*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978.
- . *Einführung in die Metaphysik. Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 40. Ed. P. Jaeger. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983.
- . *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz. Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 26. 2nd edition. Ed. Klaus Held. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1990.
- . *Platon: Sophistes. Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 19. Ed. I. Schüssler. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992.
- . *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. Trans. Michael Heim. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- . *Pathmarks*. Ed. and trans. William McNeill. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . *Identity and Difference*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- . *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Cambridge: Blackwell, 2003.
- . *Plato's Sophist*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- . *Wegmarken. Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 9. 3rd edition. Ed. F.-W. von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004.
- . *Identität und Differenz. Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 11. 2nd edition. Ed. F.-W. von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006.
- . *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 2006.
- . *Introduction to Metaphysics*. 2nd edition. Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

- Henry, Michel. *The Essence of Manifestation*. Trans. Girard Etzkorn. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.
- . *Essence de la manifestation*. 2nd edition. Paris: P.U.F., 1990.

- Husserl, Edmund. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch*, volume I. *Husserliana III/1*. Ed. Walter Biemel. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950.
- . *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendente Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologische Philosophie. Husserliana VI*. Ed. Walter Biemel. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954.
- . *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins. Husserliana X*. Ed. Rudolf Boehm. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966.
- . *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.
- . *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Erstes Buch*, volume I. *Husserliana III/1*. Ed. Karl Schuhmann. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976.
- . *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. F. Kersten. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983.
- . *Logische Untersuchungen*, volume II, part II. *Husserliana XIX/2*. Ed. Ursula Panzer. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984.
- . *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*. Trans. John Barnett Brough. Dordrecht: Springer, 1991.
- . *Logical Investigations*, volume II. Trans. J.N. Findlay. New York: Humanities Books, 2000.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Éthique de la différence sexuelle*. Paris: Minuit, 1984.
- . “Questions à Emmanuel Lévinas”. *Critique : revue générale des publications françaises et étrangères* 522 (November 1990): 911-20.
- . “Questions to Emmanuel Levinas”. In *The Irigaray Reader*. Ed. Margaret Whitford. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1992.
- . *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Trans. Carolyn Burke and Gilligan C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- James, William. *Principles of Psychology*, volume II. New York: Dover, 1950.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Hamburg: Meiner, 2003.
- . *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. “A propos de la mort de Pape Pie XI”, *Paix et droit* 19 (March 1939): 3-4, republished in *Emmanuel Levinas: Cahier de l’Herne*. Eds. Catherine Chalié and Miguel Abensour. Paris: L’Herne, 1991, 151-52.
- . “Existentialisme et antisémitisme”. *L’cahier de Alliance israélite universelle*. Vol. 14-15 (June-July 1947): 2-3.
- . “La substitution” in *Revue philosophique du Louvain* 66:89 (February 1968): 487-508.
- . “Le dire et le dit”. *Le Nouveau Commerce*, 18-19 (1971): 19-48.
- . *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.

- . *Noms Propres*. Paris: Fata Morgana, 1976.
- . *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*. Paris: Vrin, 1982.
- . *Éthique et infini: Dialogue avec Philippe Nemo*. Paris: Fayard, 1982.
- . "Éthique et Politique". *Les Nouveaux Cahiers* 18:71 (1982-83): 1-8.
- . *Difficile Liberté*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1983.
- . *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l'extériorité*. Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984.
- . "The Trace of the Other" in *Deconstruction in Context*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Ed. Marc C. Taylor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986: 345-59.
- . *Emmanuel Levinas: Qui êtes-vous?* Interview with François Poirié. Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987: 63-136.
- . *Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987.
- . *The Levinas Reader*. Ed. Seán Hand. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989.
- . *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Trans. Seán Hand. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- . "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism". Trans. by Seán Hand. *Critical Inquiry* 17:1 (1990:Autumn): 62-71.
- . *Entre nous Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*. Paris: Grasset, 1991.
- . *Beyond the Verse*. Trans. Gary D. Mole. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- . *Les imprévus de l'histoire*. Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1994.
- . *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Eds. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- . "Martin Heidegger and Ontology". Trans. The Committee of Public Safety. *Diacritics*, 26:1 (Spring, 1996): 11-32.
- . *Collected Philosophical Papers*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998.
- . *De l'évasion*. Paris, France: Librairie générale française, 1998.
- . *Discovering Existence with Husserl*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998.
- . *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- . *Of God Who Comes to Mind*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- . "Existentialism and Anti-Semitism". Trans. Denis Hollier and Rosalind Krauss. *October*. Vol. 87 (Winter, 1999), 27-31.
- . *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*. Paris: Vrin, 2010.
- . *Existence and Existents*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001.
- . *Is it Righteous to Be?* Ed. Jill Robbins. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- . *De l'existence à l'existant*. Paris: Vrin, 2002.
- . *On Escape*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- . "Être juif". *Cahiers d'Études levinassiennes* 1 (2003): 99-106.
- . *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University

- Press, 2005.
- . *Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l'hitlérisme*. Ed. Miguel Abensour. Paris: Rivages Poche, 2006.
- . "Being Jewish". Trans. Mary Beth Mader. *Continental Philosophy Review* 40 (2007): 205-10.
- . *L'au-delà du verset*. Paris: Minuit, 2007.
- . *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2008.
- . *Proper Names*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- . *Œuvres 1: Carnets de captivité et autres inédits*. Eds. Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalié. Paris, France: Grasset et Fasquelle / IMEC, 2009.
- . *Œuvres 2: Parole et silence et autres conférences inédites*. Eds. Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalié. Paris, France: Grasset et Fasquelle / IMEC, 2011.
- . *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012.
- . *Humanisme de l'autre homme*. Paris: Poche, 2012.
- . *Le temps et l'autre*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. "Levinas' Logic". In *Face to Face with Lévinas*. Ed. Richard A. Cohen. Trans. Ian McCleod. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
- Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Trans. A.J. Krailshiemer. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Plato. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.
- Ricœur, Paul. *Soi-même comme un autre*. Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil, 1990.
- . *Oneself as Another*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- . *Autrement. Lecture d'Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'Essence d'Emmanuel Levinas*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997.
- . "Otherwise: A Reading of Emmanuel Levinas's *Otherwise than Being or beyond Essence*." Trans. Matthew Escobar. *Yale French Studies* 104 (2004): 82-99.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Réflexions sur la question juive*. Paris: Gallimard, 1987.
- . *L'être et le néant*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990.
- . *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992.
- . *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Trans. George J. Becker. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.

Secondary Literature

- Adams, Sarah LaChance. *Mad Mothers, Bad Mothers, and What a "Good" Mother Would Do: The Ethics of Ambivalence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Allison, Henry. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New

- Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Atterton, Peter. "Levinas and the Language of Peace: A Response to Derrida". *Philosophy Today* 36:1 (1992:Spring).
- Atterton, Peter, Matthew Calarco and Maurice Friedman, eds. *Levinas and Buber: Dialogue and Difference*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2004.
- Atterton, Peter, Matthew Calarco, eds. *Radicalizing Levinas*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2010.
- Baum, Bryce. *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race: A Political History of Racial Identity*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Bergo, Bettina. "Remarks on Emmanuel Levinas's Contribution to Classical and 'Situated' Justice". *Theoria* 49:100 (2002): 38-63.
- . *Levinas Between Ethics & Politics: For the Beauty that Adorns the Earth*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003.
- . "Ontology, Transcendence, and Immanence in Emmanuel Levinas' Philosophy". *Research in Phenomenology* 35 (2005): 141-177.
- . "The Face in Levinas". *Angelaki* 16:1 (2011): 17-39.
- Bettina, Bergo and Joseph D. Cohen, eds. *Judeities: Questions For Jacques Derrida*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.
- Bernasconi, Robert L. "Levinas Face to Face – with Hegel". *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 13:3 (1982): 267-76.
- . "Hegel and Levinas: The Possibility of Reconciliation and Forgiveness". *Archivio di Filosofia*, Vol. 54, (1986): 325-46.
- . "Levinas and Derrida: The Question of the Closure of Metaphysics" in *Face to Face with Levinas*. Ed. Richard A. Cohen. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986. 189-92.
- . "The Silent Anarchic World of the Evil Genius," in *The Collegium Phaenomenologicum: The First Ten Years*. Eds. G. Moneta, J. Sallis, and J. Taminiaux. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988, 257-272.
- . "The Trace of Levinas in Derrida" in *Derrida and Différance*. Eds. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1988, 13-29.
- . "Seeing Double: Destruction and Deconstruction" in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*. Eds. D. Michelfelder and R. Palmer. New York: SUNY Press, 1989, 233-250.
- . "The Ethics of Suspicion". *Research in Phenomenology* 20:1 (1990): 3-18.
- . "'Only the Persecuted...': Language of the Oppressor, Language of the Persecuted" in *Ethics as First Philosophy*. Ed. Adriaan Peperzak. New York: Routledge, 1995, 77-86.
- . "The violence of the face: Peace and language in the thought of Levinas". *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 23:6 (1997): 81-93.
- . "What Goes Around Comes Around: Levinas and Derrida on the Economy of the Gift and the Gift of Genealogy". *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*. Edited by Alan D. Schrift. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- . "Levinas: Philosophy and Beyond", in *Continental Philosophy*, Vol. 1, New York, NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1998.
- . "The third party. Levinas on the intersection of the ethical and the political".

- Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 30:1 (1999): 76-87.
- . "What is the Question to Which Substitution is the Answer?" in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*. Edited by Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . "Levinas and the Struggle for Existence". *Addressing Levinas*. Eds. Antje Kapust, Kent Still and Eric Sean Nelson. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005.
- Bernasconi, Robert, and David Wood, eds. *Time and Metaphysics*. Coventry, UK: Parousia Press, 1982.
- . *Derrida and Differance*. Coventry, UK: Parousia Press, 1985.
- . *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.
- Bernasconi, Robert and Simon Critchley, eds. *Re-Reading Levinas*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- . *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Bernet, Rudolf. *La vie du sujet*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994.
- . *Conscience et existence. Perspectives phénoménologiques*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004.
- Bernet, Rudolf, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach. *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999.
- Bloechl, Jeffrey. *Liturgy of the Neighbor: Emmanuel Levinas and the Religion of Responsibility*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2000.
- Bloechl, Jeffrey, ed. *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God. Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2000.
- Burggraeve, Roger. *From Self-Development to Solidarity: An Ethical Reading of Human Desire in its Socio-Political Relevance According to Emmanuel Levinas*. Leuven, Belgium: Centre for Metaphysics and Philosophy of God, 1985.
- . "Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other: The Vision of Emmanuel Levinas on Moral Evil and Our Responsibility". *Journal of Social Responsibility* 30:1 (1995): 29-45.
- . *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace and Human Rights*. Translated by Jeffrey Bloechl. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2002.
- Calin, Rudolphe and François-David Sebbah. *Le vocabulaire de Levinas*. Paris, France: Ellipses, 2002.
- Chalier, Catherine. *La trace de l'infini: Emmanuel Levinas et la source hébraïque*. Paris, France: Cerf, 2002.
- . *Figures du féminin: lecture d'Emmanuel Levinas*. Paris, France: Des femmes-Antoinette Fouque, 2007.
- Caygill, Howard. *Levinas and the Political*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Cohen, Richard A., ed. *Face to Face with Lévinas*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
- Chanter, Tina. *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Re-writing of the Philosophers*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

- . “The betrayal of philosophy Emmanuel Levinas's *Otherwise Than Being*”. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 23:6 (1997): 65-79.
- . “Levinas and impossible possibility: Thinking ethics with Rosenzweig and Heidegger in the wake of the Shoah”. *Research in Phenomenology* 28 (1998): 91-109.
- . *Time, Death, and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Chanter, Tina, ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.
- Cohen, Joseph. “Levinas and the Problem of Phenomenology”. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 20:3 (2012): 363-374.
- Cohen, Richard A., ed. *Face to Face with Lévinas*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
- Cohen, Richard A. *Elevations: the Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- . “Emmanuel Levinas: Philosopher and Jew”. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 62:2/4 (2006): 481-490.
- . “Emmanuel Levinas: Judaism and the Primacy of the Ethical”. In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Michael L. Morgan and Peter E. Gordon, 234-255. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Ethics, Exegesis and Philosophy: Interpretation After Levinas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Levinasian Meditations: Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010.
- Cohen-Levinas, Danielle, ed. *Rue Descartes. Collège International de Philosophie*, Vol. 19, *Emmanuel Levinas*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998.
- . *Levinas*. Paris, France: Bayard, 2006.
- Conklin, Alice. *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Crowell, Steven Galt. “Why is Ethics First Philosophy? Levinas in Phenomenological Context”. *European Journal of Philosophy* 20:4 (2012): .
- Critchley, Simon. *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*. New York, NY: Verso, 2007.
- . “Five Problems in Levinas’s View of Politics and a Sketch of a Solution to Them”. *Political Theory* 32:2 (April 2004): 172-85.
- . *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Third Edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.
- Davies, Paul. “A Fine Risk: Reading Blanchot Reading Levinas” in *Re-Reading Levinas* Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley, eds.. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Davidson, Scott and Diane Perpich, eds. *Totality and Infinity At 50*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012.
- Diprose, Rosalyn. *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Drabinski, John. *Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other*. Edinburgh:

- Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Fagenblat, Michael. "Il y a du quotidien: Levinas and Heidegger on the self". *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28:5 (2002): 578-604.
- . *A Covenant of Creatures: Levinas's Philosophy of Judaism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Frederickson, George M. *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Guenther, Lisa. *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.
- . "'Like a Maternal Body': Emmanuel Levinas and the Motherhood of Moses". *Hypatia* 21:1 (2006): 119-136.
- . "'Nameless Singularity': Levinas on Individuation and Ethical Singularity". *Epoché* 14:1 (2009): 167-187.
- . "The Ethics and Politics of Otherness: Negotiating Alterity and Racial Difference". *Philosophia* 1:2 (2011): 195-214.
- . "Shame and the Temporality of Social Life". *Continental Philosophy Review* 44:1 (2011): 23-39.
- . "Fecundity and Natal Alienation: Rethinking Kinship with Levinas and Orlando Patterson". *Levinas Studies* 7:1 (2012): 1-19.
- Hägglund, Martin. *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- Hammerschlag, Sarah. *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Horowitz, Asher. *Ethics At a Standstill: History and Subjectivity in Levinas and the Frankfurt School*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2008.
- Horowitz, Asher and Gad Horowitz, eds. *Difficult Justice: Commentaries on Levinas and Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Hüni, Heinrich and Peter Trawny, eds. *Die erscheinende Welt. Festschrift für Klaus Held*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004.
- Hutton, Christopher M. *Race and the Third Reich: Linguistics, Racial Anthropology and Genetics in the Dialectic of Volk*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005.
- Judaken, Jonathan. *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.
- Katz, Claire Elise. *Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine: The Silent Footsteps of Rebecca*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- . "Raising Cain: the Problem of Evil and the Question of Responsibility". *Cross Currents* 55:2 (2005): 215-233.
- . *Levinas and the Crisis of Humanism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.
- . *An Introduction to Modern Jewish Philosophy*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013.
- Katz, Claire Elise and Lara Trout, eds. *Emmanuel Levinas: Critical Assessments*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Kearney, Richard. *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Philosophers: The Phenomenological Heritage (Paul Ricœur, Emmanuel Levinas, Herbert Marcuse, Stanislas Breton, Jacques Derrida)*. Manchester, UK and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1984.

- Lawlor, Leonard. "Political Risks: On Derrida's Notions of Différance". *Research in Phenomenology* 21 (1991): 81-96.
- . "Phenomenology and Metaphysics: Deconstruction in Derrida's *La Voix et le phénomène*". *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 27: 2 (May 1996): 116-136. Reprinted in *Derrida: Critical Assessments*. Edited by Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor. London: Routledge, 2002, vol. III. 17-37.
- . *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- . "From the Trace to the Law: Derridean Politics". *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 15:1 (1990): 1-16. Reprinted in *Derrida and Law*, edited by Pierre Legrand. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010.
- . "The Postmodern Self: An Essay on Anachronism and Powerlessness" in *The Oxford Handbook to the Self*. Edited by Shaun Gallagher. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 696-714.
- . "The Flipside of Violence, or Beyond the Thought of Good Enough". *Phaenex: Journal of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture* 8:2 (2013): 80-104.
- Lévy, Benny. "Commentaire". *Cahiers d'Études levinassiennes* 1 (2003): 107-17.
- Llewelyn, John. *Emmanuel Levinas: The Genealogy of Ethics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- . *The Hypocritical Imagination: Between Kant and Levinas*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
- . *Appositions of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- . "Levinas and Language" in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*. Edited by Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Loumanský, Amanda. "Levinas, Israel and the Call to Conscience". *Law and Critique* 16:2 (2005): 181-200.
- . "Levinas and the Possibility of Justice". *Liverpool Law Review* 27:2 (2006): 147-171.
- Malka, Salomon. *Lire Lévinas*. Paris: Cerf, 1984.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. *Prolégomènes à la charité*. Second edition. Paris, France: Éditions la Différence, 1986.
- . *Réduction et donation: recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, Collection Épiméthée, 1989.
- . *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*. Translated by Thomas A. Carlson, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998.
- . *Prolegomena to Charity*. Translated by Stephen Lewis, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2002.
- Morgan, Michael L. *Discovering Levinas*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

- . *Levinas' Ethical Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.
- Moyn, Samuel. *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Peperzak, Adriaan Theodoor. *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993.
- . *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997.
- . *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas For Philosophy, Literature, and Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Perpich, Diane. "Figurative Language and the 'Face' in Levinas's Philosophy". *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38:2 (2005): 103-121.
- . *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- Proctor, Robert N. *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Reggiani, Andrés Horacio. *God's Eugenicist: Alexis Carrel and the Sociobiology of Decline*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2007.
- Rolland, Jacques. *Parcours de l'Autrement: Lecture d'Emmanuel Levinas*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000.
- Saghafi, Kas. *Apparitions—Of Derrida's Other*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2010.
- Sebbah, François-David. *Lévinas: Ambiguïtés de l'altérité*. Paris, France: Les Belles Lettres, 2000.
- . *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition*. Translated by Stephen Barker. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Stauffer, Jill and Bettina Bergo, eds. *Nietzsche and Levinas: "After the Death of a Certain God"*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Strasser, Stephen. *Jenseits von Sein und Zeit: Eine Einführung in Emmanuel Levinas Philosophie*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978.
- Tahmasebi-Birgani, Victoria. *Emmanuel Levinas and the Politics of Non-Violence*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.
- Tengelyi, László. „Gesetz und Begehren in der Ethik von Levinas“, B. Waldenfels und I. Därmann (Hrsg.), *Der Anspruch des Anderen. Perspektiven phänomenologischer Ethik*, W. Fink, München 1998, S. 165–175.
- . *Erfahrung und Ausdruck Phänomenologie im Umbruch bei Husserl und Seinen Nachfolgern*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2007.
- . „Einzigkeit ohne Identität bei Levinas“. *Studia Phaenomenologica* 6 (2006): 59–71.
- . „Experience of Infinity in Levinas“. *Levinas Studies* 4 (2009): 111–125.
- . „Selfhood, Passivity and Affectivity in Henry and Lévinas“. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17:3 (2009): 401-414.
- . *Welt und Unendlichkeit. Zum Problem phänomenologischer Metaphysik*. Alber: Freiburg, 2014.
- Thomas, Elisabeth Louise. *Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics, Justice, and the Human Beyond Being*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Vita
Peter J. Giannopoulos

Author: Giannopoulos, Peter J.

Title: Identity, Fecundity, Substitution: Developing Justice through Levinas' Ethics

Graduate Program: Philosophy

Keywords: Derrida, Fecundity, Heidegger, Husserl, Identity, Infinity, Justice, Levinas, Substitution, Transcendence, Trace, Double Reading, Différance, Phenomenology, Ethics, Racism, Hitlerism, Personal Identity, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Ipseity, Closure, Subjectivity, Subject, Proximity, Self, Selfhood

Download: [...]

Committee Members: Robert Bernasconi, Dissertation Advisor
Robert Bernasconi, Committee Chair
Leonard Lawlor, Committee Member
Brady Bowman, Committee Member
Allan Stoekl, Outside Member