EMMANUEL LEVINAS

TIME AND THE OTHER

[and additional essays]

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Preface (1979)

To write a preface on the occasion of the republication of something one published thirty years earlier is almost to write the preface to someone else's book. Except that one sees its shortcomings more quickly and feels them more painfully.

The text you are about to read reproduces the stenographic record of four lectures given under the title "Time and the Other" in 1946/47, during the first year of the Philosophical College founded by Jean Wahl in the Latin Quarter, Paris. It appeared in 1948 in a collection entitled *Le Choix, le Monde, l'Existence,*[1] the first of the Philosophical College publications. I was happy to have this article accompany those of Jeanne Hersch, Alphonse de Waelhens, and Jean Wahl himself.[2] The style (or nonstyle) of this writ-

[1]Cahiers du Collège Philosophique (Grenoble-Paris: Arthaud, 1947), pp. 125–96.

[2]Jeanne Hersch (1910–) has taught at a number of universities in Europe and the United States; she is currently active in UNESCO. She has translated Karl Jaspers into French, and is the author of *L'illusion philosophique* (1936), *L'être et la forme* (1946), and *La foi a l'épreuve du XX^e siècle* (1983), among other works.

Alphonse de Waelhens (1911–) professor of philosophy at the University of Saint-Louis in Brussels, has written several studies in contemporary philosophy, most notably books on Martin Heidegger (*La philosophie de Martin Heidegger*, 1942) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*Une philosophie de l'ambiguité*, 1951).

ing will surely be, for many, abrupt or maladroit in certain turns of phrase. In these essays there are also theses whose contexts have neither been formulated, nor their openings explored to the end, nor have they a systematic dissemination. Take these remarks as a preliminary note signaling all the flaws that since 1948 the aging of the text has probably accentuated.

If I nonetheless approved the idea of its republication, and in book form, and have foregone rejuvenating it, this because I still adhere to the main project of which it is—in the midst of diverse movements of thought—the birth and first formulation, and because its exposition progressively improves as one advances through its pages written in haste. Is time the very limitation of finite being or is it the relationship of finite being to God? It is a relationship that, nevertheless, would not secure for a being an infinitude as opposed to finitude, an auto-sufficiency as opposed to need, but that would signify, beyond satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the surplus of sociality. This way of examining time still seems to me today to be the vital problem. *Time and the Other* presents time not as the ontological horizon of the *being of a being [l' "être de l'étant"]* but as a mode of the *beyond being [l' "au delà de l'être"]*, as the relationship of "thought" to the other *[Autre]*,[3] and—through the diverse

[3]I have always translated *autrui* as the "Other," with an uppercase "O," and *autre* as "other," with a lowercase "o" (except for the title of this book and one section heading in part 3. Whenever "other" [*Autre*] is capitalized in French, I have supplied the term in brackets. *Autrui* refers to the personal other, the other person; *autre* refers to otherness in general, to alterity.

Jean Wahl (1888–1974), a poet, existential philosopher, expositor of existential philosophies, and historian of philosophy, was professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1936 until his death. Levinas always speaks of Wahl with much personal admiration. *Totality and Infinity* is dedicated to Marcelle and Jean Wahl. See also Levinas, "Jean Wahl et le sentiment," *Cahiers du Sud*, vol. 42, no. 331 (1955) 453–59, reprinted in *Noms propres*

figures of the sociality facing the face of the other person: eroticism, paternity, responsibility for the neighbor—as the relationship to the Wholely other *[Tout Autre]*, the Transcendent, the Infinite. It is a relation or religion that is not structured like knowing—that is, an intentionality. Knowing conceals re-presentation and reduces the *other* to presence and co-presence. Time, on the contrary, in its dia-chrony, would signify a relationship that does not compromise the other's alterity, while still assuring its non-indifference to "thought."

As a modality of finite being, time would indeed signify the dispersion of *the being of a being* into mutually exclusive moments, which are, besides, as instants unstable and unfaithful even to themselves, each expelled into the past out of their own presence, yet furnishing the fulgurating idea—and the non-sense and sense, the death and life—of this presence that they would thus suggest. But then eternity—the idea of which, without borrowing anything from lived duration *[la durée vécue]*, the intellect would claim to possess a priori: the idea of a *mode of being*, where the multiple is one and which would confer on the present its full sense—is it not always suspect of only dissimulating the fulguration of the instant, its half-truth, which is retained in an imagination capable of playing in the intemporal and of deluding itself about a gathering of the nongatherable? In the final account, would not this eternity and this intellectual God, composed of these abstract and inconstant half-instants of the temporal dispersion, be an abstract eternity and a dead God?

The main thesis caught sight of in *Time and the Other*, on

(Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1976), pp. 165–74; and the paper Levinas gave after Wahl's death, "Jean Wahl: Sans avoir ni être," in *Jean Wahl et Gabriel Marcel*, edited by Jeanne Hersch (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1976), pp. 13-31. Also see footnote 7. below.

the contrary, consists in thinking time not as a degradation of eternity, but as the relationship to *that* which—of itself unassimilable, absolutely other—would not allow itself to be assimilated by experience; or to *that* which—of itself infinite—would not allow itself to be com-prehended. That is, however, if this Infinite or this other *[Autre]* must still tolerate what we designate by using the demonstrative *"that,"* like a simple object, or what we hitch to it with a definite or indefinite article to give it body. It is a relationship with the In-visible, where invisibility results not from some incapacity of human knowledge, but from the inaptitude of knowledge as such— from its in-adequation—to the Infinity of the absolutely other, and from the absurdity that an event such as coincidence would have here. This impossibility of coinciding and this inadequation are not simply negative notions, but have a meaning in the *phenomenon* of noncoincidence *given* in the dia-chrony of time. Time signifies this *always* of noncoincidence, but also the *always* of the *relationship*, an aspiration and an awaiting, a thread finer than an ideal line that diachrony does not cut. Diachrony preserves this thread in the paradox of a relationship that is different from all the other relationships of our logic and psychology, which, by way of an ultimate community, at the very least confer synchrony on their terms. Here there is a relationship without terms, an awaiting without an awaited, an insatiable aspiration. It is a distance that is also a proximity—which is not a coincidence or a lost union but signifies, as I have said, all the surplus or all the *goodness* of an original proximity. Is not the difficulty and height of religion that dia-chrony is *more* than a synchronism, that proximity is *more precious* than the fact of being given, that allegiance to the unequalled is *better* than a self-consciousness? All descriptions of this "distance-proximity" could not be elsewise than approximate or metaphorical, since the dia-chrony of time in them is the

non-figural meaning, the literal meaning, the model.[4]

The "movement" of time understood as transcendence toward the Infinity of the "wholely other" [*tout Autre*] does not temporalize in a linear way, does not resemble the straightforwardness of the intentional ray. Its way of signifying, marked by the *mystery* of death, makes a detour by entering into the ethical adventure of the relationship to the other person.[5]

Temporal transcendence is described in my 1948 essay only through insights that remain at best preparatory. They are guided by the analogy between the transcendence that signifies dia-chrony and the distance of the Other's alterity, as well as by the insistences upon the link—incomparable to that which links the terms of every relationship—that traverses the interval of this transcendence.[5]

I did not want to modify the itinerary that follows the expression of these ideas. It seems to me to bear witness to a certain climate of openness that the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève quarter of Paris offered shortly after the Liberation. Jean Wahl's Philosophical College was a reflection of it and one of its centers. One heard the inimitable sonority of

[4]Levinas: Not all the negations occurring in the description of this "relationship with the infinite" are confined to the formal and logical sense of negation, and constitute a negative theology! They say all that a logical language—our language—can express, through a saying and an unsaying, of the dia-chrony that shows itself in the patience of awaiting and is the very length of time, neither reducing to anticipation (already a way of "making present"), nor concealing a *representation* of the awaited or the desired (this representation would be a pure "presentification"). The awaited and desired would already be *terms*; awaiting and aspiration would be a finality, not a relationship to the Infinite.

[5]Levinas: See my *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (French original, 1974) [translated by A. Lingis (The Hague; Martinus Nijhoff, 1981)] and, more particularly, my study "God and Philosophy," which appeared in 1975 in *Le Nouveau Commerce*, no. 30/31 [translated by R. Cohen and A. Lingis, in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of Emmanuel Levinas*, edited by A.Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986)].

Vladimir Jankelevitch's lofty and inspired speech, uttering the *unheard* in the Bergsonian message, formulating the ineffable, and drawing a packed hall at the Philosophical College;[6] and Jean Wahl hailing the very multiplicity of tendencies in "living philosophy," stressing the privileged kinship between philosophy and the diverse forms of art. He loved following the transitions from one to the other. By his whole attitude he seemed to invite one to audacious "*intellectual* experimentation" and risky prospection. Husserlian phenomenology and, thanks to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, the philosophy of existence,[7] and even the first statements of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, then promised new philosophical possibilities. The words designating what people were always concerned with, without daring to imagine it in a speculative discourse, took the rank of categories. Without circumlocution—and often without precaution—and although taking some liberties with the academic rules, but also without submitting to the tyranny of the then fashionable watchwords, one could give oneself—and propose to others—ideas "to be excavated," "to be deepened," or "to be explored," as Gabriel Marcel often designates them in his *Metaphysical Journal*.[8]

It is advisable to read the diverse themes of *Time and the*

[6]Vladimir Jankelevitch (1903–1986), a musician and philosopher, began his publishing career with *Henri Bergson* (1931), praised in its Preface by Henri Bergson himself. Known for his many subtle psychological and moral studies of such subjects as time and boredom, his main work is probably *Traité des vertues* (1949).

[7]Given the prominence of existential philosophy at the time, and Levinas' close personal relationship with Jean Wahl, the reader may take interest in the latter's small 1947 book, *A Short History of Existentialism*, translated by F. Williams and S. Maron (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), in which Levinas appears as a discussant (pp. 47–53); and, among others, Wahl's *Philosophies of Existence*, translated by F. Lory (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) (French original, 1954).

[8]Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, translated by B. Wall (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952) [Librairie Gallimard: Paris, 1927]. Levinas attended the Saturday evening gatherings of the philosophical avant-garde at Marcel's house in the 1930s.

Other through which my main thesis advances—with detours—in the spirit of those years of openness. There is what is said of subjectivity: the mastery of the Ego over being's anonymous *there is*, forthwith the reversal of the Self over the Ego, the encumbrance of the Ego by the self-same and, thus, a materialist materiality and a solitude of immanence, the irremissible weight of being in work, pain, and suffering. Next there is what is said of the world: the transcendence of nourishments and knowledge, an experience in the heart of enjoyment, a knowing and a return to self, a solitude in the light of knowing absorbing every *other*, the solitude of a reason essentially *one*. Then there is what is said of death: not a pure nothingness but an unassumable mystery and, in this sense, the eventuality of the event at the point of making an irruption within the Sameness of immanence, of interrupting the monotony and the ticktock of solitary instants—the eventuality of the *wholely other*, of the future, the temporality of time where diachrony precisely describes the relationship with what remains absolutely outside. Finally there is what is said of the relationship with the Other, the feminine, the child, of the fecundity of the Ego, the concrete modality of diachrony, the articulations or inevitable digressions of the transcendence of time; neither an ecstasis, where the Same is absorbed in the other [*Autre*], nor a knowledge, where the other [*Autre*] belongs to the Same—a relationship without relation, an insatiable desire, or the proximity of the Infinite. These are theses that have not all been taken up later in their first form, that since then may have been revealed as inseparable from more complex and older problems, and as demanding a less improvised expression and especially a different thought.

I should like to stress two points, in the last pages of these early lectures, that seem important to me. They concern the way in which the phenomenology of alterity and its transcendence was there attempted.

Human alterity is not thought starting with the purely formal and logical alterity by which some terms are distinguished from others in every multiplicity (where each one is already other as the bearer of different attributes or, in a multiplicity of equal terms, where each one is other than the other through its individuation). The notion of a transcendent alterity—one that opens time—is at first sought starting with an *alterity-content*—that is, starting with femininity. Femininity—and one would have to see in what sense this can be said of masculinity or of virility; that is, of the differences between the sexes in general—appeared to me as a difference contrasting strongly with other differences, not merely as a quality different from all others, but as the very quality of difference. This idea should make the notion of the couple as distinct as possible from every purely numerical duality. The notion of the sociality of two, which is probably necessary for the exceptional epiphany of the face—abstract and chaste nudity—emerges from sexual differences, and is essential to eroticism and to all instances of alterity—again as quality and not as a simply logical distinction—borne by the "thou shalt not kill" that the very silence of the face says. Here is a significant ethical radiance within eroticism and the libido. Through it humanity enters into the society of two and sustains it, authorizes it, perhaps, at least putting into question the simplicity of contemporary paneroticism.[9]

I should like finally to stress a structure of transcendence that in *Time and the Other* has been caught sight of starting with paternity: the possible offered to the son and placed *beyond* what is assumable by the father still remains the *father's* in a certain sense. Precisely in the sense of kinship. The father's—or non-indifferent—is a possibility that another assumes: through the son there occurs a possibility beyond the possible! This would be a non-indifference that

[9]See note 69, below.

does not issue from the social rules governing kinship, but probably founds these rules—a non-indifference through which the "beyond the possible" is possible to the Ego. This is what, starting with the—nonbiological—notion of the Ego's fecundity, puts into question the very idea of *power* [*pouvoir*], such as it is embodied in transcendental subjectivity, the center and source of intentional acts.

Emmanuel Levinas 1979[10]

[10]For other recent general comments by Levinas on *Time and the Other*, see the fourth 1981 radio broadcast interview by Philippe Nemo in Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, translated by R. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), pp. 55–62.

[PART I]

The aim of these lectures is to show that time is not the achievement of an isolated and lone subject, but that it is the very relationship of the subject with the Other.[1]

This thesis is in no way sociological. It is not a matter of saying how time is chopped up and parceled out thanks to the notions we derive from society, how society allows us to make a representation of time. It is not a matter of our idea of time but of time itself.

To uphold this thesis it will be necessary, on the one hand, to deepen the notion of solitude and, on the other, to consider the opportunities that time offers to solitude.

The analyses I am about to undertake will not be anthropological but ontological. I do believe in the existence of ontological problems and structures, but not in the sense that realists—purely and simply describing given being—ascribe to ontology. It is a matter of affirming that *being* is not an empty notion, that it has its own dialectic; and that notions like solitude and collectivity belong to a certain moment of this dialectic and are not merely psychological notions, like the need one can have for the Other or, implied in this need, like a prescience, presentiment, or anticipation of the other. I want to present solitude as a category of being, to show its place in a dialectic of being, or rather—because the word "dialectic" has a more determinate meaning—to show the place of solitude in the general economy of being.

[1]See note 2 of the Preface, above.

Thus from the start I repudiate the Heideggerian conception that views solitude in the midst of a prior relationship with the other. Though anthropologically incontestable, the conception seems to me ontologically obscure. The relationship with the Other is indeed posed by Heidegger as an ontological structure of *Dasein*,[2] but practically it plays no role in the drama of being or in the existential analytic. All the analyses of *Being and Time*[3] are worked out either for the sake of the impersonality of everyday life or for the sake of solitary *Dasein*. Then again, does solitude derive its tragic character from nothingness or from the privation of the Other that death accentuates? There is at least an ambiguity. I find here an invitation to go beyond the definition of solitude by sociality and of sociality by solitude. Finally, the other in Heidegger appears in the essential situation of *Miteinandersein*, reciprocally being with one another.... The preposition *mit* (with) here describes the relationship.[4]

[2]Levinas, like almost everyone else who refers to Heidegger in French (or in English for that matter) leaves the term *Dasein* untranslated. I shall do the same. *Dasein* refers to human being, literally meaning "there-being"; it is a term used to highlight the central Heideggerian notion that human existence is always in-the-world and not enclosed within a subject "in here" opposed to objects "out there."

[3]Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Maquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

It is perhaps of some interest to note that *Being and Time* had not been translated into French at the time of Levinas' lectures. Indeed, it has taken more than half a century to have *Being and Time* translated into French in its entirety. In 1938 sections 45-53 and 72-77 were translated by H. Corbin and included as part of a volume of Heidegger's writings entitled *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Paris: Gallimard). In 1964 sections 1-44 (the "Introduction" and "Division One," the *Dasein* analytic) were translated by A. de Waelhens, and R. Boehm, and published as a volume entitled *L'Etre et le Temps* ["Being and Time"] (Paris: Gallimard). Despite its title, this latter volume is only a truncated version of the original text. The complete text, entitled *Etre et temps*, appeared in 1983 translated and published by E. Martineau, and then three years later in a new translation by F. Vezin (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

[4]See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 26 (pp. 153-63). Levinas will return to Heidegger's notion of *Miteinandersein* at the end of *Time and the Other* (p. 93).

It is thus an association of side by side, around something, around a common term and, more precisely, for Heidegger, around the truth. It is not the face-to-face relationship, where each contributes everything, except the private fact of one's existence. I hope to show, for my part, that it is not the preposition *mit* that should describe the original relationship with the other.

My way of proceeding will lead me to developments that will perhaps be fairly arduous. They will not have the brilliant pathos of anthropological developments. But in return I should be able to say something else about solitude than its unhappiness and opposition to collectivity, to that collectivity whose happiness one usually says is in opposition to solitude.

In thus going back to the ontological root of solitude I hope to glimpse wherein this solitude can be exceeded. Let me say at once what this exceeding will not be. It will not be a knowledge, because through knowledge, whether one wants it or not, the object is absorbed by the subject and duality disappears. It will not be an ecstasis, because in ecstasis the subject is absorbed in the object and recovers itself in its unity. All these relationships result in the disappearance of the other.

This is when I come up against the problems of suffering and death. Not because these are very lofty themes, permitting brilliant and fashionable expositions, but because in the phenomenon of death solitude finds itself bordering on the edge of a mystery. This mystery is not properly understood negatively, as what is unknown. I shall have to establish its positive significance. This notion will allow me to catch sight of a relationship in the subject that will not be reduced to a pure and simple return to solitude. Before the death that will be mystery and not necessarily nothingness, the absorption of one term by the other does not come about. I shall show finally how the duality evinced in death becomes the relationship with the other and time.

The dialectic these developments may contain is in any case not Hegelian. It is not a matter of traversing a series of contradictions, or of reconciling them while stopping History. On the contrary, it is toward a pluralism that does not merge into unity that I should like to make my way and, if this can be dared, break with Parmenides.

THE SOLITUDE OF EXISTING

In what does the acuity of solitude consist? It is banal to say we never exist in the singular. We are surrounded by beings and things with which we maintain relationships. Through sight, touch, sympathy and cooperative work, we are with others. All these relationships are transitive: I touch an object, I see the other. But I *am* not the other. I am all alone. It is thus the being in me, the fact that I exist, my *existing*, that constitutes the absolutely intransitive element, something without intentionality or relationship. One can exchange everything between beings except existing. In this sense, to be is to be isolated by existing. Inasmuch as I am, I am a monad. It is by existing that I am without windows and doors, and not by some content in me that would be incommunicable. If it is incommunicable, it is because it is rooted in my being, which is what is most private in me. In this way every enlargement of my knowledge or of my means of self-expression remains without effect on my relationship with existing, the interior relationship par excellence.

Primitive mentality—or at least the interpretation Levy-Bruhl gave of it[5]—seemed to shake the foundation of our

[5]See Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, translated by L. A. Clare, introduction by C. Scott Littleton (Princeton University Press, 1985); originally published in 1910 as *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétes inférieures;* English translation originally published in 1925. Levinas again refers to Levy-Bruhl's notion of a prelogical participatory existence, where the principle of noncontradiction is inoperative, in *Existence and Existents*, p. 60, and in *Totality and Infinity*, p. 276. See also Levinas, "Levy-Bruhl et la phi-

concepts because it appeared to contribute the idea of a transitive existence. One had the impression that through participation the subject not only sees the other, but *is* the other. This notion is more important to primitive mentality than is the notion of the prelogical or the mystical. Nonetheless it does not deliver us from solitude. A modern consciousness, at least, could not abdicate its secrecy and solitude at so little cost. And to the extent that the experience of participation may be real today, it coincides with ecstatic fusion. It does not sufficiently maintain the duality of terms. If we leave monadology we arrive at monism.

Existing resists every relationship and multiplicity. It concerns no one other than the existent. Solitude therefore appears neither as the factual isolation of a Robinson Crusoe nor as the incommunicability of a content of consciousness, but as the indissoluble unity between the existent and its work of existing. To take up the existing in the existent is to enclose it within unity and to let Parmenides escape every parricide his descendants would be tempted to commit against him. Solitude lies in the very fact that there are existents. To conceive a situation wherein solitude is overcome is to test the very principle of the tie between the existent and its existing. It is to move toward an ontological event wherein the existent contracts existence. The event by which the existent contracts its existing I call *hypostasis*.[6]

[6]Given that this term is little used in philosophy today and, given Levinas' distinctive use of it to refer to the origin of an entity that is neither substantial nor insubstantial, the following information, taken from an article entitled "Substance and Attribute," by D.J. O'Connor (*The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 8, edited by P. Edwards [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1972], p. 36) may prove helpful: "It is interesting to note that the principal term for substance in the writings of Aristotle is *ousia*, a word which in earlier Greek writers means 'property' in the legal sense of the word, that which is owned. . . . The Latin word *substantia*, from which the English term is derived, is a literal translation of the Greek word *hypos-*

losophie contemporaine," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, vol. 147 (1957), 82nd year, no. 4, pp. 556–69; and note 64, below.

Perception and science always start with existents already supplied with their private existence. Is this tie between what exists and its existing indissoluble? Can one go back to hypostasis?

EXISTING WITHOUT EXISTENTS

We return again to Heidegger. One cannot ignore his distinction—which I have already used—between *Sein* and *Seindes*, Being and being, but which for reasons of euphony I prefer to render as *existing* and *existent*, without ascribing a specifically existentialist meaning to these terms.[7] Heidegger distinguishes subjects and objects—the beings that are, existents—from their very work of being. The first are expressed by substantives or substantivated participles, the other by a verb. This distinction, which is posited from the start of *Being and Time*,[8] permits dispelling certain of the equivocations of philosophy in the course of its history, where one started with existing to arrive at the existent possessing existing fully, God.

The most profound thing about *Being and Time* for me is

tasis ("standing under"). This term acquired its philosophical connotations in later Greek and occurs principally in controversies among early Christian theologians about the real nature of Christ." The later Greek who gave the term *hypostasis* its philosophical connotation was Plotinus. Though Levinas rarely mentions Plotinus, it would be interesting to compare their accounts of the emergence of distinct entities. It would also be interesting to compare the commitments involved in Heidegger's characterization of *Dasein*'s being in terms of authenticity *(Eigentlichkeit)*, ownness or property, as well as his use of the term *ousia*, with Levinas' commitment to the term *hypostasis* to understand the individuation of existence.

[7]For comments on this particular sentence, and an important analysis and "semiotic critique" of much else in Levinas, see Jacques Derrida's 1964 essay, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," republished in his *Writing and Difference*, translated by A. Bass (University of Chicago Press, 1978) pp. 79-153.

[8]See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translator's note 1 on pp. 19 and 22.

this Heideggerian distinction. But in Heidegger there is a distinction, not a separation.[9] Existing is always grasped in the existent, and for the existent that is a human being the Heideggerian term *Jemeinigkeit*[10] precisely expresses the fact that existing is always possessed by someone. I do not think Heidegger can admit an existing without existents, which to him would seem absurd. However, there is a notion—*Geworfenheit*[11]—"expression of a certain Heidegger," according to Jankelevitch—that is usually translated "dereliction" or "desertion." One then stresses a consequence of *Geworfenheit*. One must understand *Geworfenheit* as the "fact-of-being-thrown-in"... existence.[12] It is as if the existent appeared only in an existence that precedes it, as though existence were independent of the existent, and the existent that finds itself thrown there could never become master of existence. It is precisely because of this that there is desertion and abandonment. Thus dawns the idea of an existing that occurs without us, without a subject, an exist-

[9]The notion of *separation* is of the utmost epistemological and ontological importance in Levinas' philosophy.

The idea is doubtlessly borrowed from Franz Rosenzweig, whose *The Star of Redemption*, published in 1921, exerted an enormous influence on Levinas. Rosenzweig aimed to think humankind, the world, and God, each in their own terms—that is, in their radical separation from one another; as well as in their interrelations.

Levinas likewise here attempts to think existence independent of existents—that is, in its separation from the world and others (and God to the extent that God is an existent). Later in this text—and elsewhere in other texts—he attempts to think the human being, qua "hypostasis," in independence, in separation from the world and others (and God).

This structure of separation puts Levinas in a difficult position relative to philosophy and its history, which has perhaps defined itself from its inception as intellectual vision of the one, the whole, the comprehensive. Levinas attempts to both reject Parmenides (the One) and remain a philosopher. Whether and how this is possible is the central issue of the collection of secondary articles on Levinas, *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by R. Cohen (Albany; State University of New York Press, 1986).

[10]"Mineness, see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 68 and 284.

[11]Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 174, 223, 330–33.

[12]The English translators of *Being and Time* have indeed used the term "thrownness" to translate *Geworfenheit*.

ing without existents. Without doubt Jean Wahl would say that an existing without existents is only a word. The term "word" is surely upsetting because it is pejorative. But on the whole I am in agreement with Wahl. Only one should first determine the place of the word in the general economy of being.[13] I would also gladly say that existing does not exist. It is the existent that exists. And the fact of having recourse to what does not exist, in order to understand what does exist, hardly constitutes a revolution in philosophy. Idealist philosophy on the whole has been a way of grounding being on something that does not have being.

How are we going to approach this existing without existents? Let us imagine all things, beings and persons, returning to nothingness.[14] What remains after this imaginary destruction of everything is not something, but the fact that there is [*il y a*].[15] The absence of everything returns as a presence, as the place where the bottom has dropped out of everything, an atmospheric density, a plenitude of the void, or the murmur of silence. There is, after this destruction of things and beings, the impersonal "field of forces"[16] of existing. There is something that is neither sub-

[13]Of course, philosophy *has* already said a great deal about the role of the word and its relationship to being. Franz Rosenzweig's thoughts on words, however, may not be especially well known to philosophers. See *The Star of Redemption,* translated by W.W. Halo (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972; Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1985), especially book 2 of part 2 (pp. 156–204); and *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy,* edited by N.N. Glatzer (New York: Noonday Press, 1954), especially chapters 3 (pp. 35–41) and 6 (pp. 53–62).

[14]This technique of approaching existence without existents by means of the imagination is also employed in *Existence and Existents,* pp. 57–58.

[15]In 1946 Levinas published an article entitled *"Il y a"* (*Deucalion,* vol. 1, pp. 141–54), which he later incorporated into *Existence and Existents* (pp. 17–18, 57–64). The *there is* again appears in *Totality and Infinity,* where it is also called "the elemental." It is a notion of continued significance for all Levinas' subsequent thought, and is always assumed when it is not explicitly invoked.

[16]This expression is doubtlessly meant to recall, at least, Kant's account of the transcendental esthetic, at the beginning of *The Critique of Pure Reason;* Hegel's account of "Force and The Understanding," at the beginning

ject nor substantive. The fact of existing imposes itself when there is no longer anything. And it is anonymous: there is neither anyone nor anything that takes this existence upon itself. It is impersonal like "it is raining" or "it is hot."[17] Existing returns no matter with what negation one dismisses it. There is, as the irremissibility of pure existing.[18]

In evoking the anonymity of this existing, I am not at all thinking of the indeterminate ground spoken of in philosophy textbooks, where perception carves out things. This indeterminate ground is already a being [*un être*]—an entity [*un étant*]—a something. It already falls under the category

[17]Compare this with Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Kaufmann and Hollingdale translation), section 635; or *Beyond Good and Evil*, sections 16 and 17.

Nietzsche too (and Freud and Marx, in their way) was struck by the impersonality of being. The "I" for Nietzsche is always the product of a preconscious "it" made up of forces in contention. Gilles Deleuze makes much of this in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, translated by H. Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). Also in this regard, see A. Lingis, "The Will to Power" in *The New Nietzsche*, edited by D.B. Allison (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985), pp. 37–63.

Levinas has always kept a critical distance from Nietzsche, especially seeing in his thought an attempt to undermine the universal intention of truth. See Levinas, "Quelques réflexions sur la philosphie de l'hitlérisme" ["Some Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism"] in *Esprit*, vol. 2, no. 26 (November 1934), pp. 199–208; see also the comments on Levinas' article by Georges Batailles, "Nietzsche et les fascistes" ["Nietzsche and the Fascists"] in *Acephale*, vol. 2 (January 1937) pp. 3–13; English translation in Batailles, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, edited and translated by A. Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 182–96, especially the last 3 pages.

[18]These descriptions of the "there is" provide a *phenomenological* counterpart to Henri Bergson's 1907 arguments against, and his psychologistic account of, the idea of "nothing" in *Creative Evolution* (translated by A. Mitchell [New York: Random House, 1944] pp. 296–324). Levinas several times acknowledges Bergson's importance for him.

Though Levinas radically rejects Parmenides' philosophically decisive concept of the One, we can see in the notion of the "there is" an acceptance of Parmenides' sanction against the path of nonbeing.

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of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (especially sections 136–41); and Nietzsche's account of will to power (see the following note).

of the substantive. It already has that elementary personality characteristic of every existent. The existing that I am trying to approach is the very work of being, which cannot be expressed by a substantive but is verbal. This existing cannot be purely and simply affirmed, because one always affirms a *being* [*êtant*]. But it imposes itself because one cannot deny it. Behind every negation this ambience of being, this being as a "field of forces," reappears, as the field of every affirmation and negation. It is never attached to an *object that is,* and because of this I call it anonymous.

Let us approach this situation from another slant. Let us take insomnia.[19] This time it is not a matter of an imagined experience. Insomnia is constituted by the consciousness that it will never finish—that is, that there is no longer any way of withdrawing from the vigilance to which one is held. Vigilance without end. From the moment one is riveted there, one loses all notion of a starting or finishing point. The present is welded to the past, is entirely the heritage of that past: it renews nothing. It is always the same present or the same past that endures. A memory would already be a liberation with regard to the past. Here, time begins nowhere, nothing moves away or shades off. Only the exterior noises that may mark insomnia introduce beginnings in this situation without beginnings or end, in this immortality from which one cannot escape,[20] very similar to the *there is,* the impersonal existence about which I was just speaking.

I am going to characterize the *there is,* and the way that existing is affirmed in its own annihilation, by a vigilance

[19]In *Existence and Existents,* too, Levinas turns to an account of "the night" (pp. 58–61) after invoking the imaginative "experience" of nothingness.

[20]In *Existence and Existents* Levinas develops this striking but nascent thought into a third and final access to the "there is": the "impossibility of death" (pp. 61–62).

without possible recourse to sleep. That is to say, by a vigilance without refuge in unconsciousness, without the possibility of withdrawing into sleep as into a private domain. This existing is not an *in-itself* [*en-soi*], which is already peace; it is precisely the absence of all self, a *without-self* [*sans-soi*]. One can also characterize existing by the notion of eternity, since existing without existents is without a starting point. An eternal subject is a *contradictio in adjecto,* for a subject is already a beginning. The eternal subject not only cannot begin anything outside itself, it is impossible in itself, for as a subject it would have to be a beginning and exclude eternity. Eternity is not appeased, because it does not have a subject that takes it upon itself.

One can also find this turning of nothingness into existing in Heidegger. The Heideggerian nothingness still has a sort of activity and being: "nothingness nothings."[21] It does not keep still. It affirms itself in this production of nothingness.

But if it were necessary to compare the notion of the *there is* with a great theme of classical philosophy, I would think of Heraclitus. Not to the myth of the river in which one cannot bathe twice, but to Cratylus' version of the river in which one cannot bathe even once;[22] where the very fixity of unity, the form of every existent, cannot be constituted; the river wherein the last element of fixity, in relation to which becoming is understood, disappears.

[21]This peculiar expression is found several times in Heidegger's 1929 article, "What is Metaphysics" (translated by R.F.C. Hull and A. Crick, found in *Existence and Being,* edited by W. Brock [Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1970], pp. 325–61). See also section 58 of *Being and Time,* "Understanding and Appeal and Guilt" (pp. 325–35), where Heidegger links nothingness and existence.

[22]For Cratylus' version of the Heraclitean river, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* IV, 1010a18. For a contemporary discussion of it, see G.S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 195–96. Levinas again refers to Cratylus' river in *Totality and Infinity,* p. 60.

This existing without existents, which I call the *there is*, is the place where hypostasis will be produced.[23]

But first I want to stress at greater length the consequences of this conception of the *there is*. It consists in promoting a notion of being without nothingness, which leaves no hole and permits no escape. And this impossibility of nothingness deprives suicide, which is the final mastery one can have over being, of its function of mastery. One is no longer master of anything—that is, one is in the absurd. Suicide appears as the final recourse against the absurd.[24] I mean suicide in the broad sense of the term, also including the despairing yet lucid struggle of a Macbeth, who fights even when he has recognized the uselessness of combat.[25] This mastery, this possibility of finding a meaning for existence through the possibility of suicide, is a constant fact of tragedy. Juliette's cry in the third act of *Romeo and Juliette*—"I keep the power to die"—is still a triumph over fatality. One can say that tragedy, in general, is not simply the victory of fate over freedom, for through the death assumed at the moment of the alleged victory of fate the individual escapes fate. And it is for this reason that Hamlet is beyond tragedy or the tragedy of tragedy. He understands that the "not to be" is perhaps impossible and he can no longer master the absurd, even by suicide.[26] The notion of irremissible being, without exit, constitutes the fun-

[23]In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas writes: "The term 'production' designates both the effectuation of being (the event 'is produced,' an automobile 'is produced') and its being brought to light or its exposition (an argument 'is produced,' an actor 'is produced'). The ambiguity of this verb conveys the essential ambiguity of the operation by which the being of an entity simultaneously is brought about and is revealed" (p. 26). See also Lingis' footnote on the same page.

[24]Levinas doubtlessly has in mind the issues raised by Albert Camus in his popular 1942 text, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (translated by J. O'Brien [New York: Random House, 1959]).

[25]See pp. 71-73 below, "Death and the Future."

[26]Levinas again refers to suicide and Shakespeare's Hamlet in *Existence and Existents*, pp. 61-62; and *Totality and Infinity*, p. 231.

damental absurdity of being. Being is evil not because it is finite but because it is without limits. Anxiety, according to Heidegger, is the experience of nothingness.[27] Is it not, on the contrary—if by death one means nothingness—the fact that it is impossible to die?

It can also seem paradoxical to characterize the *there is* by vigilance, as if the pure event of existing were endowed with a consciousness. But it is necessary to ask if vigilance defines consciousness, or if consciousness is not indeed rather the possibility of tearing itself away from vigilance, if the proper meaning of consciousness does not consist in being a vigilance backed against a possibility of sleep, if the feat of the ego is not the power to leave the situation of impersonal vigilance. In fact, consciousness already participates in vigilance. But what characterizes it particularly is its always retaining the possibility of withdrawing "behind" to sleep. Consciousness is the power to sleep.[28] This leak within the plenum is the very paradox of consciousness.

HYPOSTASIS

Consciousness is a rupture of the anonymous vigilance of the *there is;* it is already hypostasis; it refers to a situation where an existent is put in touch with its existing. Obviously I will not be able to explain *why* this takes place. There is no physics in metaphysics. I can simply show what the significance of hypostasis is.[29]

The appearance of a "something that is" constitutes a

[27]Heidegger, *Being and Time,* pp. 233 and 321.

[28]Levinas returns to the connections between sleep, insomnia, and consciousness in *Existence and Existents,* pp. 65–71; and "God and Philosophy," pp. 129–30.

[29]On "hypostasis," see note 6, above.

veritable inversion at the heart of anonymous being. "Something that is" bears existing as an attribute, is master of this existing as the subject is master of an attribute. Existing is its own, and it is precisely through this mastery (whose limits we shall soon see), through this jealous and unshared mastery over existing, that the existent is alone. More exactly, the appearance of an existent is the very constitution of a mastery, of a freedom in an existing that by itself would remain fundamentally anonymous. In order for there to be an existent in this anonymous existing, it is necessary that a departure from self and a return to self—that is, that the very work of identity—become possible. Through its identification the existent is already closed up upon itself; it is a monad and a solitude.

The present is the event of hypostasis. The present leaves itself—better still, its *is* the departure from self. It is a rip in the infinite beginningless and endless fabric of existing. The present rips apart and joins together again; it begins; it is beginning itself. It has a past, but in the form of remembrance. It has a history, but it is not history.

Positing hypostasis as a present is still not to introduce time into being. Although giving us the present, we are given neither a stretch of time set within a linear series of duration, nor a point of this series. It is not a matter of a present cut out of a current, already constituted time, or of an element of time, but of the *function* of the present, of the rip that it brings about in the impersonal infinity of existing. It is like an ontological schema. On the one hand, it is an event and not yet something; it does not exist; but it is an event of existing through which something comes to start out from itself. On the other hand, it is still a pure event that must be expressed by a verb; and nonetheless there is a sort of molting in this existing, already a something, already an existent. It is essential to grasp the present at the limit of existing and the existent, where, in function of existing, it already turns into an existent.

This is precisely because the present is a way of accomplishing[30] the "starting out from itself" that is always an evanescence. If the present endured, it would have received its existence from something preceding. It would have benefited from a heritage. But it is something that comes from itself. One cannot come from oneself otherwise than by receiving nothing from the past. Evanescence would thus be the essential form of beginning.

But how can this evanescence result in something? By a dialectical situation that describes rather than excludes a phenomenon that is called for now: the "I."

Philosophers have always recognized the amphibolous character of the "I": it is not a substance, nevertheless it is preeminently an existent. To define it by spirituality says nothing if spirituality is equivalent to properties. It says nothing about its mode of existence, about the absolute that in the ego does not exclude a power of total renewal. To say that this power has an absolute existence is at least to transform this power into a substance. On the contrary, grasped at the limit of existing and the existent, as a function of hypostasis, the ego stands directly outside the oppositions of the variable and the permanent, as well as outside the categories of being and nothingness. The paradox ceases when one understands that the "I" is not initially an existent but a mode of existing itself, that properly speaking it does not exist. To be sure, the present and the "I" turn into existents, and one can form them into a time, so that they have time like an existent. And one can have a Kantian or Bergsonian experience of this hypostatized

[30]Like the term "production," Levinas has chosen the term "accomplish" carefully. In *Totality and Infinity,* with an eye to the limits of phenomenology, he writes: "The break-up of the formal structure of thought (the noema of a noesis) into events which this structure dissimulates, but which sustain it and restore its concrete significance, constitutes a *deduction*—necessary and yet non-analytical. In our exposition it is indicated by expressions such as "that is," or "precisely," or "this accomplishes that," or "this is produced as that," (p. 28).

time. But it is then the experience of a hypostatized time, a time that is. It is no longer time in its schematic function between existing and the existent, time as the pure event of hypostasis. In positing the present as the mastery of the existent over existing, and in seeking in it the passage from existing to the existent, we find ourselves at a level of investigation that can no longer be qualified as experience. And if phenomenology is only a method of radical experience, we will find ourselves beyond phenomenology. The hypostasis of the present, however, is only one moment of hypostasis; time can indicate another relationship between existing and the existent. This is what will later appear to us as the very event of our relationship with the Other, permitting us to conclude then with a pluralist existence surpassing the monist hypostasis of the present.

As present and "I," hypostasis is freedom. The existent is master of existing. It exerts on its existence the virile power of the subject. It has something in its power.

It is a first freedom—not yet the freedom of free will, but the freedom of beginning. It is by starting out from something now that there is existence. Freedom is included in every subject, in the very fact that there is a subject, that there is a being. It is the freedom of the existent in its very grip on existing.

SOLITUDE AND HYPOSTASIS

If solitude in this study has initially been characterized as the indissoluble unity between the existent and its existing, it thus does not result from some presupposition about the other. It does not appear as a privation of a previously given relationship with the Other. It results from the work of hypostasis. Solitude is the very unity of the existent, the fact that there is something in existing starting from which existence occurs. The subject is alone because it is one. A

solitude is necessary in order for there to be a freedom of beginning, the existent's mastery over existing—that is, in brief, in order for there to be an existent. Solitude is thus not only a despair and an abandonment, but also a virility, a pride and a sovereignty. These are traits the existentialist analysis of solitude, pursued exclusively in terms of despair, has succeeded in effacing, making one forget all the themes of the Romantic and Byronic literature and psychology of proud, aristocratic and genial solitude.[31]

SOLITUDE AND MATERIALITY

But the subject's mastery over existing, the existent's sovereignty, involves a dialectical reversal.

Existing is mastered by the existent that is identical to itself—that is to say, alone. But identity is not only a departure from self; it is also a return to self. The present consists in an inevitable return to itself. The price paid for the existent's position lies in the very fact that it cannot detach itself from itself. The existent is occupied with itself [*s'occuper de soi*]. This manner of being occupied with itself is the subject's materiality. Identity is not an inoffensive relationship with itself, but an enchainment to itself; it is the necessity of being occupied with itself. Beginning is made heavy by itself; it is the present of being and not of a dream. Its freedom is immediately limited by its responsibility. This is its great paradox: a free being is already no longer free, because it is responsible for itself.

Though it is a freedom with regard to the past and fu-

[31]Levinas develops these analyses of the existent's primordial and irreducible independence and sovereignty in *Existence and Existents* (pp. 17–36) and *Totality and Infinity* (pp.110–14, 117–20, 127–40, 144–51). Even though, as we shall see, the existent's solitude turns out to be insufficient (for its needs) and inferior (to ethical-social life), Levinas is emphasizing here that it ought not therefore to be understood solely in terms of what it *lacks*. The existent *is* separate, come what may.

ture, the present is an enchainment in relation to itself. The material character of the present does not result from the fact that the past weighs upon it or that it is anxious about its future.[32] It results from the present as present. The present has torn the fabric of infinite existing; it ignores history; it comes starting out from now. And despite this or because of this, it commits itself and through this knows a responsibility, turns into materiality.

In psychological and anthropological descriptions this is explained by the fact that the I is already riveted to itself, its freedom is not as light as grace but already a heaviness, the ego is irremissably itself. I am not dramatizing a tautology. The turning of the ego back upon itself is precisely neither a serene reflection nor the result of a purely philosophical reflection. The relationship with itself is, as in Blanchot's novel *Aminadab*,[33] the relationship with a double chained to the ego, a viscous, heavy, stupid double, but one the ego [*le moi*] is with precisely because it is me [*moi*]. This *with* is manifest in the fact that it is necessary to be occupied with oneself. Every undertaking is a sort of domestic stirring. I do not exist as a spirit, or as a smile or a breath of air; I am not without responsibility. My being doubles with a having; I am encumbered by myself. And this is material existence. Consequently, materiality does not express the contingent fall of the spirit into the tomb or prison of a body. Materiality accompanies—necessarily—the upsurge of the subject in its existent freedom. To understand the body starting with its materiality—the concrete event of the relationship between Ego [*Moi*] and Self [*Soi*]—is to reduce it to an ontological event. Ontological relationships are not disembodied ties. The relationship between Ego and Self is

[32]On the anxiety of the future in Heidegger, see *Being and Time*, pp. 306–11; on the weight of the past, pp. 329–34. In Sartre, see "Phenomenology of the Three Temporal Dimensions" in *Being and Nothingness*, translated by H. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1969) pp. 159–87.

[33]Maurice Blanchot, *Aminadab* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942).

not an inoffensive reflection of the spirit upon itself. It is the whole of human materiality.

The freedom of the Ego and its materiality thus go together. The first freedom resultant from the fact that in anonymous existing an existent arises, includes as its price the very finality of the *I* riveted to itself. This finality of the existent, which constitutes the tragedy of solitude, is materiality. Solitude is not tragic because it is the privation of the other, but because it is shut up within the captivity of its identity, because it is matter. To shatter the enchainment of matter is to shatter the finality of hypostasis. It is to be in time. Solitude is an absence of time. The time *given*, itself hypostatized and studied, the time the subject travels by carrying its identity, is a time incapable of loosening the tie of hypostasis.

[PART II]

Matter is the misfortune [*malheur*] of hypostasis. Materiality and solitude go together. Solitude is not a higher-level anxiety that is revealed to a being when all its needs are satisfied It is not the privileged experience of *being toward death*, but the companion, so to speak, of an everyday existence haunted by matter. And to the extent that material concerns issue from hypostasis itself and express the very event of our existent freedom, everyday life, far from constituting a fall, and far from appearing as a betrayal with regard to our metaphysical destiny, emanates from our solitude and forms the very accomplishment of solitude and the infinitely serious attempt to respond to its profound unhappiness [*malheur*]. Everyday life is a preoccupation with salvation.

EVERYDAY LIFE AND SALVATION

Can one not thus resolve a contradiction that all contemporary philosophy plays out? The hope for a better society and the despair of solitude, both of which are founded on experiences that claim to be self-evident, seem to be in an insurmountable antagonism. There is not merely an opposition but an antinomy between the experience of solitude and social experience. Each of them claims the rank of a universal experience and manages to account for the other, referring to it particularly as the degradation of an authentic experience.

The feeling of solitude persists and threatens in the very midst of the optimistic constructivism of sociology and socialism. It enables one to denounce the joys of communication, collective works, and everything that makes the world livable, as Pascalian diversion and the simple forgetfulness of solitude. The fact of finding oneself settled in the world, occupied with things, attached to them, and even the aspiration to dominate them, is not merely depreciated in the experience of solitude, but explained by a philosophy of solitude. Concern for things and needs would be a fall, a flight before the uttermost finality[34] that these needs themselves imply, an inconsequence, a nontruth, inevitable, to be sure, but bearing the mark of the inferior and the reprehensible.

But the inverse is equally true. We behave like the frightful bourgeois in the midst of Pascalian, Kierkegaardian, Nietzschean, and Heideggerian anxieties. Or we are crazy. No one will recommend madness as a way of salvation. The buffoon, the fool of Shakespearean tragedy, is the one who feels and bespeaks with lucidity the unsubstantiality of the world and the absurdity of its situations—the one who is not the principal character of tragedy, the one who has nothing to overcome. In a world of kings, princes, and heroes, the fool is the opening through which this world is swept by drafts of madness; the fool is not the tempest that extinguishes the lights and tears away the curtains. However much the entirety of preoccupations that fill our days and tear us away from solitude to throw us into contact with our peers are called "fall," "everyday life," "animality," "degradation," or "base materialism," these preoccupations are in any case in no way frivolous. One can think

[34]For Heidegger *Dasein* usually lives in the possibilities that permit it to flee from an authentic awareness of death, its uttermost [*aussersť*] possibility; indeed, inauthentic everyday life is constituted by flight from death. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 294, 297–99.

that authentic time is originally an ecstasis,[35] yet one buys oneself a watch; despite the nudity of existence, one must as far as possible be decently clothed. And when one writes a book on anxiety, one writes it for someone, one goes through all the steps that separate the draft from the publication, and one sometimes behaves like a merchant of anxiety. The man condemned to die straightens out his uniform before his last walk, accepts a final cigarette, and finds an eloquent word before the salvo.

These may seem like facile objections, recalling the ones certain realists address to idealists when they reproach them for eating and breathing in an illusory world. But under the circumstances they are less negligible objections: they do not oppose a behavior to a metaphysics but a behavior to a morality. Each of these antagonistic experiences is a morality. They object not to the error but to the inauthenticity of one another. There is something other than naivety in the flat denial the masses oppose to the elites when they are worried more about bread than about anxiety. From this comes the accent of greatness that stirs in a humanism springing from the economic problem; from this comes the very power that the demands of the working

[35]The notion of temporal "ecstasis" is central to all contemporary theories of time, especially those of Husserl and Heidegger, and their successors. It expresses the temporal character of the transcendence or the being-in-the-world of human existence (see note 2, above).

See Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, edited by M. Heidegger, translated by J. S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971); Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 377 and passim; and Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," translated by F. A. Capuzzi, in *Basic Writings*, edited by D. F. Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) pp. 193–242.

Much secondary literature has appeared on the ecstasis of time in Heidegger and Husserl. For one good account of time in Husserl, see Robert Sokolowski's "The Inside of Time" in *Husserlian Meditations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 138–68; for Heidegger (and Husserl), see the chapter on "Temporality" in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by C. Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), especially pp. 418–22.

class possess to be elevated into a humanism. They would be inexplicable for a behavior that was to have been simply a fall into inauthenticity, or likewise a diversion, or even a legitimate exigency of our animality.

For a constructive and optimistic socialism, however, solitude and its anxieties are an ostrichlike position in a world that solicits solidarity and lucidity; they are epiphenomena—phenomena of luxury or waste—of a period of social transformation, the senseless dream of an eccentric individual, a luxation in the collective body. And it is with a right equal to that used by the philosophy of solitude that the anxiety of death and solitude can be called by socialist humanism "falsehood" and "idle chatter," and even "mystification" and "deceptive eloquence," "flight before the essential" and "deliquescence."

This antinomy opposes the need to be saved and the need to be satisfied—Jacob and Esau. But the true relationship between salvation and satisfaction is not that which classic idealism perceived, and that despite everything modern existentialism maintains. Salvation does not require the satisfaction of need, like a higher principle that would require the solidity of its bases to be secured. The daily run of our everyday life is surely not a simple sequel of our animality continually surpassed by spiritual activity. But neither does the anxiety about salvation arise in suffering a need that would be its occasional cause, as if poverty or the proletarian condition were the occasion for glimpsing the gate of the Heavenly Kingdom. I do not believe that the oppression that crushes the working classes gives it uniquely a pure experience of oppression in order to awaken in it, beyond economic liberation, the nostalgia for a metaphysical liberation. The revolutionary struggle is divested of its true significance and its real intention when it serves simply as a basis for spiritual life, or when through its crises it must awaken vocations. Economic struggle is already on an equal footing with the struggle for salvation

because it is founded in the very dialectic of hypostasis through which the first freedom is constituted.

In Sartre's philosophy there is some sort of angelical present. The whole weight of existence being thrown back onto the past, the freedom of the present is already situated above matter. In recognizing the whole weight of matter in the present itself and in its emerging freedom, we want both to recognize material life and its triumph over the anonymity of existing, and the tragic finality to which it is bound by its very freedom.

By connecting solitude to the subject's materiality—materiality being its enchainment to itself—we can understand in what sense the world and our existence in the world constitute a fundamental advance of the subject in overcoming the weight that it is to itself, in overcoming it's materiality—that is to say, in loosening the bond between the self and the ego.

SALVATION THROUGH THE WORLD—NOURISHMENTS

In everyday existence, in the world, the material structure of the subject is to a certain extent overcome: an interval appears between the ego and the self. The identical subject does not return to itself immediately.

Since Heidegger we are in the habit of considering the world as an ensemble of tools.[36] Existing in the world is acting, but acting in such a way that in the final account action has our own existence for its object. Tools refer to one another to finally refer to our care for existing.[37] In turning on

[36]For Heidegger practice precedes theory and is the initial and implicit realm of significance; see Heidegger, *Being and Time,* sections 14 and 15.

[37]In *Being and Time* Heidegger distinguishes three levels: *Dasein's* "concern" *(Besorgen)* for things within the world; *Dasein's* "solicitude" *(Fürsorge)* for other persons within the world; and *Dasein's* "care" *(Sorge)* for being-in-the-world as such—that is, its care for itself qua *Da-sein.* It is no

a bathroom switch we open up the entire ontological problem. What seems to have escaped Heidegger—if it is true that in these matters something might have escaped Heidegger—is that prior to being a system of tools, the world is an ensemble of nourishments. Human life in the world does not go beyond the objects that fulfil it. It is perhaps not correct to say that we live to eat, but it is no more correct to say that we eat to live. The uttermost finality of eating is contained in food. When one smells a flower, it is the smell that limits the finality of the act. To stroll is to enjoy the fresh air, not for health but for the air. These are the nourishments characteristic of our existence in the world. It is an ecstatic existence—being outside oneself—but limited by the object.

This relationship with an object can be characterized by enjoyment [*jouissance*]. All enjoyment is a way of being, but also a sensation—that is, light and knowledge. It is absorption of the object, but also distance with regard to it. Knowledge and luminosity essentially belong to enjoying. Through this, before the nourishments that offer themselves, the subject is in space, at a distance from all the objects that are necessary for its existence. Though in the pure and simple identity of hypostasis, the subject is bogged down in itself, in the world, instead of a return to itself, there is a "relationship with everything that is necessary for being." The subject separates from itself. Light is the prerequisite for such a possibility. In this sense our everyday life is already a way of being free from the initial materiality through which a subject is accomplished [*s'accomplit*]. It al-

accident that the latter, care—*Sorge*—is etymologically and ontologically at the root of the other two. The "call of care" draws *Dasein* from out of its ordinary (= within-the-world) absorption with things and persons to an authentic relationship with itself. It is to this ultimate reflexivity that Levinas is here alluding. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 116–17 (on the referral from tool use to *Dasein*); 332–34, 341–45 (on the general structure of ultimate referral to *Dasein*).

ready contains a forgetfulness of self. The morality of "earthly nourishments" is the first morality, the first abnegation. It is not the last, but one must pass through it.[38]

THE TRANSCENDENCE OF LIGHT AND REASON

Self-forgetfulness and the luminosity of enjoyment do not break the irremissible attachment of the ego to the self when one separates this light from the ontological event of the subject's materiality, where it has its place, and when, in the name of reason, one elevates this light into an absolute. The interval of space given by light is instantaneously absorbed by light. Light is that through which something is other than myself, but already as if it came from me. The illuminated object is something one encounters, but from the very fact that it is illuminated one encounters it as if it came from us.[39] It does not have a fundamental strange-

[38]Levinas: This conception of enjoyment as a departure from the self is opposed to Platonism. Plato makes a calculation when he denounces the mixed pleasures; they are impure since they presuppose a lack that is filled without any real gain being recorded. But it is not right to judge enjoyment in terms of profits and losses. One must view it in its becoming, its event, in relationship to the drama of the ego inscribed in being, thrown into a dialectic. The entire attraction of earthly nourishments and the entire experience of youth is opposed to Platonic calculation.

[The notion of enjoyment—prior to theory and practice—is developed in *Existence and Existents*, pp. 37–45; *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 127–39, 143–51; and *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 72–74. See also, R. Cohen, "Emmanuel Levinas: Happiness is a Sensational Time," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Fall 1981), pp. 196–203.]

[39]Levinas: I take this opportunity to return to a point treated here at this college by Alphonse de Waelhens in his fine lecture. It is a question of Husserl. De Waelhens reckons that the reason that prompted Husserl to shift from descriptive intuition to transcendental analysis resulted from an identification of intelligibility and construction—pure vision not being intelligibility. I think, to the contrary, that the Husserlian notion of vision already implies intelligibility. To see is already to render the encountered object one's own, as drawn from one's own ground. In this sense, "transcendental constitution" is but a way of seeing in full clarity. It is a completion of vision.

ness. Its transcendence is wrapped in immanence. The exteriority of light does not suffice for the liberation of the ego that is the self's captive.

Light and knowledge appeared to us in their place in hypostasis and in the dialectic it brings forth, as a way for the subject—emancipated from the anonymity of existing but riveted to itself through its identity as an existent (that is, materialized)—to take a distance with regard to its materiality. But separated from this ontological event, separated from the materiality that is promised other dimensions of liberation, knowledge does not surmount solitude. By themselves reason and light consummate the solitude of a being as a being, and accomplish its destiny to be the sole and unique point of reference for everything.

By encompassing everything within its universality, reason finds itself once again in solitude. Solipsism is neither an aberration nor a sophism; it is the very structure of reason. This is so not just because of the "subjective" character of the sensations that it combines, but because of the universality of knowledge—that is, the unlimitedness of light and the impossibility for anything to be on the outside.[40] Thus reason never finds any other reason to speak. The intentionality of consciousness allows one to distinguish the ego from things, but it does not make solipsism disappear: its element—light—renders us master of the exterior world but is incapable of discovering a peer for us there. The objectivity of rational knowledge removes nothing of the solitary character of reason. The possible reversal of objectivity into subjectivity is the very theme of idealism.

[40]The final chapter of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* is entitled simply "Outside."

[See A. Lingis, "On Phenomenological Explanation," *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, vol. 11, no. 1 (January 1980), pp. 54–68; reprinted in A. Lingis, *Phenomenological Explanations* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986) pp. 1–19.]

which is a philosophy of reason. Subjectivity is itself the objectivity of light. Every object can be spoken of in terms of consciousness—that is, can be brought to light.

The reality of the transcendence of space could be secured only if it is founded on a transcendence without a return to its point of departure. Life could only become the path of redemption if, in its struggle with matter, it encounters an event that stops its everyday transcendence from falling back upon a point that is always the same. To catch sight of this transcendence, which supports the transcendence of light and lends a real exteriority to the exterior world, it is necessary to return to the concrete situation wherein light is given in enjoyment—that is, to material existence.[41]

[41]The sequence of ideas followed here is also followed in *Existence and Existents*: a section on light (pp. 46–51) comes after the section on enjoyment (see note 38, above). Also on light, see *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 189 and passim.

[PART III]

I have dealt with the subject alone, alone due to the very fact that it is an existent. The solitude of the subject results from its relationship with the existing over which it is master. This mastery over existing is the power of beginning, of starting out from itself, starting out from itself neither to act nor to think, but to be.

I then showed that liberation with regard to the existent's anonymous existing becomes an enchainment to self, the very enchainment of identification. Concretely, the relationship of identification is the encumbrance of the ego by the self, the care that the ego takes of itself, or materiality. The subject—an abstraction from every relationship with a future or with a past—is thrust upon itself, and is so in the very freedom of its present. Its solitude is not initially the fact that it is without succor, but its being thrown into feeding upon itself, its being mired in itself. This is materiality. So in the very instant of the transcendence of need, placing the subject in front of nourishments, in front of the world as nourishment, this transcendence offers the subject a liberation from itself. The world offers the subject participation in existing in the form of enjoyment, and consequently permits it to exist at a distance from itself. The subject is absorbed in the object it absorbs, and nevertheless keeps a distance with regard to that object. All enjoyment is also sensation—that is, knowledge and light. It is not just the disappearance of the self, but self-forgetfulness, as a first abnegation.

But this instantaneous transcendence through space does not manage to escape solitude. The light that permits encountering something other than the self, makes it encountered as if this thing came from the ego. The light, brightness, is intelligibility itself; making everything come from me, it reduces every experience to an element of reminiscence. Reason is alone. And in this sense knowledge never encounters anything truly other in the world. This is the profound truth of idealism. It betokens a radical difference between spatial exteriority and the exteriority of instants in relation to one another.

In the concreteness of need, the space that keeps us away from ourselves is always to be conquered. One must cross it and take hold of an object—that is, one must work with one's hands. In this sense, "the one who works not, eats not" is an analytic proposition. Tools and the manufacture of tools pursue the chimerical ideal of the suppression of distances. In the perspective that opens upon the tool, beginning with the modern tool—the machine—one is much more struck by its function which consists in suppressing work, than by its instrumental function, which Heidegger exclusively considered.

In work—meaning, in effort, in its pain and sorrow—the subject finds the weight of the existence which involves its existent freedom itself. Pain and sorrow are the phenomena to which the solitude of the existent is finally reduced.

SUFFERING AND DEATH[42]

In pain, sorrow, and suffering, we once again find, in a state of purity, the finality that constitutes the tragedy of

[42]The themes of this section are taken up and developed in the section entitled "Time and the Will: Patience," in *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 236–40.

solitude. The ecstasis of enjoyment does not succeed in surmounting this finality. Two points must be emphasized: I am going to pursue the analysis of solitude in the pain of need and work, not in the anxiety of nothingness; and I am going to lay stress on the pain lightly called physical, for in it engagement in existence is without any equivocation. While in moral pain one can preserve an attitude of dignity and compunction, and consequently already be free; physical suffering in all its degrees entails the impossibility of detaching oneself from the instant of existence. It is the very irremissibility of being. The content of suffering merges with the impossibility of detaching oneself from suffering. And this is not to define suffering by suffering, but to insist on the *sui generis* implication that constitutes its essence. In suffering there is an absence of all refuge. It is the fact of being directly exposed to being. It is made up of the impossibility of fleeing or retreating. The whole acuity of suffering lies in this impossibility of retreat. It is the fact of being backed up against life and being. In this sense suffering is the impossibility of nothingness.

But in suffering there is, at the same time as the call to an impossible nothingness, the proximity of death. There is not only the feeling and the knowledge that suffering can end in death. Pain of itself includes it like a paroxysm, as if there were something about to be produced even more rending than suffering, as if despite the entire absence of a dimension of withdrawal that constitutes suffering, it still had some free space for an event, as if it must still get uneasy about something, as if we were on the verge of an event beyond what is revealed to the end in suffering. The structure of pain, which consists in its very attachment to pain, is prolonged further, but up to an unknown that is impossible to translate into terms of light—that is, that is refractory to the intimacy of the self with the ego to which all our experiences return. The unknown of death, which is not given straight off as nothingness but is correlative to an experience of the impossibility of nothingness, signifies not

that death is a region from which no one has returned and consequently remains unknown as a matter of fact; the unknown of death signifies that the very relationship with death cannot take place in the light, that the subject is in relationship with what does not come from itself. We could say it is in relationship with mystery.

This way death has of announcing itself in suffering, outside all light, is an experience of the passivity of the subject, which until then had been active and remained active even when it was overwhelmed by its own nature, but reserved its possibility of assuming its factual state. To say "an experience of passivity" is only a way of speaking, for experience always already signifies knowledge, light, and initiative, as well as the return of the object to the subject. Death as mystery contrasts strongly with experience thus understood. In knowledge all passivity is activity through the intermediary of light. The object that I encounter is understood and, on the whole, constructed by me, even though death announces an event over which the subject is not master, an event in relation to which the subject is no longer a subject.

I at once take note of what this analysis of death in suffering presents that is unusual, in relation to the celebrated Heideggerian analyses of *being toward death.* Being toward death, in Heidegger's authentic existence, is a supreme lucidity and hence a supreme virility. It is *Dasein*'s assumption of the uttermost possibility of existence, which precisely makes possible all other possibilities,[43] and consequently makes possible the very feat of grasping a possibility—that is, it makes possible activity and freedom. Death in Heidegger is an event of freedom, whereas for me the subject seems to reach the limit of the possible in suf-

[43]Levinas: Death in Heidegger is not, as Jean Wahl says "the impossibility of possibility," but "the possibility of impossibility." [See Heidegger, *Being and Time,* pp. 294, 307.] This apparently Byzantine distinction has a fundamental importance. [See *Totality and Infinity,* p. 235.]

fering. It finds itself enchained, overwhelmed, and in some way passive. Death is in this sense the limit of idealism.

I even wonder how the principal trait of our relationship with death could have escaped philosophers' attention. It is not with the nothingness of death, of which we precisely know nothing, that the analysis must begin, but with the situation where something absolutely unknowable appears. Absolutely unknowable means foreign to all light, rendering every assumption of possibility impossible, but where we ourselves are seized.

DEATH AND THE FUTURE[44]

This is why death is never a present.[45] This is a truism. The ancient adage designed to dissipate the fear of death—"If you are, it is not; if it is, you are not"[46]—without doubt misunderstands the entire paradox of death, for it effaces our relationship with death, which is a unique relationship with the future. But at least the adage insists on the eternal futurity of death. The fact that it deserts every present is not due to our evasion[47] of death and to an unpardonable

[44]The themes of this section are later taken up and developed in *Totality and Infinity,* in the section entitled "The Will and Death" (pp. 232–236), which directly precedes—rather than follows—the section of *Totality and Infinity* indicated in note 42 above, thus reversing the order of development found in *Time and the Other.*

[45]"Present" in English and French can mean either the present time or a gift. As this section will show, the emphasis is on the former, the temporal meaning.

[46]Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus.

[47]The earliest published text containing what is perhaps the nascent kernal of Levinas' thought—hidden within the husks of Heideggerian ontology—is entitled "De l'évasion" ["On Evasion"] (*Recherches philosophiques,* vol. 5 [1935/36] pp. 373–92); republished as a book (Montepellier: Fata Morgana, 1982) introduced and annotated by J. Rolland). Its main theme is the escape of the self from its enchainment with itself. It is noteworthy, furthermore, in that it contains, nearly three years before the publication of Sartre's famous novel *Nausea,* several pages describing "the very experience of pure being" in terms of the experience of nausea!

diversion at the supreme hour, but to the fact that death is *ungraspable*, that it marks the end of the subject's virility and heroism. The now is the fact that I am master, master of the possible, master of grasping the possible. Death is never now. When death is here, I am no longer here, not just because I am nothingness, but because I am unable to grasp. My mastery, my virility, my heroism as a subject can be neither virility nor heroism in relation to death. There is in the suffering at the heart of which we have grasped this nearness of death—and still at the level of the phenomenon—this reversal of the subject's activity into passivity. This is not just in the instant of suffering where, backed against being, I still grasp it and am still the subject of suffering, but in the crying and sobbing toward which suffering is inverted. Where suffering attains its purity, where there is no longer anything between us and it, the supreme responsibility of this extreme assumption turns into supreme irresponsibility, into infancy. Sobbing is this, and precisely through this it announces death. To die is to return to this state of irresponsibility, to be the infantile shaking of sobbing.

Allow me to return once again to Shakespeare, in whom I have overindulged in the course of these lectures. But it sometimes seems to me that the whole of philosophy is only a meditation of Shakespeare. Does not the hero of tragedy assume death? I will allow myself a very brief analysis of Macbeth's end. Macbeth learns that Birnam Wood marches on the castle of Dunsinane, and is the sign of defeat: death approaches. When this sign comes true, Macbeth says: "Blow wind! come, wrack!" But right afterward: "Ring the alarm-bell! [etc. . . .] At least we'll die with harness on our back." Prior to death there will be battle. The second sign of defeat has not yet come about. Had not the witches predicted that a man of woman born could do nothing against Macbeth? But here is Macduff, who was not of woman born. Death is coming now. "Accursed by

that tongue that tells," cries Macbeth to Macduff who learns of his power over him, "for it hath cow'd my better part of man!...I'll not fight with thee."

This is the passivity when there is no longer hope. This is what I have called the "end of virility." But immediately hope is reborn, and here are Macbeth's last words:

"Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane, and thou oppos'd, being of no woman born, yet I will try the last."

Prior to death there is always a last chance; this is what heroes seize, not death. The hero is the one who always glimpses a last chance, the one who obstinately finds chances. Death is thus never assumed, it comes. Suicide is a contradictory concept. The eternal immanence of death is part of its essence. In the present, where the subject's mastery is affirmed, there is hope. Hope is not added to death by a sort of *salto mortale*,[48] by a sort of inconsequence; it is in the very margin that is given, at the moment of death, to the subject who is going to die. *Spiro/spero.*[49] *Hamlet* is precisely a lengthy testimony to this impossibility of assuming death. Nothingness is impossible. It is nothingness that would have left humankind the possibility of assuming death and snatching a supreme mastery from out of the servitude of existence. "To be or not to be"[50] is a sudden awareness of this impossibility of annihilating oneself.

[48]A somersault [literally: "deadly-jump"]. This expression reappears in *Totality and Infinity*, p. 246.

[49]["If] I breathe, I hope."

[50]In English in original. Jankelevitch also protests against this seemingly all-inclusive disjunction; see the section entitled "Etre ou n'être pas?" [To be or not to be?"] in his *Philosophie Première* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 36–38.

Almost thirty-five years after *Time and the Other*, Levinas again recalls Hamlet's famous question in "Bad Conscience and the Inexorable," where he writes: "To be or not to be—this is probably not the question par excellence" (in *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by R. Cohen [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986], p. 40).

THE EVENT AND THE OTHER [*L'AUTRE*]

What can we infer from this analysis of death? Death becomes the limit of the subject's virility, the virility made possible by the hypostasis at the heart of anonymous being, and manifest in the phenomenon of the present, in the light. It is not just that there exist ventures impossible for the subject, that its powers are in some way finite; death does not announce a reality against which nothing can be done, against which our power is insufficient—realities exceeding our strength already arise in the world of light. What is important about the approach of death is that at a certain moment we are no longer *able to be able* [*nous ne 'pouvons plus pouvoir'*].[51] It is exactly thus that the subject loses its very mastery as a subject.

This end of mastery indicates that we have assumed existing in such a way that an *event* can happen to us that we no longer assume, not even in the way we assume events—because we are always immersed in the empirical world—through vision. An event happens to us without our having absolutely anything "a priori," without our being able to have the least project, as one says today. Death is the impossibility of having a project. This approach of death indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely other, something bearing alterity not as a provisional determination we can assimilate through enjoyment, but as something whose very existence is made of alterity. My solitude is thus not confirmed by death but broken by it.

[51]The verb *pouvoir* means "to be able" or "can"; the noun means "power," "force," "means." Levinas' idea seems to be that in the face of the mystery of death, the subject not only loses its various powers, it loses its very ability to have powers, its "I can"—that is to say, its very self-constitution as an existent.

In his translation of Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, Alphonso Lingis also notes this peculiar doubling of the verb *pouvoir* (pp. 39, 198, 236).

Right away this means that existence is pluralist. Here the plural is not a multiplicity of existents; it appears in existing itself. A plurality insinuates itself into the very existing of the existent, which until this point was jealously assumed by the subject alone and manifest through suffering. In death the existing of the existent is alienated. To be sure, the other [*l'Autre*] that is announced does not possess this existing as the subject possesses it; its hold over my existing is mysterious. It is not unknown but unknowable, refractory to all light. But this precisely indicates that the other is in no way another myself, participating with me in a common existence.[52] The relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy[53] through which we put ourselves in the other's place; we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery. The other's entire being is constituted by its

[52]Although Levinas is explicitly discussing the encounter with the alterity of death, this sentence and the ones following it conjure up the encounter with the alterity of the other person. What is common to death and social life is an encounter with radical alterity.

This important shift from solitude to social life, evinced by death, does not result, therefore, from an intellectual confusion or a fallaciously employed ambiguity. As will soon become clear (see especially the penultimate paragraph of the next section below), and as Levinas says unequivocally in *Totality and Infinity,* the encounter with the alterity of death is like nothing so much as the encounter with the alterity of the other person, "as though the approach of death remained one of the modalities of the relationship with the Other" (*TI,* p. 234).

It is alterity, then, not shared attributes, that is the key to social life.

In the above critical sentence, Levinas doubtlessly has in mind the alternative version of social life expressed in particular by Heidegger's notion of *mitsein* (previously mentioned) and Husserl's notion of "associative pairing," found in the fifth meditation of Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (translated by D. Cairns [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970], pp. 89–151), a text that Levinas, along with Gabrielle Pfeiffer, translated into French for publication in 1931. (It is relevant, then, to note that Pfeiffer translated the first three meditations and Levinas translated the longer and final two meditations as well as Husserl's brief conclusion.)

[53]See Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy,* translated by P. Heath (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954); first German edition published in 1913, the second in 1923.

exteriority, or rather its alterity, for exteriority is a property of space and leads the subject back to itself through light.

Consequently only a being whose solitude has reached a crispation through suffering, and in relation with death, takes its place on a ground where the relationship with the other becomes possible. The relationship with the other will never be the feat of grasping a possibility. One would have to characterize it in terms that contrast strongly with the relationships that describe light. I think the erotic relationship furnishes us with a prototype of it. Eros, strong as death,[54] will furnish us with the basis of an analysis of this relationship with mystery—provided it is set forth in terms entirely different from those of the Platonism that is a world of light.

But it is possible to infer from this situation of death, where the subject no longer has any possibility of grasping, another characteristic of existence with the other. The future is what is in no way grasped. The exteriority of the future is totally different from spatial exteriority precisely through the fact that the future is absolutely surprising. Anticipation of the future and projection of the future, sanctioned as essential to time by all theories from Bergson[55] to Sartre, are but the present of the future and

[54] "*L'Eros, fort comme la mort*. . . ." This expression is found in the Song of Songs, 8:6. Franz Rosenzweig begins part 2, book 2, of *The Star of Redemption* with it; Lev Shestov refers to it in his 1937 book, *Athens and Jerusalem* (translated by B. Martin [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968], p. 144).

[55] It is perhaps curious that Levinas includes Bergson here (as he does, similarly, in *Existence and Existents*, p. 94). Levinas often acknowledges his indebtedness to Bergson, who was, after all, *the* dominate French thinker at the beginning of the twentieth century, and led the way in rethinking time and its insertion of newness into being.

It was Bergson who argued, against previous notions of time (and proleptically against Heidegger's notion of time), that we must "succeed in conceiving the radically new and unforeseeable," which means rejecting the idea of " 'possibles' outlined beforehand. . . as if the will was limited to 'bringing about' one of them" (Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, translated by M. Andison [New York: Philosophical Library, 1945], pp. 18–19).

In the opening comments and the third section of IV, below, Levinas will give his reasons for criticizing Bergson in this regard.

not the authentic future; the future is what is not grasped, what befalls us and lays hold of us. The other is the future. The very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future. It seems to me impossible to speak of time in a subject alone, or to speak of a purely personal duration.

OTHER AND THE OTHER[56]

I have just shown the possibility of an event in death. And I have contrasted this possibility, where the subject is no longer master of the event, with the possibility of the object, which the subject always masters and with which it is, in short, always alone. I have characterized this event as mystery, precisely because it could not be anticipated—that is, grasped; it could not enter into a present or it could enter into it as what does not enter it. But the death thus announced as other, as the alienation of my existence, is it still *my* death? If it opens a way out of solitude, does it not simply come to crush this solitude, to crush subjectivity itself? In death there is indeed an abyss between the event and the subject to whom it will happen. How can the event that cannot be grasped still happen to me? What can the other's relationship with a being, an existent, be? How can the existent exist as mortal and nonetheless persevere in its "personality," preserve its conquest over the anonymous "there is," its subject's mastery, the conquest of its subjectivity? How can a being enter into relation with the other without allowing its very self to be crushed by the other?

This question must be posed first, because it is the very problem of the preservation of the ego in transcendence. If the escape from solitude is meant to be something other than the absorption of the ego in the term toward which it

[56] *Autre et autrui.*

is projected, and if, on the other hand, the subject cannot assume death, as it assumes an object, how can this reconciliation between the ego and death come about? How, too, can the ego assume death without meanwhile assuming it as a possibility? If in the face of death one is no longer able to be able, how can one still remain a self before the event it announces?

The same problem is implied in a description faithful to the very phenomenon of death. The pathos of suffering does not consist solely in the impossibility of fleeing existing, of being backed up against it, but also in the terror of leaving this relationship of light whose transcendence death announces. Like Hamlet we prefer this known existence to unknown existence. It is as though the adventure into which the existent has entered by hypostasis were its sole recourse, its sole refuge against what is intolerable in that adventure. In death there is Lucretius' temptation of nothingness, and Pascal's desire for eternity.[57] These are not two distinct attitudes: we want both to die and to be.

The problem does not consist in rescuing an eternity from the jaws of death, but in allowing it to be welcomed, keeping for the ego—in the midst of an existence where an event happens to it—the freedom acquired by hypostasis. Such is the situation one can call the attempt to vanquish death, where at one time the event happens and yet the subject, without welcoming it, as one welcomes a thing or object, faces up to the event.

I have just described a dialectical situation. I am now going to show a concrete situation where this dialectic is accomplished. It is impossible for me to explain this method at length here; I have resorted to it again and again. One sees in any event that it is not phenomenological to the end.

The relationship with the Other, the face-to-face with the Other, the encounter with a face that at once gives and con-

[57]See Lucretius, *The Way Things Are*, book 3; Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, passim.

ceals the Other, is the situation in which an event happens to a subject who does not assume it, who is utterly unable in its regard, but where nonetheless in a certain way it is in front of the subject. The other "assumed" is the Other.

TIME AND THE OTHER[58]

I hope to be able to show that the relationship with the Other is as entirely different from what the existentialists propose as it is from what the Marxists propose. For the moment I would like to at least indicate how time itself refers to this situation of the face-to-face with the Other. The future that death gives, the future of the event, is not yet time. In order for this future, which is nobody's and which a human being cannot assume, to become an element of time, it must also enter into relationship with the present. What is the tie between two instants that have between them the whole interval, the whole abyss, that separates the present and death, this margin at once both insignificant and infinite, where there is always room enough for hope? It is certainly not a relationship of pure contiguity, which would transform time into space, but neither is it the élan of dynamism and duration, since for the present this power to be beyond itself and to encroach upon the future seems to me precisely excluded by the very mystery of death.

Relationship with the future, the presence of the future in the present, seems all the same accomplished in the face-to-face with the Other. The situation of the face-to-face would be the very accomplishment of time; the encroachment of the present on the future is not the feat of the subject alone, but the intersubjective relationship. The condition of time lies in the relationship between humans, or in history.

[58] *Temps et autrui.*

[PART IV]

Part III began with suffering as the event whereby the existent manages to accomplish all its solitude—that is, all the intensity of its tie with itself, all the finality of its identity—and at the same time it is that whereby the subject finds itself in relationship with the event that it does not assume, which is absolutely other, and in regard to which it is a pure passivity and no longer able to be able. This future of death determines the future for us, the future insofar as it is not present. It determines what in the future contrasts strongly with all anticipation, projection, and élan. Starting from such a notion of the future to understand time, one never again meets with time as a "moving image of eternity."[59]

When one deprives the present of all anticipation, the future loses all co-naturalness with it. The future is not buried in the bowels of a preexistent eternity, where we would come to lay hold of it. It is absolutely other and new. And it is thus that one can understand the very reality of time, the absolute impossibility of finding in the present the equivalent of the future, the lack of any hold upon the future.

To be sure, the Bergsonian conception of freedom through duration tends toward the same end. But it preserves for the present a power over the future: duration is creation. To criticize this deathless philosophy it is not enough to situate it within the whole drift of modern philosophy, which makes creation the principal attribute of the creature. It is a matter of showing that creation itself presupposes an opening onto a mystery. The subject's identity

[59]Plato, *Timaeus*, 37; also see p. 129 below.

by itself is incapable of yielding this. To uphold this thesis I have insisted upon the anonymous and irremissible existing that constitutes an entire universe, and upon the hypostasis that ends in the mastery of an existent over existing, but which by the same token is shut up within the finality of the identity that its spatial transcendence does not undo. It is not a matter of contesting the fact of anticipation, to which the Bergsonian descriptions of duration have accustomed us. It is a matter of showing their ontological conditions, which are the feat rather than the work[60] of a subject in relation with mystery, which is, so to say, the very dimension that is opened to a subject shut up in itself. This is precisely the reason why the work of time is profound. It is not simply a renewal through creation, which remains attached to the present, giving the creature but the sadness of Pygmalion. More than the renewal of our moods and qualities, time is essentially a new birth.

POWER AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER

The strangeness of the future of death does not leave the subject any initiative. There is an abyss between the present and death, between the ego and the alterity of mystery. It is not the fact that death cuts existence short, that it is end and nothingness, but the fact that the ego is absolutely without initiative in the face of it. Vanquishing death is not a problem of eternal life. Vanquishing death is to maintain, with the alterity of the event, a relationship that must still be personal.

What, then, is this personal relationship other than the subject's power over the world, meanwhile protecting its personality? How can the subject be given a definition that somehow lies in its passivity? Is there another mastery in

[60] *le fait plutôt que l'oeuvre.*

the human other than the virility of grasping the possible, the *power to be able* [*"pouvoir de pouvoir"*]? If we find it, it is in it, in this relation that very place of time will consist. I already said in Part III that this relation is the relationship with the Other.

But a solution does not consist in repeating the terms of the problem. It is a matter of specifying what this relationship with the Other can be. Someone has objected to me that in my relationship with the Other it is not only the Other's future that I encounter, that the other as existent already has a past for me and, consequently, does not have a privilege over the future. This objection will allow me to approach the main part of my exposition here. I do not define the other by the future, but the future by the other, for the very future of death consists in its total alterity. But my main response will consist in saying that the relationship with the other, taken at the level of our civilization, is a complication of our original relationship; it is in no way a contingent complication, but one itself founded upon the inner dialectic of the relationship with the Other. I cannot develop this here.[61] I will simply say that this dialectic appears when one pushes further all the implications of hypostasis that have thus far been treated very schematically, and in particular when one shows, next to the transcendence toward the world, the transcendence of expression that founds the contemporaneousness of civilization and the mutuality of every relationship. But this transcendence of expression itself presupposes the future of alterity, to which I limit myself here.

If the relationship with the other involves more than relationships with mystery, it is because one has accosted the other in everyday life where the solitude and fundamental alterity of the other are already veiled by decency. One is

[61]For these developments, see the section entitled "Intentions" in *Existence and Existents*, pp. 37–45; and the section entitled "The Truth of the Will" in *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 240–47.

for the other what the other is for oneself; there is no exceptional place for the subject. The other is known through sympathy, as another (my)self, as the alter ego.[62] In Blanchot's novel *Aminadab,* this situation is pushed to the absurd. Between the persons circulating in the strange house where the action takes place, where there is no work to pursue, where they only abide—that is, exist—this social relationship becomes total reciprocity. These beings are not interchangeable but reciprocal, or rather they are interchangeable because they are reciprocal. And then the relationship with the other becomes impossible.

But already, in the very heart of the relationship with the other that characterizes our social life, alterity appears as a nonreciprocal relationship—that is, as contrasting strongly with contemporaneousness. The Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not.[63] The Other is this, not because of the Other's character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other's very alterity. The Other is, for example, the weak, the poor, "the widow and the orphan,"[64] whereas I am the rich or the powerful. It can be said that intersubjective space is not

[62]It is at the level of the "decency" of "everyday life" then, that Levinas finds a place for the sympathy and pairing that he has rejected as ultimately constitutive of the inter-subjective relationship (see notes 50 and 51, above).

[63]For Levinas this formulation does not necessarily lead to the conclusion of the German Idealists—namely, that alterity is only encountered through *negation.* Philosophers can perhaps hardly be reminded too often of this difference. For Levinas the alterity encountered through negativity is merely a relative, not an absolute, alterity. To grasp alterity *outside* even negativity, and thus in a truly positive "sense," is perhaps the essence of Levinas' entire effort. See, in particular, the section entitled "Transcendence is Not Negativity" in *Totality and Infinity,* pp. 40–42; and the Preface, above (p. 32).

[64]The Hebrew Bible contains many references to the orphan and the widow jointly: Exodus 22:21; Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17, 24:19, 24:20, 24:21, 26:12, 27:19; Isaiah 1:17, 9:16, 10:2; Jeremiah 7:6, 22:3; Ezekiel 22:7; Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5; Psalms 68:6, 109:9, 146:9; Lamentations 5:3. Relevant to Levinas' emphasis on the alterity of the other, in all these instances (except Isaiah, and at 68:6 in Psalms where the "solitary" is men-

symmetrical.[65] The exteriority of the other is not simply due to the space that separates what remains identical through the concept, nor is it due to any difference the concept would manifest through spatial exteriority. The relationship with alterity is neither spatial nor conceptual. Durkheim has misunderstood the specificity of the other when he asks in what Other rather than myself is the object of a virtuous action.[66] Does not the essential difference between charity and justice come from the preference of charity for the other, even when, from the point of view of justice, no preference is any longer possible?[67]

Eros[68]

In civilized life there are traces of this relationship with the other that one must investigate in its original form.

[65]See the section entitled "The Asymmetry of the Interpersonal" in *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 215–16, also p. 251 and passim.

[66]According to Durkheim, "morality is the product of the collective" and not the result of the face-to-face encounter. See "The Determination of Moral Facts" and "Replies to Objections" in Emile Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, translated by D. Pocock (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 35–79.

[67]Although, inasmuch as our culture is predominately Christian, one might see here an allusion only to the alleged opposition between "Christian mercy" and "Jewish justice," in addition to being an internal Christian opposition (often enough, it is true, expressed in terms of a Christian vision of Judaism), the allusion here is certainly also to an ancient and properly internal Jewish opposition—namely, that between God's *chesed*, kindness, and God's *gevurah*, justice. To be sure, this opposition is equally a secular, moral opposition.

[68]For a fuller development of the analysis of eros and fecundity (the topic of the next section), see section 4, "Beyond the Face," of *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 254–85. Also see "Phenomenology of the Face and Carnal Intimacy" by A. Lingis in his book, *Libido: The French Existential Theories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 58–73; and "The Fecundity of the Caress" by L. Irigaray, in *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by R. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 231–56.

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tioned; and, one should add, in James 1:27, where the orphan and the widow are mentioned together), the *stranger* is always also mentioned in conjunction with the orphan and the widow.

Does a situation exist where the alterity of the other appears in its purity? Does a situation exist where the other would not have alterity only as the reverse side of its identity, would not comply only with the Platonic law of participation where every term contains a sameness and through this sameness contains the Other? Is there not a situation where alterity would be borne by a being in a positive sense, as essence? What is the alterity that does not purely and simply enter into the opposition of two species of the same genus? I think the absolutely contrary contrary [*le contraire absolutement contraire*], whose contrariety is in no way affected by the relationship that can be established between it and its correlative, the contrariety that permits its terms to remain absolutely other, is the *feminine*.[69]

Sex is not some specific difference. It is situated beside the logical division into genera and species. This division certainly never manages to reunite an empirical content. But it is not in this sense that it does not permit one to account for the difference between the sexes. The difference between the sexes is a formal structure, but one that carves up reality in another sense and conditions the very possibility of reality as multiple, against the unity of being proclaimed by Parmenides.

Neither is the difference between the sexes a contradiction. The contradiction of being and nothingness leads from one to the other, leaving no room for distance. Noth-

[69]This sentence and some of those that follow were cited by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949 in *The Second Sex* (translated by H. Parshley [New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1970], p. xvi, n. 3) to condemn Levinas for sexism. De Beauvoir takes Levinas to task for allegedly assigning a secondary, derivative status to women: subject (he) as absolute, woman as other. The issue is important but certainly not as simple as de Beauvoir, in this instance, makes it out to be, because for Levinas the other has a priority over the subject. For a more sympathetic treatment of Levinas' thought on this issue, see C. Chalier, *Figures du féminin* (Paris: La nuit surveillée, 1982).

For Levinas' most recent thoughts on this issue, with regard to *Time and the Other*, see "Love and Filiation" in Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, translated by R. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), pp. 65–72.

ingness converts into being, which has led us to the notion of the "there is." The negation of being occurs at the level of the anonymous existing of being in general.

Neither is the difference between the sexes the duality of two complementary terms, for two complementary terms presuppose a preexisting whole. To say that sexual duality presupposes a whole is to posit love beforehand as fusion.[70] The pathos of love, however, consists in an insurmountable duality of beings. It is a relationship with what always slips away. The relationship does not *ipso facto* neutralize alterity but preserves it. The pathos of voluptuousness lies in the fact of being two. The other as other is not here an object that becomes ours or becomes us; to the contrary, it withdraws into its mystery. Neither does this mystery of the feminine—the feminine: essentially other—refer to any romantic notions of the mysterious, unknown, or misunderstood woman. Let it be understood that if, in order to uphold the thesis of the exceptional position of the feminine in the economy of being, I willingly refer to the great themes of Goethe or Dante, to Beatrice and the *ewig Weibliches*, to the cult of the *Woman* in chivalry and in modern society (which is certainly not explained solely by the necessity of lending a strong arm to the weaker sex)—if, more precisely, I think of the admirably bold pages of Léon Bloy in his *Letters to his Fiancée*,[71] I do not want to ignore the legitimate claims of the feminism that presupposes all the acquired attainments of civilization. I simply want to say that this mystery must not be understood in the ethereal sense of a certain literature; that in the most brutal materiality, in the most shameless or the most prosaic appearance of the feminine, neither her mystery nor her modesty are abolished. Profanation is not a negation of mystery, but one of the possible relationships with it.

[70]This is Aristophanes' position in Plato's *Symposium*.

[71]*Lettres à sa Fiancée* (Paris: Stock, 1922); English translation (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937). Léon Bloy (1846-1917) was a prolific French Catholic writer with a strong Jansenist bent.

What matters to me in this notion of the feminine is not merely the unknowable, but a mode of being that consists in slipping away from the light. The feminine in existence is an event different from that of spatial transcendence or of expression that go toward light. It is a flight before light. Hiding is the way of existing of the feminine, and this fact of hiding is precisely modesty. So this feminine alterity does not consist in the object's simple exteriority. Neither is it made up of an opposition of wills. The Other is not a being we encounter that menaces us or wants to lay hold of us. The feat of being refractory to our power is not a power greater than ours. Alterity makes for all its power. Its mystery constitutes its alterity. A fundamental comment: I do not initially posit the Other as freedom, a characteristic in which the failure of communication is inscribed in advance. For with a freedom there can be no other relationship than that of submission or enslavement. In both cases, one of the two freedoms is annihilated. The relationship between master and slave can be grasped at the level of struggle, but then it becomes reciprocal. Hegel has shown precisely how the master becomes slave of the slave and the slave becomes master of the master.[72]

In positing the Other's alterity as mystery, itself defined by modesty, I do not posit it as a freedom identical to and at grips with mine; I do not posit another existent in front of me, I posit alterity. Just as with death, I am not concerned with an existent, but with the event of alterity, with alienation. The other is not initially characterized as freedom, from which alterity would then be deduced; the other

[72]Surely, in addition to Hegel, Levinas has Sartre's philosophy of freedom in mind. *Being and Nothingness* was published only five years earlier than *Time and the Other* (although Levinas, a German captive for the duration of W.W. II, had not yet read it in 1946, by his own admission [see Jean Wahl, *A Short History of Existentialism*, translated by F. Williams and S. Maron (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949)], p. 51).

For some recent critical remarks by Levinas on the early Sartre, see Richard Kearney's "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by R. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 16–17.

bears alterity as an essence. And this is why I have sought this alterity in the absolutely original relationship of eros, a relationship that is impossible to translate into powers and must not be so translated, if one does not want to distort the meaning of the situation.

I am thus describing a category that falls neither into the being-nothingness opposition, nor into the notion of the existent. It is an event in existing different from the hypostasis by which an existent arises. The existent is accomplished in the "subjective" and in "consciousness"; alterity is accomplished in the feminine. This term is on the same level as, but in meaning opposed to, consciousness. The feminine is not accomplished as a *being* [*étant*] in a transcendence toward light, but in modesty.

The movement here is thus inverse. The transcendence of the feminine consists in withdrawing elsewhere, which is a movement opposed to the movement of consciousness. But this does not make it unconscious or subconscious, and I see no other possibility than to call it mystery.

Even when by positing the Other as freedom, by thinking of the Other in terms of light, I am obliged to admit the failure of communication, I have merely admitted the failure of the movement that tends to grasp or to possess a freedom. It is only by showing in what way eros differs from possession and power that I can acknowledge a communication in eros. It is neither a struggle, nor a fusion, nor a knowledge. One must recognize its exceptional place among relationships. It is a relationship with alterity, with mystery—that is to say, with the future, with what (in a world where there is everything) is never there, with what cannot be there when everything is there—not with a being that is not there, but with the very dimension of alterity. There where all possibles are impossible, where one can no longer be able, the subject is still a subject through eros. Love is not a possibility, is not due to our initiative, is with-

out reason; it invades and wounds us, and nevertheless the *I* survives in it.

A phenomenology of voluptuousness, which I am only going to touch upon here—voluptuousness is not a pleasure like others, because it is not solitary like eating or drinking—seems to confirm my views on the exceptional role and place of the feminine, and on the absence of any fusion in the erotic.

The caress is a mode of the subject's being, where the subject who is in contact with another goes beyond this contact. Contact as sensation is part of the world of light. But what is caressed is not touched, properly speaking. It is not the softness or warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks. This "not knowing," this fundamental disorder, is the essential. It is like a game with something slipping away, a game absolutely without project or plan, not with what can become ours or us, but with something other, always other, always inaccessible, and always still to come [*à venir*]. The caress is the anticipation of this pure future [*avenir*],[73] without content. It is made up of this increase of hunger, of ever richer promises, opening new perspectives onto the ungraspable. It feeds on countless hungers.

This intentionality of the voluptuous—the sole intentionality of the future itself, and not an expectation of some future fact—has always been misunderstood by philosophical analysis. Freud himself says little more about the libido than that it searches for pleasure, taking pleasure as a simple content, starting with which one begins an analysis but

[73]*Venir* is a verb meaning "to come" or—especially in the construction *à venir*—"about to come"; *avenir* is a noun meaning "future." These latter two terms sound exactly the same in French. Levinas is emphasizing the essential connection between their meanings: the future is what is always about to come—that is, what is always about to come into the present but has not yet done so and never will (lest it be present rather than future).

which itself one does not analyze. Freud does not search for the significance of this pleasure in the general economy of being. My thesis, which consists in affirming voluptuousness as the very event of the future, the future purified of all content, the very mystery of the future, seeks to account for its exceptional place.

Can this relationship with the other through Eros be characterized as a failure? Once again, the answer is yes, if one adopts the terminology of current descriptions, if one wants to characterize the erotic by "grasping," "possessing," or "knowing." But there is nothing of all this, or the failure of all this, in eros. If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power.

Furthermore, the relationship with the other is generally sought out as a fusion. I have precisely wanted to contest the idea that the relationship with the other is fusion. The relationship with the Other is the absence of the other; not absence pure and simple, not the absence of pure nothingness, but absence in a horizon of the future, an absence that is time. This is the horizon where a personal life can be constituted in the heart of the transcendent event, what I called above the "victory over death." I must say a few words about it in concluding.

FECUNDITY[74]

I am going to return to the consideration that led me from the alterity of death to the alterity of the feminine. Before a pure event, a pure future, which is death, where the ego can in no way be able—that is, can no longer be an ego—I seek a situation where nonetheless it is possible for it to remain an ego, and I have called this situation "victory over

[74]See note 68, above.

death." Once again, this situation cannot be qualified as power. How, in the alterity of a you, can I remain I, without being absorbed or losing myself in that you? How can the ego that I am remain myself in a you, without being nonetheless the ego that I am in my present—that is to say, an ego that inevitably returns to itself? How can the ego become other to itself? This can happen only in one way: through paternity.

Paternity is the relationship with a stranger who, entirely while being Other, is myself, the relationship of the ego with a myself who is nonetheless a stranger to me. The son, in effect, is not simply my work, like a poem or an artifact, neither is he my property. Neither the categories of power nor those of having can indicate the relationship with the child. Neither the notion of cause nor the notion of ownership permit one to grasp the fact of fecundity. I do not *have* my child; I *am* in some way my child. But the words "I am" here have a significance different from an Eleatic or Platonic significance. There is a multiplicity and a transcendence in this verb, "to exist," a transcendence that is lacking in even the boldest existentialist analyses. Then again, the son is not any event whatsoever that happens to me—for example, my sadness, my ordeal, or my suffering. The son is an ego, a person. Lastly, the alterity of the son is not that of an alter ego. Paternity is not a sympathy through which I can put myself in the son's place. It is through my being, not through sympathy, that I am my son. The return of the ego to itself that begins with hypostasis is thus not without remission, thanks to the perspective of the future opened by eros. Instead of obtaining this remission through the impossible dissolution of hypostasis, one accomplishes it through the son. It is thus not according to the category of cause, but according to the category of the father that freedom comes about and time is accomplished.

Bergson's notion of *élan vital*, which merges artistic creation and generation in the same movement—what I call

"fecundity"—does not take account of death, but above all it tends toward an impersonal pantheism, in the sense that it does not sufficiently note the crispation and isolation of subjectivity, which is the ineluctable moment of my dialectic. Paternity is not simply the renewal of the father in the son and the father's merger with him, it is also the father's exteriority in relation to the son, a pluralist existing. The fecundity of the ego must be appreciated at its correct ontological value, which until now has never been done. The fact that it is a biological—and psychological—category in no way neutralizes the paradox of its significance.

I began with the notions of death and the feminine, and have ended with that of the son. I have not proceeded in a phenomenological way. The continuity of development is that of a dialectic starting with the identity of hypostasis, the enchainment of the ego to the self, moving toward the maintenance of this identity, toward the maintenance of the existent, but in a liberation of the ego with regard to self. The concrete situations that have been analyzed represent the accomplishment of this dialectic. Many intermediaries have been skipped. The unity of these situations—death, sexuality, paternity—until now appeared only in relation to the notion of power that they exclude.

This was my main goal. I have been bent on emphasizing that alterity is not purely and simply the existence of another freedom next to mine. I have a power over such a freedom where it is absolutely foreign to me, without relation to me. The coexistence of several freedoms is a multiplicity that leaves the unity of each intact, or else this multiplicity unites into a general will. Sexuality, paternity, and death introduce a duality into existence, a duality that concerns the very existing of each subject. Existing itself becomes double. The Eleatic notion of being is overcome. Time constitutes not the fallen form of being, but its very event. The Eleatic notion of being dominates Plato's philosophy, where multiplicity was subordinated to the one, and

where the role of the feminine was thought within the categories of passivity and activity, and was reduced to matter. Plato did not grasp the feminine in its specifically erotic notion. In his philosophy of love he left to the feminine no other role than that of furnishing an example of the Idea, which alone can be the object of love. The whole particularity of the relationship of one to another goes unnoticed. Plato constructs a Republic that must imitate the world of Ideas; he makes a philosophy of a world of light, a world without time. Beginning with Plato, the social ideal will be sought for in an ideal of fusion. It will be thought that, in its relationship with the other, the subject tends to be identified with the other, by being swallowed up in a collective representation,[75] a common ideal. It is the collectivity that says "we," that, turned toward the intelligible sun, toward the truth, feels the other at its side and not in front of itself. This collectivity necessarily establishes itself around a third term, which serves as an intermediary. *Miteinandersein*, too, remains the collectivity of the "with," and is revealed in its authentic form around the truth. It is a collectivity around something common. Just as in all the philosophies of communion, sociality in Heidegger is found in the subject alone; and it is in terms of solitude that the analysis of *Dasein* in its authentic form is pursued.

Against this collectivity of the side-by-side, I have tried to oppose the "I-you" collectivity,[76] taking this not in Buber's sense, where reciprocity remains the tie between two sepa-

[75]The term "collective representation" was used by the *l'année sociologique* group of anthropologists, including Durkheim, Mauss, and Levy-Bruhl. See, again, Lucian Levy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (Princeton University Press, 1985), translated by L. Clare; especially the Introduction and part 1, chapter 1, "Collective Representation in Primitives' Perceptions and the Mystical Character of Such," pp. 13–76.

[76]Of course Sartre also rejects the collectivity of the side-by-side in the name of the "I-you" (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, part 3, chapter 1). But, as we have seen, for Levinas, Sartre's criticism is inadequate because the "I-you" it proposes remains an antagonistic relationship of two freedoms, a failure of communication.

rated freedoms, and the ineluctable character of isolated subjectivity is underestimated.[77] I have tried to find the temporal transcendence of the present toward the mystery of the future. This is not a participation in a third term, whether this term be a person, a truth, a work, or a profession. It is a collectivity that is not a communion. It is the face-to-face without intermediary, and is furnished for us in the eros where, in the other's proximity, distance is integrally maintained, and whose pathos is made of both this proximity and this duality.

What one presents as the failure of communication in love precisely constitutes the positivity of the relationship; this absence of the other is precisely its presence as other.

Set against the cosmos that is Plato's world, is the world of the spirit [*l'esprit*] where the implications of eros are not reduced to the logic of genus, and where the ego takes the place of the same and the *Other* takes the place of the other.

[77]For a deeper understanding of Levinas' reading of Buber, see (among other articles) Levinas, "Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge," in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber,* edited by P. Schillp and M. Friedman (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967), pp.133-50; and their subsequent correspondence in "Dialogue avec Martin Buber," in Levinas, *Noms Propre* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1976), pp. 51-55.