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Person, system, and subjectivity: Psychology and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas

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The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

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PERSON, SYSTEM, AND SUBJECTIVITY:

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF

EMMANUEL LEVINAS

A Thesis in

Philosophical Psychology

by

David Richard Harrington

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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We approve the thesis of David Richard Harrington.

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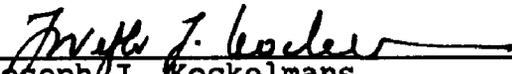
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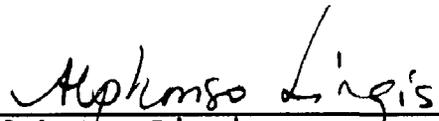
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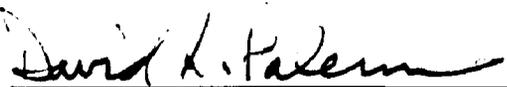
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ABSTRACT

The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas has profound
implications for psychology, and the goal of this project
has been to communicate those implications to mainstream
psychologists. The dissertation examines psychology's
boundaries and its cohesiveness as a science. It also
examines psychology's definitions of the human and
psychology's role in establishing, justifying, and
prescribing what is proper in terms of behavior.

This tripartite region is discussed after an
exploration of important themes in Levinas' work. Levinas'
description of the uncanny nature of time as articulation of
the distinctions of the world is examined. This lived
temporality is intrinsically related to ethics and justice
and the relationship that I have with another person and
with other people. The relationship of self and other is
described, both in terms of the temporal gap between them
which renders the relationship irreversible and in terms of
how this dyadic relationship is breached. Human
subjectivity is explored and its responsible nature
revealed. Additionally, the role of *Being* — conceived as a
synchronic system of language — is explained as a time of
justice. *Being* is a place of meeting where the infinite
responsibility which *is* subjectivity can perform practical
action in a finite realm.

Following the discussion of themes in Levinas' work,

the three initial areas of concern are once again addressed.
Psychology as a science which would circumscribe the human
is understood to be plagued with unresolvable aporias, not
the least of which is the impossibility of capturing within
a representational system the human who escapes
representation. The *essential* nature of the human is that
the human essence escapes the act of *articulation*.
Therefore, those very aporias which conspire to keep
psychology from forming a unified system also attest to the
human inability to be confined in such a system. The
various systems and stances regarding the *psyche* are
attestations to the elusive nature of the quintessentially
human; they reflect the incapacity of the terms of language
to contain the saying of the language.

Insofar as the place of the human in psychology is
concerned, Levinas maintains that human historicity is
transcended by a certain fundamental temporality. While
the historico-cultural context of the human can explain a
good deal, a philosophical investigation of temporality
reveals an ethical bearing which eludes historicity and
which is constitutive of subjectivity.

Regarding its normative influence, psychology bears a
great deal of responsibility within our society for defining
what is normal or acceptable. Its terms become part of the
common parlance, and its theories become simplified
explanations for why people behave in certain ways. It also

has authority in areas formally held by religious and community mores. But as a historical entity, psychology is vulnerable to ideological pressures, fads, and changes in historico-cultural context. Recognition of this historicity and of the responsibility inherent within a science charged with explaining human conduct might promote a humility within psychology which would temper its pronouncements.

Other implications were also found. An essential self-alienation is present within human identity. Rather than disparage this breach, and its consequences — guilt, shame, and grief — psychology should respect such alienation as the hallmarks of human subjectivity. Another important notion to come out of Levinas' focus on temporality is the reliance of the logical law of identity upon visualism, the use of visual metaphors to describe understanding, awareness, consciousness, and comprehension. Through changing the sensory metaphor to audition, the psychologist can de-emphasize the reliance upon language whose descriptive structure best describes things and how they fit into a synchronous present. It is possible to use our terms tentatively and skeptically. A counter-discourse can be utilized to remind us that the terms we use are always inadequate when persons are involved.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Levinas

AOATW	"As Old as the World?"
DL	Difficult Liberty: Essays on Judaism
EE	Existence and Existents
EI	Ethics and Infinity
GP	"God and Philosophy"
II	"Ideology and Idealism"
LP	"Language and Proximity"
MT	"Messianic Texts"
NI	"No Identity"
OTB	Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence
TI	Totality and Infinity
TIHP	The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Philosophy

Interviews with Levinas

DEL	Kearney, R. "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas"
EEL	Malka, S. "Entretien de Emmanuel Lévinas" [Translations of EEL within dissertation are mine.]
POM	Wright, T., et al. "The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas"

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The love and support of my parents, Albert H. and Harriett W. Harrington, were instrumental in enabling me to study Levinas. To them and to my wife, Christine Evans Harrington, whose unremitting confidence and bolstering have enabled the completion of the project, I dedicate this dissertation.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Preliminary Comments

Emmanuel Levinas is a contemporary French phenomenological philosopher. He was born in Lithuania in 1906 and spent some youthful years in the Ukraine. He grew up reading both the great Russian novelists and, as a member of a Jewish Orthodox family, the Hebraic Bible. He studied in Strasbourg and Freiburg as a young adult and later moved to France. His teachers included Léon Brunschvicg, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger. His friendships included Jean Wahl, Gabriel Marcel, and Maurice Blanchot. His dissertation on Husserl's theory of intuition was one of the first full-length works to introduce phenomenology to the French. Levinas' philosophy points to the ethical underpinnings of interpersonal interaction and to areas in experience where categorical thought fails.

The aim of this dissertation is to describe implications that the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas has for psychology; it has been written for mainstream psychologists rather than for those few specifically trained in philosophical psychology. It is my hope that Levinas' insights might be appreciated outside of the small group of psychologists who have studied existential-phenomenology and other contemporary Continental philosophical thought.

Many philosophical dissertations have been written on the works of Levinas. Translations of his texts have increased substantially in the last few years and secondary literature continues to proliferate. Dissertations have become increasingly sophisticated and complex, investigating in great detail the histories and permutations of technical terms and concepts.[1] In these treatises one may find Levinas' methods and sense examined, supported, and critiqued; it is not my primary task in this work to render philosophical support for Levinas' positions. Such a task, exhaustive of both time and paper, rightfully falls within the discipline of philosophy.[2]

However, discussing a philosopher's work is necessarily evidential and interpretive. I have taken certain stands with regard to Levinas which quite likely differ from the positions of other commentators and/or gloss over various important distinctions. It would be foolish to claim simply that I have done so because I am constrained by the purposes of the dissertation, although that is certainly a part of it. But I am a psychologist who came to philosophy after becoming grounded in psychology, rather than vice versa, and as a result I tend not to be heavily invested in many of the technical issues which are taken up by philosophers. This dissertation is the result (or the process) of my own attempt to deal with the disturbance which Levinas effected in my theoretical bearings in psychology. It is an attempt

by a psychologist to communicate his understanding of an important philosophy to other psychologists.

The task of introducing the influences Levinas might have upon psychology necessitates introducing the historical, cultural, and philosophical contexts through which Levinas' thought has emerged. I recognize that although many histories of psychology give truncated descriptions of philosophers' ideas, it is rare for psychologists to have more than nominal grounding in the history of philosophy. Nor is the history of psychology stressed beyond required courses in undergraduate programs and cursory treatments in introductory texts. Psychology may rest upon philosophemes which have long histories, but that does not mean that the source of the philosophical bases are known or acknowledged by most psychologists.

However, while I do sketch the necessary contexts, the primary aim of the dissertation - to show that Levinas' insights are important to psychology - could not be neglected. As a result, I compress, summarize, and simplify some relevant philosophical issues and events in the preliminary chapters. It is regretted that much of the fascinating work in postmodern philosophy is given short shrift. However, it seems that much of the emphasis of an interdisciplinary dissertation must be to make one discipline's (or subdiscipline's) basic thought accessible to the practitioners or theoreticians of another discipline.

Different disciplines participate in different discourses which stem from and contain different histories. Different meanings appear for similar signifiers, and methodologies acceptable to one discipline are eschewed by the other. The task of mediating between the two discourses of philosophy and psychology in order to clearly communicate the research goals of the dissertation competes with those goals.

I am certainly not the first to suggest that Levinas' works hold implications for psychology. Some attempts to integrate Levinas with the schemata of psychodynamic developmental psychology have been published in France, and Paul Ricoeur has compared some of Levinas' ideas to those of Heinz Kohut's ego psychology.[3] Most previous psychological investigations of Levinas' texts have generally been from the viewpoint of psychotherapy. Levinas has described the other person in terms that are attractive to therapists dismayed by widespread emphases on technique-oriented approaches to psychopathology.[4] Psychotherapists who have studied Levinas are captivated by his description of the gulf separating self from the other person. They wish to found their clinical interactions upon what Levinas insists is basic to all human encounters, the exalted - yet elusive - station held by the uniquely individual face of the other person. Levinas reminds the clinician that the client exceeds diagnostic categories and that the tools of therapy - words themselves - are inadequate.

Even some of Levinas' early analyses can help understand concrete aspects of certain forms of suffering treated by psychotherapists. An analysis of insomnia that he composed in part to counter Heideggerian ontology can be used to understand the existential misery accompanying this common symptom, and his analysis of sleep could aid in understanding the person whose life is characterized by fear and lack of trust.[5] Levinas' insightful phenomenology of eros could be helpful to the psychologist who treats sexual dysfunction.[6]

Levinas' philosophy may supplement techniques as well as appreciation of the client in the clinic, but he has more to say than how to better relate to our analysands. Levinas speaks to all theorists and practitioners of psychological sciences. In short, Levinas' thought is aimed at the very foundation of any science hoping to circumscribe the human. He speaks of limits in the measurement of the human. Levinas reveals one understanding of why psychology remains a non-paradigmatic science, why it stumbles in every attempt to become unified, and why, as the science most involved in the everyday nature of humanness, it is based in inadequacy. Its methods and concepts are inadequate to its presumed task.

In order to form the basis of my critique, I will introduce the psychological areas which could benefit by Levinas' thought: the problems regarding a systematized

psychology, selfhood in psychology, and psychology's
normative role in society. The three areas are
intrinsically related.

Psychology and the Quest
for a Systematic Science

Since psychology defined itself as a discipline
separate from philosophy, it has suffered crises of just
what this newly defined identity ought to be. Most
introductory psychology texts and history of psychology
texts document the definitional disputes among
structuralists, functionalists, psychoanalysts,
behaviorists, cognitivists, and Gestaltists. Yet frequently
ignored are the voices of those who argue, not for a
specific system, but for the elimination of the systematic
quest.

The difficulty in clearly delimiting the science of
psychology has been repeated by commentators throughout the
century. In 1912 Dunlap indicated that it was easier to
tell the student what psychology is not than what it is. In
1947 Wolff indicated that most contemporary authors do not
attempt a definition.[7] And although psychology as a
science of behavior was promulgated by Watson (in 1913) and
Skinner (in 1953), Lefton's 1985 introductory text described
psychology as the science of behavior, but incorporated into
behavior all aspects of an organism's functioning, including

thoughts and feelings.[8] Such open definitions are more common since the 1960's clash among psychological schools, but the distending of the definition of behavior would be anathema to both Watson and Skinner.[9]

Proponents of a systematic psychology believe that psychology is not just supposed to make sense out of particular facets of organisms, but that the intelligibility should relate to a global viewpoint. Psychology is or can be "coherent." Similar words, like "paradigmatic," "integral," "unitary," and "unified" are used to convey this concept of a unified science.

Opposed to this incorporative telos are the eclecticists, who argue for the pragmatics of a pluralistic view and maintain that a coherent psychology cannot or should not be achieved no matter how much the systematizers strive for it.

An early example of the conflict between systematizers and their opponents is revealed by an important essay, "The Formal Criteria of a Systematic Psychology," written in 1933. The author, McGeoch, argued that American psychology necessarily must create systems.[10] The audience that he addressed was primarily composed of experimentalists, whose opinion regarding systems was scornful, according to McGeoch. He acknowledged that a systematic theory implies a "closed, finished, somewhat dogmatic body of doctrine," but believed that such a unified structure need only be closed

temporarily and need not be either finished or dogmatic.[11]

McGeoch believed that if psychology could not define itself

apart from other fields of inquiry, with its own set of

problems, then it "has no place as a separate field of

knowledge . . . ."[12]

McGeoch can be understood as fighting against

"champions of eclecticism," cited to be Boring and Klein,

whom, he claimed, were also erecting a system, but one which

was not as rational nor as overt as what he proposed.[13]

Boring had written a chapter entitled "Psychology for

Eclectics" in Psychologies of 1930 and had characterized the

majority of American psychologists as those who chose the

best out of conflicting schools.[14] Boring's eclectics

chose not to think in terms of truth or falsity, but in

terms of "fertility," what revealed the most in pragmatic

terms. Klein, McGeoch's other adversary, wrote a 1930

article entitled "Eclecticism Versus System-Making in

Psychology" which questioned why a psychologist should be

loyal to a system when different viewpoints shed valuable

light on the phenomenon being studied.[15]

McGeoch's desire to have systems for psychology, ready

to dissolve and recoalesce as data dictate, anticipated the

paradigmatic analyses that Kuhn started in 1962. According

to Kuhn's assessment of the progress of the natural sciences

in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, sciences

progress through paradigm shifts. When established

conceptual frameworks become unable to account for anomalies, new paradigms succeed old. Yet psychology, not having a governing paradigm, does not fit into the system-mold of Kuhn's assessment.[16]

Psychology from Kuhn's perspective is preparadigmatic. No consensus exists as to the subject matter which psychology circumscribes. Unlike natural sciences such as geology and biology, psychology is characterized by different schools of thought. Though there have been significant shifts in the thought of American psychologists, no one paradigm has governed at any time. There have always been vocal dissenters from the mainstream. While Kuhnian analysis places psychology in the early stages of a preparadigmatic science, the possibility that psychology is resistant to paradigms is important to consider.

Sigmund Koch is one of the more persistent of the contemporary eclecticists and states that psychology can never achieve paradigmatic status. Psychology cannot be "coherent," according to Koch, because:

> On an a priori basis, nothing so awesome as the total domain comprised by the functioning of all organisms (not to mention persons) could possibly be the subject matter of a coherent discipline.[17]

Koch argues that university departments of psychology should be renamed departments of psychological studies so that students are not deluded into searching for systematic understanding in what he describes as an incoherent discipline. He accuses the proponents of a paradigmatic

psychology of committing more than a "cognitive blunder."
Psychology's struggle to maintain its legitimacy, to prove
that proposed paradigms capture the essence of humanness,
has the effect of dictating its notions to the people whose
lives prove the inadequacy of such notions to their most
meaningful experiences.[18]

Robert Watson responded to Kuhn's analysis in a
different way than Koch. He studied in detail the various
schools of psychology through its history and determined
that psychology is characterized by a number of
prescriptions.[19] [See Table 1.] These eighteen
prescriptions are scales ranging between contrasting pairs
of approaching psychology's subject matter. Different
schools choose different points on each scale in their
unique approaches. Watson indicated, for example, that
nomotheticism was the dominant approach in the United States
at the time he wrote the article, but that ideographicism
was "sufficiently viable to make itself heard against the
prevailing state of affairs."[20]

Watson's prescriptions are the aporias of psychology.
Since psychology has not evolved a consensus about subject
matter studied, methods to be used, form of discourse, or
purpose of the study, Watson has indicated what it is that
psychologists have in common. Watson's global system is a
system of questions, which because they persist as questions
prevent systemization from occurring. Any unity that

psychology has is unitary precisely because of thorny issues which are unresolved. Watson states that the prescriptions of psychology endure while psychological facts and theories are fleeting.[21]

Watson's prescriptive nature of psychology and Koch's belief, that psychology cannot in principle be a coherent science, are not irreconcilable. Indeed, even Koch's neologism, "psychological studies," would be an equivocation if there were not some idea to which the term "psychological" referred. Watson has described psychology as a science of questions, questions which may be seen as lying within eighteen continua. As a result, it is neither theory nor methodology which unites psychologists in what they do; it is the questions within which their theories and methods are based. Koch has reacted against the hubris of different schools of psychology, the belief that the truth of life-functioning is attainable in a synoptic form and that they have the correct theory and method for attaining that truth. Watson has shown that the ground of psychology lies in basic questions, upon which various schools may stake answers, leaving room for other schools to answer differently.

An examination of Watson's prescriptive dimensions of psychology would show that many are direct reflections of the questions with which Western philosophy has dealt since its inception. An example is the contrasting pair of monism

- dualism, which most frequently recurs as the question of the relationship between mind and body, a central issue in the thought of Descartes and a topic for philosophers through the present day. Others of the prescriptions reflect comparable questions that have been raised during philosophy's twenty-five century tradition. An examination of the history of the prescriptive scale of rationalism - empiricism, for example, uncovers a philosophical debate which extends from Hobbes and Descartes to Leibniz and Locke to Hume and Kant, and is implicated with other prescriptions such as inductivism - deductivism.

Psychology has never been a unitary science. Even the domain of its subject matter is not only broad, but remains an area of dispute. Its methods are not universally accepted. Whether psychology should even attempt to become a unitary (paradigmatic) science with recognized and agreed upon boundaries and methods is in dispute and has been an area of contention throughout this century.[22]

Despite psychology's disunity, we cannot ignore the fact that psychology is linked to the philosophical attempt to comprehend the whole of what is, or *being*, and that the time of psychology's birth was a time of fascination with the success of the natural sciences. It should not be surprising that proponents of a systematized psychology have had a strong influence. Descartes, who is acknowledged by many to have been the instigator of a psychology separate

from philosophy, departed from the Aristotlean belief that
different sciences require different methods. The Cartesian
perspective demanded one method for all sciences; all
sciences were viewed as part of one, all-encompassing,
positive science.[23]

Despite Descartes' belief that a common method would
unite all sciences, his philosophy contained an impediment
which he failed to remove. He established body as extended
substance, matter (mechanical, machine-like, and able to
respond and move without benefit of mind) and mind as a
thinking substance. Although he claimed to be an
interactionist - one who believes that mind and body
interact - he failed to explain exactly how two very
different kinds of substances could interact. However,
through the failure to describe adequately the mode of
interaction between mind and body, Descartes opened the way
for two sciences of psychology, physiological psychology and
a positive science of mind.

Similarly, we find that the British empiricists,
ancestors to much of Anglo-American psychology, had the same
fascination with natural science and the same desire to
incorporate the human within natural science. Hobbes
claimed that philosophy was made up of physics, geometry,
and morals and that general principles would provide
continuity among these disparate branches.[24] James Mill
followed the associationistic pathway of claiming that the

ideas that make up mind are completely derived from
impressions from matter. He used, as his organizational
principle, a form of "mental mechanics," where complex ideas
would form out of the sum of atomistic ideas. His son, John
Stuart Mill, changed the organizational principles to that
of "mental chemistry," where complex ideas emerged in an
unrecognizable form from their constituents, much as water
emerges from the combination of oxygen and hydrogen.[25] The
atomism and energy modeling in the natural sciences would
also be influential in other psychologies; Freudian
psychoanalytic theory and metatheory are the most notable
examples.

These quests for systematic understanding of the nature
of the human and desires to fit this systemization into a
larger representational matrix which mirrors the whole of
the universe, are (despite its metaphysical reliance upon
natural scientific principles) a part of a philosophical
tradition of which Levinas is very critical.

There are reasons that we should not expect psychology
to become paradigmatic. First, the diversity of
psychology's investigative stances is representative of the
philosophical antinomies upon which psychology is based. If
agreement has not been found within the philosophical
community regarding these aporias, we should not expect
their resolution in the young field of psychology. Second,
the varying psychological theories and interpretations also

reflect the differing historical, cultural, and social milieux of the theorists.

However, the question of the possibility of a paradigm for psychology is overtaken by the question of the desirability of such a paradigm. Is it desirable to have a **presumed** science of the human which, as Hobbes desired, places morals and physics under the same scientific principles, or, as John Watson claimed, could choose to create doctors or thieves out of newborns? In this dissertation I discuss how the human evades attempts at systematization, how subjectivity and otherness subvert - by their location in time - the attempt to fix them in a system of synchronism. It is the very humanness of the human which will always resist reductionistic systems. Yet despite this human triumph, the resistance of being incorporated into a totality, the danger of presumed success looms always.

Psychology and Humans as Historical

Psychology is teeming with varieties of depictions of the self; the disagreement on the nature of the human being is as diverse as that regarding any other issue. The issue of the human "self" has been skirted by many to avoid Descartes' sequestered *cogito* and the resultant "ghost in the machine," and the self has been eschewed by the behaviorists as either nonexistent, epiphenomenal, or as a mentalistic concept and thus scientifically unexaminable.

Yet there is an implicit agreement among most schools of psychology that deal with the human, whether or not metaphysical or methodological considerations lead them to deny the self as proper datum.[26] It is accepted that the human being is an historically embedded entity and that the context, whether viewed as discrete stimuli (as in behaviorism) or as field (as in Lewin's theory) is granted a great deal of responsibility for the human's comportment and composition. Even the argument between hereditarians and environmentalists is a disagreement about which historical contingencies are most responsible. I have broadened the normal use of the term "history" to include what most psychologists agree to be highly influential, if not determinative, aspects of human context. This concept is close to, though not synonymous with the philosophical notion of historicity, with which Levinas has struggled. Because of the similarity, Levinas' works are pertinent.

Well-known theories which are seen as promoting the unity, independence, or development of self — for example, the humanistic theories of Maslow and Rogers and the psychoanalytic theory of Erikson — still rely on the contingencies of environment. The degree to which the hierarchy of needs is met for Maslow, the degree to which a person receives unconditional positive regard for Rogers, and the kind of interpersonal influence upon the resolution of Eriksonian periodic crises are all examples of this

reliance.

However, despite the widespread agreement about precursors to human conduct, there are certainly disagreements regarding the consistency of human personality. This disagreement revolves around an approach known as constructivism. Harré differentiates between two opposite psychological approaches to *agency,* what is responsible for human conduct. One approach locates agency within the individual, locating it in the individual's cognitive processes. The other finds the individual's conduct to be subordinate to structuring from social forces.[27] The cognitivist perspective is much more prominent than the constructivist in psychology, since, historically, psychology's emphasis has tended to be upon the individual. However, social psychology, which locates the individual within an interpersonal context, has developed the notion of "fundamental attribution error," a widespread tendency to misattribute the causes for conduct to intrapersonal traits rather than social exigencies.[28]

Another approach to self is as the personal unity that is experienced through time. This notion of self is what James terms "the Pure Ego," the center of awareness and the part of the stream of consciousness which remains stable and innermost. Hume felt that this pure ego was resolvable to the continuity among perceptions.[29] James described the attempt to introspectively observe the "spiritual element"

within himself. His attempts to extract a psyche out of the stream of consciousness were frustrated by the inability to simultaneously be observer and observed. In this pirouette James would find himself feeling bodily sensations rather than catching hold of the spirit. James felt that the "Self of selves" consists mainly of head and throat sensations.[30]

James and Hume were misled in their search by the substantive prejudices laid by previous metaphysics. James failed to integrate his observations with others he reported; in other parts of his work James delves into the temporality of the production of thought and speech and finds that the "intention of saying a thing" passes away as words come to mind.[31] James had evidence here, which will become more significant in the course of this dissertation, that the "spiritual self" is not to be found in the present, but passes away in the process of articulation. Introspection becomes an imperfect retrospection. Subjectivity, escaping James' grasp in his introspective chase, is never found. Instead he found, like Hume, sensations and perceptual accompaniments to muscular movement.[32] In other words, the attempt to find this spiritual self, or pure ego — what Levinas will term "subjectivity" — is an attempt that is subtended by a phenomenology of time, time as it is lived.

This subjectivity is different from the unique conceptions that one has of oneself. Whether we attribute

qualities to our selves or consider ourselves to have
particular natures, these qualities and natures are
classifications — fixed categorizations — which are
endproducts of subjectivity's subservience to a linguistic
process. Subjectivity will be examined in terms of its role
in language, as the speaker of the spoken — or as Levinas
would term, the *saying* of the *said*. We will see that
language is based in an essentially ethical subjectivity,
that language (and the systemization which language is) is
responsibility to the faces of other persons.

Psychology as Normative

Modern psychology has, since its origins, been more
than a form of study. It has also, as Koch suggested above,
been prescriptive (in a different sense than Robert Watson)
as well as proscriptive. Psychology's jargon and theories
have been incorporated into the discourse of everyday life
in order to explain the behavior of ourselves and others; to
describe feelings and thought processes, including
unconscious or perceptually unavailable factors; and to
advise us on how to behave, teach children, interact with
others, and train pets. Outside of the clinic,
psychoanalytic terminology, categories of psychopathology,
assessments of intelligence, and behavioral conditioning
terms are used as a part of the common discourse.

Besides the psychological terminology which has found

its way into ordinary discourse, many psychologists prescribe modes of thought or conduct, using their academic or research backgrounds as license. A plethora of books written by psychologists are available on how one should think and act. These treatises, which appear to have the function of previous moral and spiritual advisers, are not merely a product of the last two decades. John Watson became "the first pop psychologist," according to Buckley, and assumed a role previously held by ministers.[33] John and Rosalie Watson's 1928 book on child rearing recommended remote interactions and rigid schedules, a regimen believed to be damaging by many contemporary psychologists; the book sold over 100,000 copies within a few months of publication.[34]

An example of a more recent best selling manual of psychology is Wayne W. Dyer's Your Erroneous Zones. Psychotherapist Dyer argues, among other things, that guilt and worry are useless and therefore should be eliminated and that those who follow his prescriptions will enjoy nearly everything about life, be guilt and worry-free, and be independent.[35] Dyer portrays guilt and worry as non-productive modes of existence, an attitude remarkably reflective of the attitudes promulgated by many during the decade of the 1970's. Dyer's thesis is shallow and facile, as are the means he suggests to evacuate oneself of the "worthless" emotions. He also engenders concern about the

domain that he claims for psychology. Guilt, for instance,
when approached from the standpoint of religion and
philosophy, has a great deal more significance than as "non-
productive."[36] (The question of the utility of guilt and
worry will taken up in Chapter 6.)

The problem of most concern regarding psychologists and
society involves the legitimacy of the selection by social
scientists of what is proper in human thought, feeling, and
behavior. Although it is easy to see that mores and
fashions of comportment change through time, an ethical
question that goes beyond such obvious hindsight is the fact
that errors on the part of these scientists result in human
suffering. If the Watsons were wrong about child rearing
and some current developmentalists are correct, then parents
who obeyed their dictates harmed their children. If Dyer
was wrong in his assessment of guilt and worry, then it is
possible that he has encouraged the denial of what might be
most human in the human.[37]

The form of scientific knowledge is not divorced from
its cultural context, and psychology, as well, is
intertwined with its setting.[38] Different schools of
psychology, although maintaining a self-professed
objectivity, have been accused of having ideological cores
which reflect current mores. Cognitive psychology, which
Sampson characterizes as subjectivist and individualist
reductionism, endorses a view of the human which reflects

the current practices of society.[39] The body of theory
backing behavior therapy, far from being neutral and
objective, is heavily linked to ideological foundations of
modernity.[40] Prilleltensky argues that psychology aids in
the maintenance of the societal status quo through endowing
values which it obtains from the prevailing state of affairs
with scientific legitimacy.[41] He also argues that
psychology dispenses a view of the human being as
disconnected from society and historicocultural context.
Wallach and Wallach claim that the dominant
psychotherapeutic theories and practices from Freud through
Rogers promote egoism and selfishness.[42] Cushman states
that psychotherapy profits from the perpetuation of the
status quo and doubts that psychology will assist in
understanding the contextuality of human existence.[43]
Psychology is not severed from society nor history, and its
directives have all too often been reflections of that
larger context.

Itinerary

The three areas explored above were said to be
intertwined. I have claimed that the systemization of
psychology is based in the unresolved (or disputed) aporias
of philosophy. Further, attempts to systematize psychology
are descended from the ongoing philosophical ambition to
understand the whole of being, and natural scientific

reductionism, a perspective shared by many, but not all,
psychologies, stems from Renaissance and post-Renaissance
desires to explain all entities, human or not, with
principles successful at explaining astronomy, physics,
and/or chemistry.

Additionally, psychology, as a group of studies which
include the nature of the human in their perusal, tends to
accept that the human is to a large degree determined by
context.[44] This portrayal is similar to that of much of
the *postmodern* philosophy to which Levinas responds.
Although presuppositions and specific depictions of the
human situation differ between the two genres, the human in
both is as a text, inscribed by circumstance and
decipherable through proper interpretation techniques. Yet
there is a problem in the language which is used in these
descriptions. The gist of the problem is that if "something"
about the human escapes the classificatory nature of
language, how are we going to discuss it? The problem
becomes compounded when the definition of language is
broadened, as it is in contemporary Continental philosophy,
to include all meaning: perceptual, cognitive, and
linguistic.

This language of philosophy is "indiscretion
considering the inexpressible," [«*l'indiscrétion à l'égard*
de l'indicible»] according to Levinas, and is a fundamental
part of the languages of the West [EEL 108]. A linguistic

reduction takes place in the process of representation, representation which would leave nothing out of its categories. In this dissertation humans will be portrayed as eluding this systemization, as aloof from the linguistic reduction which takes place. The forms of discourse used in the human sciences do not transcend the reductionistic classifications of that discourse. Yet discourse does occur which communicates its own inadequacy, and it is that discourse which this work strives to introduce. When such dialogue occurs, it is the responsible nature of human subjectivity which is revealed. Psychology, as the recognized bearer of fundamental insights into human depths (whether it possesses such riches or not), has both reflected and perpetuated societal trends. It has experimented upon people in ways that are harmful to them, and it has promulgated, with authority, images of humans as mechanisms; mindless bundles of behaviors; computers; byproducts of teleologically-oriented genes; hedonistic and monadic selves; and socially-determined nodes of conduct. It has licensed the use of diagnostic labels for behaviors previously considered evil, and in the same way has labeled behaviors previously unacceptable as beneficial. Such perspectives may be extremely productive as research bases or as treatment aids, but psychology's normative influence generates a much greater response in society than research reports or treatment modalities would produce.

To great degree then, this dissertation is about language. Levinas demonstrates that it is *responsibility* that lies at the basis of speech, and it is through the investigation of that responsibility that we as psychologists can learn the importance and limitations of what we do.

Table 1

ROBERT WATSON: PRESCRIPTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY

ARRANGED IN CONTRASTING PAIRS

1. Conscious mentalism - Unconscious mentalism

2. Contentual objectivism - Contentual subjectivism

3. Determinism - Indeterminism

4. Empiricism - Rationalism

5. Functionalism - Structuralism

6. Inductivism - Deductivism

7. Mechanism - Vitalism

8. Methodological objectivism - Methodological subjectivism

9. Molecularism - Molarism

10. Monism - Dualism

11. Naturalism - Supernaturalism

12. Nomotheticism - Idiographicism

13. Peripheralism - Centralism

14. Purism - Utilitarianism

15. Quantitativism - Qualitativism

16. Rationalism - Irrationalism

17. Staticism - Developmentalism

18. Staticism - Dynamicism

Source: Robert I. Watson, "Psychology: A Prescriptive

Science," American Psychologist, Volume 22, No. 6, June 1967,

pp.436-7.

Chapter 2

BACKDROP

The purpose of this chapter is to present the
philosophical trends and background to which Levinas
responds and to show that there is affinity among those and
the influences upon and settings of American psychology.

A Terse Description of Philosophy Before Hegel

Philosophy may be viewed — from the speculations of the
Ionian Physicists in the 7th and 6th Centuries BCE to Plato
and Aristotle and thence to Kant — as a historical
progression of ideas concerning metaphysics, ontology,
epistemology, logic, ethics, and aesthetics. Philosophy's
definition is as contested as that of psychology's. Indeed,
part of philosophy's task is to investigate its own
definition, and a number of answers have been given to that
question.[1]

I have emphasized that philosophy was characterized by
a historical progression. Early speculation regarding
primal matter (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes) led to
continuing speculation about ultimate reality (what is
really real?) and whether ultimate reality is *becoming*
(Heraclitus) or *being* (Parmenides). Metaphysical pluralists
(Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, Democritus, Pythagoras)
attempted to bridge the *becoming-being* gap by postulating

both a multiplicity of elements and the laws of transformation to which they are subject.

With the advent of the Sophists, speculation regarding the place of humans in the whole became a part of philosophy. Socrates and Plato continued the use of reasoned arguments to discuss the proper place of humans; philosophy was viewed as the way that the Ideals or Forms could be accessed, and these Ideals were understood as both the templates for an imperfect and mundane reality and also as a source for the perfection of the human.

Aristotle continued this study of all things. His works included a discussion of deductive reasoning to which little has been added to the present day. Aristotle created a teleological and cosmological argument for the existence of God and wrote an ethics in which virtue and moderation become rational motivations.

Before and after the rise of Christianity, Neo-Platonism reflected the merger of Greek and Hebraic thought. It was religious in orientation, accepting as a premise the transcendence of the deity. God, to Plotinus (204 - 269 ACE), was similar to *the One* of Parmenides. Neo-Platonism and Platonism continued to be represented in Scholastic philosophy until the translation of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics around 1200 ACE. Scholasticism continued, now including much derived from Aristotle and, of course, much derived from Christian theology.

With the rise of Renaissance philosophy, ecclesiastical domination over ideas declined. Political philosophy reasserted itself, with Machiavelli, Thomas More, Francis Bacon, and Thomas Hobbes returning to the inspiration of Plato's <u>The Republic</u> to fashion ideal states. The natural sciences were beginning to show greater independence from the dictates of the Church and these sciences, in turn, influenced philosophical thought. Galileo, Kepler, and Newton influenced the subsequent modern era of philosophy.

Descartes, as mentioned *supra*, used rationalism, the belief in the discovery of truth through reason, and subsequently influenced Malebranche, Pascal, Spinoza, and Leibnitz. At the same time, empiricism, the belief that knowledge can only come through experience, was growing across the English Channel. Locke, Berkeley, and Hume were the primary thinkers of empiricism. Kant (1724 - 1804) attempted to explain how both empiricism and rationalism could be synthesized. While it is true that only experience leads to knowledge, the mind structures that experience.

This brief foray into the history of philosophy has as its primary goal the introduction of a philosopher who claimed to have made systematic sense out of these conceptual shifts.

Hegel

Hegel's system presumed to explain the evolution of mind through history and the evolution of thought in individuals. Hegel sought to synthesize all opposites in philosophical discourse and bring everything under the umbrella of reason. For Hegel the truth is the whole, and he sought to show that the universe has progressed to the point where Absolute Spirit has entered into matter through the evolution of philosophical thought. Hegel's system would have been the final event in philosophy since the systematic evolution of mind's entrance into matter would have been completely conscious of itself, and historically manifested opposites would have been overcome in a final synthesis. Hegel's system both explained the progression and was the culmination of reason. One may look at Hegel's philosophy as a description of both the history of philosophy and of the history of the subjective experience of the philosopher.

Hegel's history was a "slaughterbench" in which the person was unimportant. History is the movement of God, the unfolding of reason, the organismic incorporation of the Divine into the world. Needless to say, the individual is eliminated in the rush toward ultimate synthesis. More important than individuals is the State, which is the presence of the working of God and should be worshipped.[2] Each State contains part of the embodiment of the Absolute,

and each epoch has a predominant nation which is the
representative of the dominant dimension of the Absolute.

Postmodernism

One of the presuppositions upon which this chapter is
based is that there are more commonalities among the
psychologies of the United States and the contemporary
philosophers of the Continent than might be imagined. Just
as, is commonly agreed, Descartes codified a perspective
that was widespread rather than developing *ex nihilo* a new
perspective upon the world, so the philosophies of today
similarly reflect the perspectives of the times. We should
not be surprised that American psychologies - though using
different terminologies and separated by an ocean - should
find familiar parallels within Continental philosophy. [The
emphasis upon similarities is being made, not to apply a
veneer which can be easily removed through textual wiles,
but to demonstrate that both the philosophical and
psychological realms have inherited analogous approaches to
the human being.]

The contemporary Western quandary was augured by
Nietzsche's madman who ran into the marketplace and
announced the death of God. Pointing to churches, he
indicated that they were empty tombs.[3] The death,
unnoticed by all but the madman, is now recognized by
philosophers. But recognized or not, the death of

convention and consensus regarding metaphysical principles permeates the West. The problems that accompany the quaking of grounding foundations are expressed via many terms - anomie, normlessness, nihilism, secular humanism, loss of identity, declining superego;[4] previously accepted hierarchies are no longer accepted as governing from behind the scenes.[5] Even the grounding telos of modernism - the human as master of self and world - which supplanted the religious commonality of Christendom - is now bankrupt. The post-Darwinian legacy, the human as superior and evolving, creator of a utilitarian world and technology of energy, metal, and behavior, has been dashed as fantasy by the appearance of world wars, death camps, and the emptiness of the age of plenty. Historiography, both social scientific and philosophical, seems to be unable to certify that the modernist byword of progress means anything other than business as usual.[6]

This situation, documented by and reflected in the philosophical discourses of the day, is more than an academic preoccupation. Psychology's history starts with the discarding of divine law and the search for natural law by which all things, mental or not, could be unified under common regulation. The ejection of heaven's jurisdiction was accompanied by the search for, or newly acquired faith in, other regulatory agencies which ran parallel with those of natural science. The death of a commonly accepted,

behind-the-scenes, *raison d'être* permeates both current

society and the grounding of theorists and practitioners of

psychology. The present situation - one in which the

metaphysical history carried in any hierarchy, religious,

philosophical, or linguistic, is laid bare to challenge -

engenders proliferation of multitudinous and mutually

incomprehensible discourses. To many, personal and

relativistic aesthetics becomes the only standard - taste no

longer requires an accounting. To others, new criteria are

found to be elevated to governing status, yet the absence of

common discourse and accepted standards among disciplines

and sub-disciplines allows one to reject any such criteria

as metaphysical and cultic. Surmounting this problem has

been a significant part of the search for a foundation upon

which truth, knowledge, and ethics could be based.

Phenomenology

As conceived by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology was to be

the foundational philosophy. It would be an antidote to the

languishing state of the philosophy of the early twentieth

century, a philosophy that produced substantial volumes of

literature characterized by lack of coherency. Husserl saw

similarities between the method proposed by Descartes and

his own, but believed that Descartes' foundation was

insufficiently radical. Descartes' faith in the axiomatic

system of geometry provided a sub-foundation for the

supposed apodictic starting place. Husserl would provide his own method of reaching an absolute standpoint, a place upon which one could base all sciences.[7]

Rather than starting by using Descartes' hyperbolic doubt, phenomenology would begin through the *epoché* [ἐποχή], "bracketting" from the object of one's investigations all preconceptions; its immediate appearance would be the only data admitted to the investigation. Nothing would be admitted that was not certain. The only evidence which would be considered would be experience. Even belief in the existence of the world would be suspended during the course of the investigation. Husserl's demand for absolute certainty was to become phenomenology's method, a method that undercuts the Cartesian mind-matter split.[8]

Reflection upon our awareness reveals that consciousness is never empty, but is consciousness-of that which one is conscious of. Thus a phenomenological description reflects the intentionality of consciousness; it is a description of the experiencing, the consciousness-of [or the noetic] - and a description of the experienced, that of which one is conscious [or the noematic]. Both poles of the intentional relationship are examined without presuppositions and would be separated, at least for purposes of analysis, from the world and any claim of reality.

Husserl's phenomenology would have consciousness as the source of phenomena and the arena or medium where they appear. Through variations provided by imagination the essence of a phenomenon could be intuitively grasped, i.e. one understands what must be present in order for an object of one's intention to remain said object.

Yet the certainty that such analyses provided, and the transcendental ego whose viewpoint is necessary to them, would be challenged by Heidegger. The phenomenologist, like all other investigators, has no privileged non-mundane observation point. The human being, or *Dasein*, "being there," a term composed to emphasize the contextuality of person and world, is present within a world and cannot, even through abstraction, remove oneself out of that "thrownness."[9] Heidegger's approach disputes any philosophical way of achieving eternal truth, including the method his mentor used to intuit phenomenological essences. Truth is as embedded in perspective as the seeker of truth. Heidegger's insights would give rise to hermeneutical phenomenology and hermeneutical textual exegesis, both of which recognize that any investigation is based in the historical ground of the investigator.

It is not necessary for the purposes of this dissertation to detail the myriad differences among current phenomenologies.[10] In phenomenology what appears to us in our relationship to things in the world is the basis for our

inquiry.   What characterizes phenomenology more than any
other factor is its reliance upon what is lived.   This
presupposition, basic to phenomenology, privileges
appearances, endorses the phenomena as "the things
themselves." We must approach the phenomena without
prejudice, without categories ready to be imposed.
Lived-space, for instance, is not the three dimensional
space of Euclid; lived-space is space as it is experienced.
Our lives are not spent in mathematical space -
infinitesimal points joined by infinite lines, dimensions
dictated by perpendicular planes - but in a space
characterized by being weighed down, a space which is
defined by the houses in which we dwell, a space of
variation, rather than a space of homogeneity.[11]

Lived-time, rather than time as a series of moments
that pass linearly over a now point, involves anticipations
of a future and retentions of a past.[12] "Objective" time
would make equivalent the time of pain and the time of
pleasure as long as the same number of seconds had elapsed.
Joyful anticipation would be equivalent to anguished loss,
temporally, if the same quantity of moments would elapse as
have elapsed. Yet time as lived stretches and shrinks and
provides more dimensionality and structures wanting in
natural scientific linearity.[13]

Textuality

The way that Continental philosophy deals with language
shows its indebtedness to Saussure's linguistics [and an
affinity with Heidegger's seemingly quixotic "Language
speaks."][14] It documents the constitution of the subject by
language, a way of denying soulistic Cartesian metaphysics.
Many unacquainted with the traditions which "decenter" the
subject, and some who are, believe that the bounds of
"language" are stretched beyond useful distinction by those
who hold such philosophies. Since Levinas' philosophy
relates to language and textuality as well, it is important
to see that the definitional boundaries of language are not
as strained as one might think and do indeed reflect the way
psychology has approached people.[15] The importance of
language in the study of persons goes beyond subdisciplinary
concerns of linguistics, psycholinguistics, and
neurophysiology.

Language is human, and the advent of Saussure's theory
of linguistics has provided a structuralist escape from
approaches to human activities that are patterned after
natural science. Saussure found that one did not have to
look to etymology to find the structure of language.
Language is a system in which arbitrary signifiers
correspond to conceptual signifieds which depend on each
other for their placement within the system. One need not
find the historical, diachronic, evolution of word-systems.

A sentence need not be reduced to languages before English, syntactical changes, or vowel shifts. Saussure found that language is a system which can be examined synchronically. This linguistic approach was adopted by Lévi-Strauss in his study of myth.

Piaget's adoption of this method in the study of human cognition and Kohlberg's similar study of morality are probably the most salient psychological example of structuralism. Piaget's explanation of structuralism, though criticized as excessively broad, indicates that one looks to the totality, the structural transformations, and the self-regulation which takes place within the system under examination.[16] The structuralist looks to the meaning which comes from the transformations within the totality. That meaning does not restrict itself to the prior, to the cause. Indeed, although there are some correspondences between the French philosophical arena's approach to textuality and that of psychological sciences, faith in cause and effect has been jettisoned; a different sort of accounting for responsible agencies accompanies the structuralist approach rather than holding as responsible a cause, which would be connected to its effect in an atomistic way and would always occupy an earlier time.[17]

A comparison between texts, records of inscriptions, and humans as approached by psychology shows surprising correlations. First of all, both the text and the human are

viewed as created by antecedent forces, the text written by
someone and the human created by genes, environment and/or
interactions between the two. Both the text and the human
are viewed as meaningful, as able to be interpreted.
Indeed, psychology would not exist if the meaningfulness of
the human were denied. Both the conditions creating a
decipherable human and the current object of study, the
human, are viewed as interpretable by psychologists.

It should be evident that psychology does indeed
interpret the human being as a text. Whether the data being
interpreted are overt behaviors, resistances, attributional
processes, or personality traits, the psychologist
approaches human comportment as significant and coherent,
when approached in ways which bring the meanings of the
themes to light. The kind of data allowable varies
according to the psychologist's specialty, of course, but
the notion of the human being as a text of obvious or arcane
symbols needing further interpretation is certainly at the
core of all psychologies.

The notion of human being as text also carries with it
another implication. Texts are written; all psychologies
accept that the human being does not emerge created *ex
nihilo*. Disagreeing on what agency or agencies do the
"inscribing" of the human - genes, reinforcement,
upbringing, self-actualization, and/or history -
psychologies look to the agencies responsible for the

formation of the province of the human which is acceptable to the canons of each specialty.

Most schools of psychology accept as axiomatic that antecedent circumstances determine current circumstances. Whether a school formulates such a doctrine in terms such as "all behavior is motivated" or in terms of "nature or nurture" the implicit and often explicit assumption is that previous conditions determine current conditions. When the object of study is the human being, it is assumed that the human's behaviors may be "read" as having been inscribed by past events. It can be seen that not only do such postulates challenge, on the face of the matter, the agency which modernity assumes to be present in individual humans, but also mirrors the Continental notion that the human subject is a text inscribed by history.

Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida is known for having introduced a radical approach to textual analysis, deconstruction, which has proved to be highly influential in Continental philosophy and literary criticism. It has been utilized sporadically in the analysis of power structures in the theory and practice of psychology and other social sciences.[18]

Deconstruction is not easily summarized since it is not a technique so much as a series of investigations which

uncover the presuppositions and implicit hierarchies within the written work. Derrida avers that texts are rhetorical, persuasive documents which privilege one side of bipolar distinctions while relying upon the suppressed pole. Derrida demonstrates that the foundations dissimulate when inspected: they are built of privilege, of choosing one over the other and suppressing the reliance of the one upon the other. Words carry with them their histories, including metaphysical baggage. Greek philosophical terms carry with them Greek metaphysics. Derrida's famous attack on phonocentrism - priority given to speech over the written word - combatted a privilege supported by Plato, Rousseau, Saussure, and Lévi-Strauss. He attacked Husserl's phenomenology for its logocentricism and reliance upon the metaphysics of presence - the belief that truth, or *Logos*, is present in a graspable, intuitive, and pre-linguistic form.

Deconstruction exposes and dissimulates hierarchies; as a result it has been adopted by scholars interested in changing power structures and canons in the contemporary university. On the other hand it has been accused of implying that there are no unimpeachable standards. Derrida discards the frequent accusations that he is a nihilist, and affirms an interviewer's description of his work as "responsible anarchy."[19] He has been quoted as saying "*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte,*" a statement which can mean "there

is nothing outside of the text." Derrida's statement

emphasizes *context*.[20] For Derrida the text is disengaged

from authoral intention [which, paradoxically should inform

us to disregard his disavowal of nihilism]. Indeed, if we

interpret Nietszche's madman in light of Derrida's approach

to textuality, then we see that the empty churches are

words, empty of certainty, empty of determinate meaning,

ever-interpretable. Text unravels when it is found that it

rests on no solid ground.

Derrida reveals the transcendental structures at work

within the text. When Husserl's phenomenology elicited

essences, Derrida showed that he also was lapsing into

metaphysics. When Heidegger's phenomenology searched for

the original name of Being without onto-theology, Derrida

showed that it also was deconstructable.[21] Similar attacks

were made on structuralist differentiations. For some,

Derrida seems to leave us without anything but the aesthetic

play of signifiers, proliferating through the creation of

differences and the deferral of meaning. For others,

however, Derrida's deconstruction is an *ethical* stance and

very much in accord with the philosophy of Levinas.[22]

Chapter 3

LEVINAS AND HIS MILIEU

Levinas' thought resists easy categorization; it hovers between the chasm separating *two* cultures, sometimes appearing as a bridge, sometimes a chimera. It requires careful deliberation. In order to gain access to Emmanuel Levinas' thought it is certainly appropriate to inquire into the life of this philosopher - the events through which he lived, studies he undertook, thinkers he knew - to better understand how he could produce philosophical works which question the adequacy of philosophy.[1] Knowing of the life of Levinas helps to better reveal his philosophy and to introduce some of the implications that this self-reflective philosophy of inadequacy has for psychology. Yet Levinas himself has only occasionally specifically written of his life.

Significant is a twice-revised essay entitled "Signature." Similar to his philosophical writings, which demand of the reader the historico-philosophical background and ability to probe within the interstices of the lines, this sole autobiography briefly mentions the teachers, friends, and events by which the philosopher measures his historicity.[2] "Signature" sparsely discusses what commentaries upon the life of Levinas have tended to focus upon: the two seemingly disparate contexts and forms of his

work. On the one hand he was an early student of the major phenomenologists. He was profoundly influenced by Husserl's phenomenology but was supportive of its progression into hermeneutics under the influence of Heidegger. His study with Husserl resulted in a dissertation on Husserl's theory of intuition [which was one of the first works to introduce phenomenology to the French and was probably influential in attracting Jean-Paul Sartre to the field.][3]

Levinas was reared as a member of an Orthodox Jewish family, and his association with and participation in Jewish scholarship, education, and religion have continued throughout his life.[4] Both strands - phenomenology and Judaism - have been contributors to and recipients of Levinas' writing. Both genres have profited from a conceptual foundation which concedes that certain areas of thought can only be gingerly thematized, a basis given by the Judaic concept of a wholly other God. Considered as definitively separate by some commentators, the religious and philosophical texts (and parts of his life) resist a simple schism. Both styles reveal evidence of a man who wrestled with questions regarding the role of thought in a world which has witnessed the Nazi and Cambodian horrors and the growth of totalitarian systems. Both forms insist that there is something which transcends the historicity of meaning, something which judges the meaning itself.

Husserl

In several of his works and in interviews, Levinas has credited Husserl with developing an important method. Levinas understands Husserl to have given us a method to examine the way meaning comes to mean in our lives, a route of discovery concerning consciousness and its "contact with objects outside of itself" [DEL 50]. In Husserl's method there lies a potential to take "one's bearings" without becoming misled by preexisting assumptions [EI 30]. The intentionality of human experience is made salient with the phenomenological method. As such, phenomenology is a way of self-understanding. It is through Husserl's phenomenological method that consciousness is able to understand its own immersion in the world, to reflect upon itself, and to discover the obscured or overlooked "horizons" or contexts of intentionality. Phenomenology is a way of discovering our place in the world through reflection, a form of retrieval of the fount of meaning within the lived world [EI 30].

Although crediting Husserl with the development of a method, Levinas deviates from it.[5] Levinas disputes the thesis that all that consciousness exposes in the phenomenological reduction may be encompassed or made present by consciousness. Levinas consistently uses reflection upon experience to identify where intentional correlates do not coincide, where the analysis breaks up

because it is exposing "alterity," something outside of and resistant to thought's ability to bring things into presence. Levinas' philosophy exceeds Husserlian intentionality.[6]   Intentionality is overflowed in the ethical demand placed upon the subject. Indeed, Levinas credits Husserl with developing a method which exposes ethics as an unmediated "optics."[7]   Levinas also exposes a surplus in the subject in its origins, in a prior state of enjoyment, and in sensation.[8]

Through Husserl, Levinas adopted and surpassed a philosophical method which maintains that all can be brought before consciousness.[9] He has exposed alterity, otherness which overflows consciousness. The "overflow" is seen at the periphery of human reason, in language, in the origin, in sensation, through the Other, and in the ethical demand imposed upon the subject before cognition and volition.[10]

Heidegger

Levinas frequently acknowledges his debt to Heidegger, stating that Being and Time ranks with works by Plato, Kant, Hegel, and Bergson as one of the greatest books in philosophy [EI 37-8]. Where Levinas understood Husserl's philosophy as abstract and essentially epistemological, Heidegger brought the "phenomenological method to life," and showed that it "originates in time, in our temporal and historical existence" [DEL 52]. In Levinas' work on

Husserl's theory of intuition he invokes Heidegger's concept
of *care* to counter Husserl's "intellectualism." He also
pays tributes to Heidegger for having demonstrated that
existence is not ahistorical and that theoretical
consciousness is only one mode of existence [TIHP 19].

Levinas credits Heidegger with focusing philosophy upon
human existence rather than human nature. Heidegger
performed ontological studies of what had previously been
passed off as without philosophical importance. Anxiety,
for instance, became a mode of disclosure, "direct and
irreducible," to nothingness - and nothingness was exposed
as that which animates existence [EI 40]. The other major
area for which Levinas continues to recognize Heidegger is
in the development of philosophical hermeneutics. Hegel
incorporated previous philosophical thought into a
teleological movement toward the Absolute; philosophers such
as Aristotle or Descartes were viewed simply as moments of
sublation in history. Heidegger demonstrated that in
consultation with the ancients it is still possible to "not
manipulate outworn things" [EI 47]. Through hermeneutics
one may bring perspectives - contemporarily significant -
from the classics of the past.

However, Levinas did not remain simply appreciative of
Heidegger. Even though Levinas continues to acknowledge his
admiration for Heidegger's early work, he does so with
"*honte*," shame.[11] The participation of Heidegger in

National Socialism remains, for Levinas, a choice which is difficult to forgive.[12]

It was as a soldier during World War II that Levinas, captured by the Germans and spending many years in a prisoner of war camp, diverged acutely from Heideggerian philosophy. In the "*stalag*" he wrote a short work which not only criticized Heideggerian ontology, specifically attacking the "generosity" of *being*, but included original analyses of states of existence.[13] In Existence and Existents he emphasized the horror of anonymous existence and described the states of an existent in which postponement of *being* is most desired.[14]

After the war Levinas returned to Paris and to the community of existential and phenomenological philosophers. He also instituted study with a Talmudic scholar, Chouchani.[15] In 1961 he completed a thesis for a State Doctor of Letters degree, Totality and Infinity. In this text the merger of two traditions can clearly be seen, the quest of Western philosophy to encompass the totality of all possible meanings through philosophical discourse, and the Judaic tradition of leaving God outside of naming and description. Heidegger's *being* was seen as war, the appropriation and capture of all into the realm of the same.

However, Totality and Infinity is not intended to be a theological text upon which philosophy could be grounded. Rather, Levinas introduced into his work the idea of

infinity, a source of inexhaustible meaning, and he relied on experience to back his claim. In <u>Totality and Infinity</u> he placed the "site" of infinity in the face of the other person as a source of demand which cannot be sated. The "exteriority" of the title referred to *being*, exterior to the appropriations of the individual subject and manifested through the other person. [Later even the idea of *being* seemed too restrictive, and the term "otherwise than *being*" occurred in later texts.][16]

Levinas has been criticized for "falsifying" Heidegger and not realizing the potential for dialogue between the two positions.[17] Certainly the conflict between positions has been commented on and argued about by many.[18] Though I do not doubt the importance of the debate, it is not the purpose of this dissertation to resolve the conflict.[19]

Judaism

There is certainly consonance between the two genres of Levinas' texts, philosophical and religious, despite their difference in style and form of discourse, evidence cited, and intended audience.[20] A criticism frequently leveled against his philosophical works, that they are thinly disguised theology, is similar to another criticism that his religious works reduce Judaism to ethics.[21] While an examination of the former criticism is important for the purposes of this dissertation, the latter must be addressed

as well, if only to stress that even in his religious writings, Levinas does not reach into a heaven populated by God and angels to justify his statements.[22] Ironically, however, both assessments appear to be in some degree warranted.

However, those who criticize Levinas for theologizing philosophy often equate Levinas' concept of the other person and the face of the other as epiphanies of God. Such a belief, while supported by the hallowing language that Levinas uses in Totality and Infinity, is refuted by both Levinas and further investigation. The "infinity" of the face of the other so often mentioned in Totality and Infinity is a philosophical description of an admittedly ambiguous, yet still an experiential, event. And indeed, if Levinas is to bring his Jewish-based viewpoint to philosophy, he must show that it does not depend upon Orthodox upbringing or being a part of a people said to have been chosen by God. Such a stance would require an appeal to universals experienced by each particularity, each human.

Levinas claims just that universality. The face of the other manifests as a source of "overflow," an experiential and ever-escaping source of ethical command.[23] The other is not God. To talk about the face and create a representational schema with God at its peak is to bring God into a conceptual order and would make God a slave of being [OTB 94]. Levinas sees the miraculous in the epiphany of

the face and does not point beyond the ethical manifestation of the miracle to some presumed theological cause [OTB 95]. Indeed, although the problematic of God and that of a quasi-phenomenal other have much in common, Levinas' religious writings generally involve extracting the ethical message from Biblical texts. Even the question of the existence of God is not to be resolved by an individual.[24]

Yet Levinas does indeed see his role as bringing the wisdom of Judaism to philosophy.[25] The primary wisdom of Judaism is in its devotion to the law - and the law is present in an ethical dimension of experience. [Levinas states that the "way of life inscribed in the Torah is ethically self-validating."][26] The law is the command to be *responsible* to the other. Levinas' task within philosophy can be seen as a pointing to the experiential roots of responsibility, a primality which, though ambiguous and fleeting, is nonetheless the basis of human intersubjectivity.

As such, one can see that Levinas does not hesitate to include his Jewish experience in his philosophical writings. He does not support his philosophical arguments by appealing to the authority of sacred texts, but through appealing to experience, experience of those who might not be Jewish. Levinas conveys "chosen" status on all human beings. ("Judaism is an essential modality of any human" [EEL 108].) His texts constantly introduce terms such as "salvation,"

"messianic time," "pardon," and "absolution," yet he does not hesitate to validate his work with phenomenological methods and arguments. Judaism as a corporeal election is equivocally confirmed in a religious text [DL 50], yet the corporeal election of each human being is emphasized in his philosophical works. Otherwise Than Being speaks of "each individual" as "virtually a chosen one" [OTB 185].

Levinas, personally and philosophically, deals with the death of God announced by Nietzsche, by relegating God to the status of not entering into being [OTB 123; 185]. But commandments and infinity are a constant influence upon, and seemingly constitutive of the human.

Levinas enfranchises all humanity into secular Judaism. The commandment against murder is, according to Totality and Infinity, inscribed on each and every human face, and the dedication of Otherwise Than Being includes both the victims of the Nazi horror and the

> millions on millions of all confessions and all
> nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man,
> the same anti-semitism. [OTB v, Emphasis added]

The merger of the heritage of the Greeks and the Jews is paramount in Levinas' work; on the one hand, Levinas considers the pursuit of being in its totality to be the basic mode of existence of the human: to war, to appropriate, and to bring into the realm of the same all that has not been identified, consumed, or captured. On the other hand, Levinas believes that the continual frustration

of this attempt is evidence for an infinite which commands.
Whether writing for Jew or Gentile, his message remains the
same, a message which celebrates the infinity of the human
person, an infinity not based in power or will, but in
responsibility.

A Sketch Of Levinas' Philosophy

The flesh, vulnerable and sensible, undergirds the
philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. The body is seen as the
carnal ambiguity of freedom and bondage.[27] Embodiment
means being able to move, grasp, and stand; but it also
means to be prey to disease and disability.[28] As in the
work of Merleau-Ponty, the subject is embodied, with bodily
modes, stances, and needs reverberating throughout the world
of the same. The ability to sleep becomes a way by which
one can be conscious; fecundity becomes a basis for time;
corporeal needs become the basis for appropriation; and the
separation of the body in the dwelling becomes the way one
can encounter alterity. The recurvation of the modes of the
body through the entire world of the self (or *same*) grounds
Levinas' philosophy in the concrete and raises it to the
quasi-abstract. However, it is difficult to separate
Levinas' philosophy of the body from the rest of his
philosophy. He represents the space of the self as a
"totality," and though he uses the needs and modes of the
body as examples of the self's basic way of being in the

world through totalizing, he does not restrict the self to the body.

A way to approach understanding Levinas is to represent his thought on a vertical scale. At base is the elemental, the anonymous stuff of being. Upon this formless ground is built the dwelling, place of separate enjoyment. From on high comes the call of the visage of another, breaching the walls of the dwelling. This hierarchy is seemingly not present in Levinas' later work, <u>Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence</u>, but in fact has been placed in the microscopic quanta of meaning itself. In the later work, Levinas concentrates on the vulnerability of the sensible self and how this sensibility is still impressed with the call of the other, *alterity* at the deepest core of the *same*.

We live in the elemental, the ever present undifferentiated *il y a* ("there is"). It is the source of mindless enjoyment; from, through, and within it we constitute and appropriate the things we need. The concept of the elemental is Levinas' "clay" of creation. Just as the Judaic God formed Adam out of the clay of the ground, so does Levinas see the self as being gathered up from the undifferentiated and formless elemental. The elemental is the region that cannot be penetrated or scooped up qua elemental. It is also the realm of horror. It is *being* without personal attributes: anonymity itself.

Western philosophy has spent its resources on the explication of the mystery of the realm of *being*, yet The mystery is not to be solved by looking to the ground. For Levinas, though I spring from the elemental, my movement is upward, toward the Other. The horror of the *il y a* is not the anxiety toward death — it is not the fear of nonexistence. It is horror before the perpetuity of consciousness without substance; it is insomnia in the dark night. Before the anonymous *il y a* we are vigilant, a vigilance at the "bottom" of Levinas' verticality that we will see at the "top" as well.

From the participation in the elemental the self arises in separateness. We begin to see Levinas' multilevel equivalencies in the concept of the dwelling. He describes the dwelling as the place where the self secludes itself in separation:

> The privileged role of the home does not consist in being the end of human activity but in being its condition, and in this sense its commencement [TI 152].

It is the home which allows enjoyment, labor, acquisition, and possession. By utilizing the concept of the dwelling Levinas simultaneously refers to the development through time of the human, the condition of embodiment, and the representational "space" of thought. In the dwelling Levinas has placed *femininity* — supportive withdrawal, the walled space allowing free movement [TI 154]. Just as the mother is the carrier of the child *in utero* and the one who

enfolds the child in her arms to provide the breast, so Levinas sees that every dwelling — characterized by intimacy and familiarity — has a feminine presence. The femininity of the home is the gift of the other. Just as my house separates me from other people but has been built with their permission and support, so has my separate identity and interiority been granted by the other's withdrawal. The walls of my identity have been simultaneously built and allowed by the other.

I furnish my dwelling through labor and appropriation. The way of being in the world is the gathering of furnishings for the home, the totality of the *same*. Appropriation requires identification of that to be appropriated — the representation of a thing brings it into the *same* through apprehension and comprehension. I labor to enjoy the fruit of my labor within my dwelling. The appropriation into the dwelling is first a taking into my body of enjoyable sustenance. I live-from (*vivre de*) my needs [TI 110].

Up to this point, I have discussed the self in separation. Levinas describes the advent of the Other as breaching the dwelling. I am called out by the face of another; I am ordered to respect the other's right to live. For Levinas every face is the face of the widow and orphan and contains within its image ethical commandments. Just as there is no merging of the bodies of self and Other, there

is an asymmetrical relationship with the Other. I can never, under any circumstances, reach equality or reciprocity with alterity. The world is a totality of that which I have appropriated. Into my world appears a face, but it is a face without a back. Levinas states that the face is not the color of eyes, the texture of skin; if one notices those, one is not really looking at the face [DEL 85-86]. Levinas is saying that the other cannot be reduced to something appropriated. The other's body is seen by me as being vulnerable and subject to pain, but the other will always escape my grasp. I am vigilant before the Other, called forth to protect and feed.

But what of the intimate other, the lover? The erotic, to Levinas, is the most potent example of the relation to all others. My appropriation is frustrated in the attempt to grab on to alterity. The caress, erotic contact, describes the intimacy of nakedly carnal encounter, but is also the way I look at the face of the other.[29] I stroke, probe and search, but the other escapes me. Levinas distinguishes between the need which engenders appropriation, and desire, which is engendered by the other and is goodness itself. Desire attracts me to alterity, and eros is the ambiguity of need and desire. The erotic is ambiguous, a strange mixture of the profane and the sacred, need and desire.

It is in fecundity that Levinas grounds another relationship with the other. Parenthood is seeing a part of

oneself born which is completely other.[30] Irigaray shows

that fecundity is already a part of the erotic encounter:

"Prior to any procreation, the lovers bestow on each other —

life. Love fecundates each of them in turn . . . "[31]

Levinas does not restrict this feature to biology or family.

Paternity is extended into the realm of the social, where

the other who is not family is seen to be a part of me but

completely separate.[32] We see that Levinas starts with the

bodily manifestations of eroticism and fecundity and extends

them through the realm of sociality.

The relationship with the other constitutes time for

Levinas. In one way we can see that the breach of the

dwelling by the other in his infinity opens up an horizon to

which the *same* reaches. I have already indicated above how

the caress opens up what is not-yet, and I have attempted to

demonstrate how the caress is the way of relating to the

face of the other. In another way we can see that the time

of the elemental is an endless stupor of immersion (much

like Hegel's "sensuous certainty") and hence is timeless.

Time opens in the separate dwelling, but through the grace

of the feminine, the gentle withdrawal of the other, which

allows appropriation for future need.

The other opens up a past through speech. Levinas

separates speech into the *saying* and the *said*. The *said*,

the words and representations, are fixed and recuperable.

But the *saying* is irrecuperable. "It" comes as from a past

that is ancient but never was. The other opens up an antiquity that existed before the self. It is through the other that both dimensions of time, past and future, are constituted. Fecundity extends into the moment, becoming a fecundous moment. Pardon, time's sweeping clean the past and bringing forth the new, is the discontinuity of the generations, each other coming forth as a part of, yet totally separate from, the parent. Levinas' world is a human world, infused with human time.

But though pardon allows the renewal of the moment, discarding previous fates, it also allows me to see the discontinuous images of myself from previous times. I gather memories of earlier times, when muscles did not ache and my face was unwrinkled. By my being subject-to the other, and the time opened by the other, I can see the memories of youth contrasted to my now. It is as though we are sacrifices for the other. By being thrust into time in our response to the call of alterity, we become able to recognize ourselves ageing.

To be embodied is to be mortal. Levinas has made the very fact of otherness (*l'autre*, as that which is not personal) dependent on the other (*l'autrui*, the personal other) [TI 43]. He has also indicated that it is the horror of indeterminacy and contentlessness that constitutes the *il y a*. Death, rather than being the fear of my identity ceasing, is based in the fear that other will cease, that

what (who) I am obsessed with will withdraw. Underlying the fear of death is fear of consciousness without other, the very horror of the *il y a*. It is your infinity which calls me into existence and into the ethical. And it is your infinity which limits me, limits that define my world.

I am exposed to alterity and am vulnerable. Levinas brings forth concepts such as proximity, the contact with alterity, and shows how proximity becomes obsession, the other within me. Levinas argues for a passivity within sensibility that brings alterity into the self and holds the self hostage. I am obsessed with my neighbor's destitution [OTB 93]. Levinas describes how the passivity and vulnerability of sensibility lead to substitution, the state of being held hostage within one's own dwelling, having the other sit in at my dwelling. This substitution occurs through obsession and desire.

Chapter 4

LANGUAGE, SYSTEM, AND HUMAN

The Presentation of Being

Levinas begins Totality and Infinity by wondering if we are not "duped by morality" [TI 21]. Being itself is characterized as war.[1] The exercise of reason is understood as politics, the art of winning wars, and the opposite of morality. This concern is restated at the beginning of Otherwise Than Being, where Levinas states that war is part and parcel of *essence*, the coming into being [OTB 4]. This characterization signifies more than the Darwinian survival of the fittest or the reduction of all human action to hedonistic motive. Levinas is discussing the capture of meaning, wherein all things are brought into a system of understanding. War, to Levinas, is the dominant trend in philosophy and intellectual life. Levinas' forbidding picture of the world and our relationship with it, however, also admits to times of peace. Levinas' philosophy may be seen as an elaborate meditation on the way that the war of being is interrupted.

Yet already such a description, summary though it is, remains intangible to most of us in the study of psychology. When faced with discussions of being as war - though a war apparently not fought with arms - we are left wondering if the text is poetic metaphor, whether the obscurity of the

jargon will inform us of any practical aspects of our science. The language used is foreign; it does not designate what we understand to be the components of our work.

Yet it is language that is much of the problem for Levinas as well. Levinas describes as our *modus operandi* the incorporation of the things of the world into a system - a *linguistic* system - such incorporation is *prior* to any deliberation. The world, according to Levinas, is given to us in a language which is prior to the "subsidiary" language which we speak and hear.[2] The objects of that world are given to us in clarity as if already articulated, *already spoken.*[3]

Why does Levinas subordinate perception and comprehension to language? Levinas, though radical, is not unique in approaching *being* as a text. Structuralism and poststructuralism share, stylistically, in their linguistic approach, an approach whose genesis was in Saussure's analysis of language as a system which precedes any actual speech act.[4] As a method of investigating the human world with that which is distinctly human, language, Continental thinkers have used structuralism to deny the privileged Cartesian self and to intimate that such a self is in fact constituted by language. Poststructuralists have also pinpointed the responsibilities for historical change and the fixity and proliferation of meaning outside of the

agency of human will and rationality. Many unacquainted with the traditions which "decenter" the subject, and some who are, believe that the bounds of "language" are stretched beyond useful distinction by those who hold such philosophies. Yet the language which is referred to is not the encoding-transmission-decoding of cognitivism. It is the medium of meaning.

Objects present themselves for the most part as instances, signifiers, of classes of objects. The telephone pole which I observe at this moment is grasped in its generality more than its specificity. To be sure, upon investigation one finds an indefinite number of components, the array of which may be unique in one's experience. However, the aspects - the components or qualities - are themselves clearly given as examples of their categories. The knotholes on the telephone poles are given as knotholes or depressions signifying knotholes or depressions.

Even that which is new, that which we have not experienced before, is given to us with qualities which are clearly demarcated. The world is not a shimmering compilation of near-qualities which must be carefully threaded out and woven together. When I see an object, the immediacy of the perception coincides with the immediacy of my grasp of the perception. One can, to be sure, be mistaken in the identification of an object. The telephone pole may at first glance be taken as a tree. Yet the

mistaken impression is given as something or some things present and resolves later into something else as present as the original impression was. Objects as experienced are signifiers for qualities and, as signifiers, they can be mined for referents, for further signifiers. It is in this way that we can understand Levinas' curious statement that the phenomenon is itself a phenomenology [OTB 37], The *logos* of the phenomenon is, though given in experience as that immediate experience, already mediated, already articulated.

Yet if this world is already re-presented, already signifiers, already mediated though immediacy itself, where do the terms of the preoriginal, the *Ur*-language, arise? What is responsible? We certainly recognize that our experience is our own, that we bring to our consciousness of the world our own interpretations; do we not have responsibility for the articulations, the apparent synthesis of information into objects? Many contemporary philosophers maintain that the responsible agency is language itself.[5] The subject would then be only a site upon which history plays out its dramas. There are good reasons to entertain such a possibility.

Certainly our world is structured differently than the world of the Laplander, the Eskimo, or the Hopi. Perspective, historicity, culture, and vicissitudes of lives are reflected in structures of worlds; *being*, as Levinas

defines it, has manifold manifestations. The forest
signifies in different ways to a forest dweller. The forest
signifies in other ways after one learns the
differentiations of botany. One's home signifies in a
different way after it has been burglarized. If the
linguistic character of the world varies with the
particularity of the person or the person's
spatiotemporality, this does not mean that the mediated
immediacy of an already signifying world is a power of the
subject. We do not create our language nor this *Ur-*
language; we live in it as given to us. And our
interpretations are seemingly woven from culture and the
specifics of our life. However, regardless of such
extrapolations, the question arises as to whether we can
leave the system by which we obtain meaning in order to
obtain a metaperspective.

To describe the system of meaning which provides the
language which is the manifested world - or to ask questions
about the totality regarding its meaning or workings - is
not to leave the system. The question of "what" is a
question which occurs within the system and is in fact an
exemplar of the determinative nature of the system
[OTB 23-4]. The whatness of the objects and qualities of
the world are prespoken - the question of "what?" as applied
to the totality of meaning is, despite its possible
accompaniment by awe, still a question which arises within

a linguistic system which delineates the boundaries of the linguistic terms which might answer the question.

Can we leave the system by which the world is given - the organization which gives it sense - and ascribe meaning to the system? Is it not obvious that the system can not be vacated, that any meaning ascribed to the system must be a part of the system, a representation which though part purports to be a symbol for the whole? [OTB 61] For Levinas the organizational system is being, and he will indeed try to speak of an *autrement qu'être*, an "otherwise than being" which transcends the system via time; yet he recognizes that the problems with describing what lies outside of the system of meaning are more than simply the inability to leave the system to do so and the temptation to fall into otherworldly metaphysics.[6] Indeed, the manifestation of that which transcends the determinative signification of being can be pointed to in experiential terms; for Levinas what provides the "excesses" in experience can be indicated, the telos and source of speech, the other person and the self.

Whether we characterize an object or a person, the terms we use are concerned with "*what* shows itself?"[7] In the "said," the representations of *Ur*-language or language, the *what* reigns. The terms used to describe people are terms inadequate to circumscribe the other (or the self).[8] This differentiation between an object and the other person

presumes that an object is accompanied by its *logos* in the coming to presence of *essence*, the verbness of being, while the other is not.[9] A phenomenology of the other person becomes impossible. Levinas discusses *the face* as evidence that the other person eludes the system which would bring all within comprehension.[10] When we look at another, at another's face, what is it that we see? If we look to the color of eyes, blemishes on cheek, well-formed nose, it is not the *other* who is seen.[11] The animation which is the plasticity of the face is never made adequate to a term, to signification. The who which animates the face cannot be brought into an equation of synchronic identification, is not a representative of a class, but runs away at the periphery of presentation and representation.[12] Yet the experience which Levinas describes is not a part of the play of signifiers, nor even philosophers' play with signifiers; it is *experience*, yet experience which is uncanny.[13] There is some signification to the experience, however, according to Levinas. The very resistance of the face to encompassment is a command which must be obeyed. I cannot swallow you into my system, and you, in the escape from the attempt, have told me not to do so. The face, if not phenomenological, is thus an ethical datum. It is not that the face prevents murder or humiliation; it is that such acts fail to bring the other into the synchronism.[14] The

face freezes my powers of appropriation (if they are indeed
mine) and appears as an exposure, a demand.[15]

Levinas' conception of eros is perhaps the clearest
explanation of the quasi-phenomenality of the other. The
caress is unlike palpation. In palpation, something, a
what, is sought, surrounded, ascertained as this or that.
In a caress, the search is on, but the object of the search
is ever escaping.[16] There is, of course, ambiguity in the
caress. It does indeed find flesh and response, but in its
unceasing character is the revelation of its ever eluding
object (which is no object). In the same way, the gaze
which caresses the face of the other is a search. To be
sure, it fixates on here and there, on lips and eyebrow.
But these are aberrations in personal perception. The
other's animation is not an object; if there is an object to
the gaze it is the animator who is not able to be
objectified, who objects to the attempt. In the face of the
other person we find refusal to enter the system, to be
brought to presence. Levinas professes that the other
eludes us into the future, yet because the other eludes us,
the lived future is an unattainable future.

In a similar way Levinas will place the self in an
elusive past. If we look to our past to see if we can bring
evidence of our own complicity (via choice, *conatus*, or
will) in the formulation of the terms of this world, we find
that past, in which the terms are spoken or inscribed, is

unavailable to present scrutiny. Of mainstream psychological theorists, Lewin best realized that a past must be present in experience in order for it to be meaningful to a comprehensive system. It is the persistence of trauma that is the problem in traumatic disorders, just as it is the remnants of past habitations which allow the archeologist to surmise about past civilizations. The recuperation of a past is the essence of any experiential past. Can a past without the memories – without the retentions, the parts of the past which are yet present – can a past such as Levinas discusses, an "irrecuperable" past be a part of meaningful discourse? [OTB 47]

The interlinking and synchronic linguistic system which is the fixity of the world is presence itself; in order for meaning to be manifest, must it not be a part of an economy of the present? If meaning, in order to mean, arises out of contrast and graded differentiations – must be in the linguistic system – then is not Levinas' notion of an irrecuperable past the kind of otherworldly metaphysics which should be shunned as meaningless or as fantasy? Levinas indicates that in order to understand the process of being, the process whereby meaning comes to presence, we must somehow retrieve the origin of the process. Since meaning is within the present and we live within this present, any such origin, in order to be meaningful must be a part of the very system we are trying to exit from. Hence

Levinas' description of this *otherwise than being* as "a past more ancient than any present," [OTB 24] "an irrecuperable, unrepresentable past," [OTB 47] and "an immemorable past that has not crossed the present" [OTB 58].

The Language of Proximity

Levinas has created a unique vocabulary to describe the experience of *proximity*, being with another person.[17] Proximity is the origin of language insofar as language forms in response to the other (or as if to an other). Levinas describes that experience as *restlessness* or disturbance [*l'inquiétude*].[18] It is an *obsession*, a *pain*,[19] a substitution for the other to the point of being a *hostage* [OTB 59]. The innovative language of proximity is a language of discomfort.

But it is important to lay the groundwork for why this phenomenological examination of the *ordinary* requires such peculiar language to describe. In other words, why does Levinas use such unusual language to describe such a common occurrence as a social encounter?

Such a question is first best approached by discussing phenomenology in general, as opposed to the specific mode of investigation of Levinas. Phenomenology, though it deals with the mundane (i.e., what is *given* in experience) is not merely description of what is or has been obvious to all who have experienced. If such were the case it would provide

little surprise and few insights. In a phenomenology there is that which is new to the reader. A thematic description of pre-reflective experience emerges from the rigor of the investigation. The new description delineates the *eidos* or essential structure of an experience which has hitherto been obscured by other facets of the phenomenon. Although it is the consensual aspect of the description which lends it its philosophical authority, one must not expect that the structure uncovered must have been previously brought into the realm of linguistic description in the common language. Nor does the fact that one has experienced a phenomenon necessarily imply that one has reflected upon it or that one has reflected upon the indefinite number of perspectives that one phenomenon may provide.

Secondly, eidetic phenomenology is subject to a attitude that may be called visualism. Visualism imagines that the subject of its investigations is hovering before one's eyes, able to be studied and examined in intricate and static detail. Neither the self nor the other turn out to be examinable in such a way. Levinas has consistently advised us that human beings are not only complexities but are in experiential fact unplumbable. When describing the experience of the other person, he strains against conventions of the time, conventions which strive to bring all of the human into synchrony with a language which describes *things.*

Proximity not only *precedes* the process of representation but is unable to be adequately brought to the present through representation (*re-presentation*). The disturbance which required me to respond to another - proximity - is *always* in my personal past. It does not occur at the present *since I am already into the synchronic language system which is the response to the other.* No static object of study is present since the event of the other is a process of temporality. Levinas uses *language* to describe the temporal and *linguistic* process of response to another - its instigation in a disturbance which is *always* in a personal *past*, the subjective dehiscence which transpires in the process of signification, and the *telos* of the other to which it responds - and such a description of the process of language requires a language which carries no illusion of an eternal and extramundane viewpoint. The peculiar language Levinas uses cannot be verified through dispassionate deliberation since it must necessarily suffer from a constant recursiveness; terms must be used which resist the fixity of language.

The language used by Levinas also carries distinctly affective connotations rather than assuming distance from the subject. To great degree this affective intonation is necessary because the subject of Levinas' study is the intricately intertwined web of self and other, an event which is the basis of lived-time *and is experienced*

affectively. Subjectivity is based in proximity, *and neither the experience of its origin nor its proper description is passionless.* On the contrary, the social experience is one of pain, desire, and transformation.

Levinas' lexicon of terms to describe proximity is also more than innovative use of old terms. He seems acutely aware of the histories and connotations of the terms he has used. Like many, Levinas seems at times to be purposely creating wordplays, equivocal meanings, and references to etymologies of signifiers. (One might think that signifiers are encouraged to have as many signifieds as possible!) The etymological connections and the straining of language at times seem to be attempts to distort the meanings of words through poetic license. Indeed, Levinas would seem to be endowing words with ephemeral (and otherworldly) metaphorical significance. Yet perhaps it is the myopia (if one, after condemning visualism, may use a visual metaphor) of the current age which requires that terms describe what can only be adequately circumscribed by simple thought or concepts which are easily assimilable into the common worldview.[20] (Indeed, it is to phenomenology's enduring credit that it accepts that complexities are not reduced in their weightiness by the use of reductionistic language.)

To be sure, there is poetic rhetoric in Levinas' descriptive method, but there is also recognition that the histories of the terms used can give support to the

interpretations proffered. Etymologies can point to phenomena experienced by those alive when terms originated. An example may be found in terms involving the *heart*.

In an article criticizing mentalistic forms of psychology, B.F. Skinner discussed the Homeric Greeks' appeal to *thumos* or heart for explanations of behavior.[21] He then listed a variety of similar expressions in English, "heart" as an expression used to mean the whole personality, intelligence, compassion, opinion, affection, goodwill, courage, and taste. Skinner stated:

> Of course, we do not mean the *real* heart, but the Greeks may not have meant that either. [emphasis mine][22]

What Skinner refers to as "real" is the heart as a physiological pump which initiates circulation of blood. But is that the original meaning of *thumos* to the Homeric Greeks? Wood presents a forceful argument that the multitudinous terms in English derivative of *kardia, kerd, thumos, cor, coeur, Gemüt,* etc. [i.e., courage, record, cordial, fume, thymic, mood, etc.] sketch the perimeters of a "primordial" phenomenon, "an *Urwort* standing for the organic totality of experience, the center, the core."[23] The **real**, in Wood's view, is not simply the heart as physiological pump, but a dynamic centeredness. Hence expressions such as "I feel in my heart" may not be metaphorical at all, but metonymical, using a term which signifies a **greater** phenomenon to refer to a component **part.**

Wood's etymologies point to a phenomenon which gave rise to language yet which - due perhaps to historical contingencies and physicalist thinking - must be reconstituted in reflective language.[24]

Levinas' use of language also seems to point us to a phenomenon embedded in etymology, but one less easy to systematically represent. [Wood was able to create a three-dimensional diagram representing the bounds of "heart."] Complicating the *presentation* of the phenomenon is its temporality and the recursiveness of language which must represent the coming-to-be of language, the origin of what is said. Since proximity is intimately intertwined with the very process of representation, representing it is complicated by the constant need to undo the fixity of the terms used.[25]

Consider Levinas' use of "difference" and "indifference." Their etymologies would seem to reveal that the Latin *differentia* simply negates *indifferentia*. But despite the similarity of the words, the meaning of the latter does not seem to be the negation of the former. In our ordinary use, "difference" - which indicates divergence or contrast - is not the emotionlessness which "indifference" - neutrality, apathy - would annul. In Levinas' use of the terms we find a possible coherent connection between them.

Levinas believes that one is not indifferent to that which is different. He frequently uses "non-indifference" in a context where one might expect to see "concern" or some other term indicating a state of emotion.[26] It is contrasted with the "difference" of the other. "Difference," is normally contrasted with "same," a practice which Levinas continues in his contrasting "same" and "other." When I am indifferent, it is "all the same" to me. It is the other person that is the veritable and irreducible difference, and to whom I am incapable of being indifferent. It is the other person who destabilizes my world.

An object is classified into a world of the *same*, a world of stability. This stability, or equilibration, was significant in Piaget's documentation of cognitive modes which accompany development. According to Piaget one constantly creates schemata in the process of assimilation and accommodation. The anomalous (without a *nom*, name) will in Piaget's theory be named and classified through this active process and the world will achieve stability through representation.

However, the contact with the other person does not result in assimilation into the same. Certainly one does classify others in ways which attempt to reduce their alterity. We place others in niches within families, societies, clubs, schools, and battlefields. But the

placement of others into these niches is not comprehensive -
other people always remain alien, resistant to assimilation.
The leveling that takes place in cognitive classification -
the equating of "this" with "that" is frustrated. Cognition
and representation do not empty the other of alterity, of
difference.

Levinas' use of the word *l'inquiétude* as the
fundamental experience of proximity is also instructive.
The word means "restlessness," "disturbance," "worrying,"
or "disquieting." The Latin root of *l'inquiétude* means
"quiet." Hence the utilization of this term is appropriate
from an etymological standpoint; it illustrates the
disturbance by the other which produces a response which is
a *saying* to the other. *L'inquiétude* is the restlessness
which is an end to the quiet. An encounter with the other
calls forth responsible language, but it is language which
does not succeed in adequation of its object. The other
resists assimilation and elicits even more response. The
other is disquieting and disturbing.

Two other terms used by Levinas, *hostage* and *obsession*,
signify via their etymologies. *Hostage*, in fact, is derived
from a term meaning *lodging* and the same roots as *obsession*
(*ob*, at, and *sedere*, to sit). Proximity is being described
as the other who is within me *from whom there is no
possibility of taking a distance*. The other occupies or
pre-occupies me. In <u>Totality and Infinity</u> Levinas described

the mode of existence of the human as *dwelling* in a home.[27]

It is the home which allows enjoyment, labor, acquisition,

and possession. By utilizing the concept of the dwelling,

Levinas simultaneously refers to the development through

time of the human, the condition of embodiment, and the

representational "space" of thought.[28] Levinas' use of

hostage thus denotes an invasion in the home, the alien who

has hold of me, who sits within the core of my existence. I

have been preoccupied by an other who worries me.

We must not assume, however close the other is to me,

that there is a blurry of distinction between self and

other. Levinas constantly reminds us that in order to

understand proximity we must recognize the inherently *non-

reciprocal* nature of experiencing the other. Levinas'

description does not allow an unexperienced symmetry between

self and other to intrude. The subject and the other person

are never experientially interchangeable. Being with

another person does not consist, phenomenologically, of

being with a more or less equal human being in reciprocal

relation. The other person is always experienced as other

than oneself, and one cannot leave the indigenous place of

sensibility that is one's own - except through a form of

abstraction. That abstraction, an equation which places me

side by side with you in a species or genus of similar

humans with nearly identical parts, is not erroneous. But

it ignores the lived content of one's life, a life that is

inextricable from the experience of one's body. Embodiment
is the most poignant example of the non-reciprocal nature of
existence.

A good deal of phenomenological investigation has gone
into understanding the meaning of living a body.[29] Is it
not clear that embodiment is not, as Descartes would have
it, a machine controlled by a soul? Nor is it as La Mettrie
would indicate, simply a machine. My purposeful action of
grasping is not a homunculus manipulating a waldo; nor am I
mechanism. My body is **lived**. And while the classificatory
schemes of language and the necessary taxonomies of a shared
world may equiparate me and you, the primary experience
belies the correspondences.

An examination of the differences between my eyes and
your eyes will aid in the clarification of themes of
Levinas. My eyes as lived are not organs of sight which
conduit light into neuronal tissue; they are vision itself.
I notice them as separate from vision only when vision
falters or when dust or disease elicits pain or distortion.
While I can come to understand that your eyes are also, to
you, lived in the same ways as mine are to me, that
abstraction is secondary.

Your eyes are expressions rather than receptors. They
are evidence of your unreachable experience. They **signify**
to me - in part through their accommodation and pupillary
reactivity, and in part through their congruity with the

rest of your face - your interest and the direction of your awareness. But I live your eyes differently from the way I live my eyes. I can also come to understand that you too experience my eyes as expressions; yet although such understanding is important in sales techniques and other forms of directed drama, it is a secondary phenomenon already built upon the primacy of the signification of the other to subjectivity.

I am irrevocably stuck in the confines of my embodied existence, and the other is always experienced, not as part and parcel of my world, but as on an interface of the knowable and the unknown.

Although the most common *representations* of the interpersonal situation involve a "leveling" of all humans into commonality and reciprocity, Levinas thematizes lived existence in another way. Levinas' description does not result in a genus which unites all humans as viewed from some extramundane standpoint; subjectivity and alterity become primary and distinct themes of existence. Although I may indeed be manifested as an other to your subjectivity, my otherness (which indeed may be accused of being an oxymoron) is not experienced by my subjectivity. Alterity is consistently resistant to incorporation into the realm of mine.

I find, however, that although the abyss which separates self from other is not bridged, that I am always

already finding myself responding to the other. The
separation of self and other is not one of distance, but
proximity. Proximity signifies both the non-reciprocal
nature of the interpersonal relation and the incessant pre-
occupation of the self by the other. The other weighs upon
subjectivity and *already* weighs upon subjectivity before one
chooses a course of action. The human is composed of an
already responsive and responsible sensibility. And prior
to the response there is the weight, the burden, of the
other person to whom one is responsible.

In order to more easily understand the meaning of this
weight it is tempting to detour to an analogous phenomenon
in early developmental psychology. Following birth a child
may not only see those people around him or her but will
also mimic their facial expressions. Yet this mimesis
occurs before the awareness by the child that he or she is a
visual object; indeed, before the self-concept
(representation of oneself as a perceptual nexus) the child
is **already** prepared to imitate smiles, frowns, and tongue
movements. Such mimesis betrays the potency of the other
upon the child. Merleau-Ponty described mimesis as "the
ensnaring of me by the other, the invasion of me by the
other . . . . "[30] The mimicry is assuredly not the result
of a rational chain of cognitions; it is more a form of
being affected without choice. The passivity of the infant
in the face of this impregnation by the other is an

illustration and example of the vulnerability of
subjectivity.

Yet such a period in the developmental sequence of the
infant must be understood phenomenologically as an
illustration of other-directedness rather than as an
argument which relies on prior events to ascertain essential
features of the human. The fact that such susceptibility
exists at an early age does not in itself demonstrate that
the person is necessarily, nor essentially, other-directed.
However, it is precisely this primacy of the vulnerability
of subjectivity to the other which is supported by Levinas.

In the term *proximity* Levinas expresses the primary
social relation, the closeness of another. While the body
of a neighbor may be across the room, one still best
describes the experience of being with that other person as
one of contact. Levinas indicates that proximity is an
expression of a concreteness which undergirds our derived
notion of space and that the *primary* experience of space
involves the weight of demand associated with interpersonal
contact.

Subjective Identity

Phenomenology, including Levinas' unique phenomenology,
differs from other methods of investigation. Although it is
typical for psychological investigations into human identity
to examine the ways in which consistencies in behaviors or

traits originate or the way in which others attribute such consistencies to a person, our experiential focus upon subjectivity qua subjective identity attempts to explain the nature of identity as it is experienced.[31] Some philosophers (Hume and James, for instance) have bypassed individual traits and have explained that identity is a function of the continuity of the flow of sensations.[32] Yet there is more to the subjective *me*-ness than simply the flow of one experience into another. Rather than emphasizing the flow of sensations, Levinas accentuates the vulnerability of sensibility, the vulnerable surface of existence which supports such flow. It is this vulnerability which Levinas understands to be one's identity.

Sensibility is not synonymous with, or a subcategory of consciousness. The problem with *consciousness* as a term of subjective identity is in part one of the historical accompaniments to the term. We have been invited since Nietzsche to eschew the metaphysics which has been handed us in our language, and the terms we use to refer to our personal identity — including *consciousness* — are indeed endowed with nuances inherited from the history of the language. *Consciousness* is derived from *com*, with, and *scire*, to know. The term *consciousness* signifies knowledge within, or the process of knowing. Consciousness consists of identifying entities in the world from, and despite, the variety of images which appear to us. An entity is

identified as *that*, an "ideality" [OTB 99], Like the
fettered observers in Plato's cage watching the shadows cast
from behind them, we identify prototypes, terms, from the
dissemination of different appearances at different times.
Consciousness is thereby equatable with *theoretical*
consciousness, the process of assessing and representing the
entities in the world.[33] As a result it is a term
conveying power - the cognitive power of deliberation and
judgement; it also conveys stability, a platform whence the
ephemeral appearances coalesce into certainties [OTB 99].
The language of consciousness is, according to Levinas, the
mode of Western philosophy.[34]

Levinas desires, however, to undercut this language of
mastery, language which offers up the human from the first
as measurer of the world and master of self.[35] Sensibility
precedes the classificatory approach of consciousness, an
approach that would keep the world in synchronous
re-presentation. He portrays the temporal origin of each
experienced instant as an unwilled passivity, the
forbearance of sensibility. The self-enclosed and
monarchical consciousness which Descartes proposed, founded
in aloof thought, is fundamentally breached via a
sensibility which has *already* been receptive to the other.

Sensibility, portrayed as a surface already
subjected-to the other, conforms to the frequent use of the
terms *subject* and *subjectivity* by Levinas. We are

deliberately reminded that the terms derive from *sub-*,
under, and *jacere*, to throw; subjectivity is not the
potentate that is implied by grammatical references to the
subject of a sentence, the instigator of action.
Subjectivity is *subjected-to*, thrown under the authority or
control of another. Such servitude is not chosen; it is not
a freely deliberated commitment.

Subjectivity may be unique (and it is important to
reiterate the non-reciprocal nature of subjectivity) — to be
approached by another calls me to respond as only I can[36] —
but certainly to be *me* does not mean to be disentangled from
the world. To be me qua *me* is certainly to be *here*, *in* the
world. *Here* is a primal part of identity. When someone
refers to a house, town, or object as *here*, its *hereness* is
based in the experience of the one who is already *here*. The
definitive lived-spatiality (the hereness or the *thereness*)
of existence, its essential *being-in-the-world*, and its
irreducible *mineness* [*Jemeinigkeit*] have been explicated in
detail by Heidegger.[37] Levinas expands upon the nature of
being-here, claiming that *here* as a reference point for
spatiality is dependent upon another being *there*. *Mineness*
becomes, for Levinas, *me*, a term which signifies - not
possession - but "Here I am," response and responsibility:
mineness becomes at its roots *for-the-other* [OTB 142]. In
other words, Levinas bases subjective identity, the identity

of the individual as experienced, in a relationship to an other who is not me.[38]

Levinas' portrayal of the dependency of subjective identity upon the other has similarities among other French philosophers. Sartre modified phenomenology's intentional poles into consciousness (*pour-soi*) and that which is not conscious (*en-soi*); he also radically separated self from other (in a move probably derived from Hegel's master-slave dialectic). On the one hand, consciousness was viewed as lacking substance, lacking being, and always craving the fixity and substantiality of the *en-soi*. On the other hand, other people were viewed as objectifying. The gaze of the other, to Sartre, fixes me as an object, places me on exhibition. Whilst I can exist into the distance, becoming a part of the activities of *out-there*, another's gaze will bring me into myself as limited, in a body whose boundaries are fixed in bondage to the other's stare.[39] (Gerard also adopts a similar position. What the other has, substantiality and being, is what I crave.)[40]

A similar notion of lack as the basis of subjectivity was adopted by Lacan, who adapted Freudian psychology to his own structuralist understanding. Lacan asserts that the subject is actually fabricated (through identification) of what is external to it. Subjective identity is purely a construction of culture and language. The specular image that a child receives in a mirror gives him or her the

illusion that he or she is a wholly unitary being. Later
acquisition of language and its singularizing pronouns
complements the mirror-obtained error.[41]

Though Levinas may seem to echo certain of these
formulations, there are substantial differences. Whereas
others have seen *lack* (of being, substance, or power) as
definitive of subjectivity, Levinas understands subjectivity
— though permeated from the beginning by the other — to be a
source of excess. Subjectivity is an overflow of response
and responsibility. What we Westerners believe to be the
most personal of all personal attributes - the *experiencing*
itself - is a place **and a time** of disruption *for the other*.

Even the language one uses to refer to oneself gives
clues to this source of self-identity. A pronoun, according
to the standard definition, is a word used in place of or as
a substitute for a noun or proper noun. However, there is,
within the prescriptive rules of English grammar,
recognition that a pronoun is not a simple substitution.
Indeed, certain verb forms are *only* used with pronouns.
Although a third person pronoun, such as *he*, may substitute
satisfactorily for a name in a sentence such as *John (He)
goes to the store*, in the case of first or second person
pronouns grammatical irregularities are revealed when one
attempts a straightforward substitution. *I* may *go* to the
store, but *David goes* to the store. *I am*, but *David is*.

Indeed, the use of one's name to refer to oneself in the first person is not acceptable. [A similar problem occurs when one attempts to substitute *you* for a name in a sentence: the verb form may change. Although I may say *You are reading, John are reading* is improper.] First and second person pronouns carry more significance than as simple surrogates for proper nouns. Yet it is not only grammatical evidence which indicates that *I* and *you* are terms which mean more than our names.

The use of a pronoun, *I*, to refer to myself is experientially more *authentic* than the use of my name. [Indeed, the name in many ways seems to be but a poor proxy for "I."] My name is a way that others refer to me, but the *pronoun* "I," though it may be shared by all speakers of English, is the representative of what is genuinely mine, genuinely me. And what is this that is *me*?[42] Levinas insists that subjectivity is a process of disruption in which *one* comes into existence in the instant when one is turning oneself into words. The *oneness*, the identity, rather than being a unity of knowledge or consistency of characteristics, is a lived sense that *I* am here called into account, called into question. This disruption which is nonetheless *me* may be termed *psyche*, the archaic term which forms the basis for the name of our science. Yet though archaic, the term can still teach us of the nature of identity. Did it not arise out of the Greek *psychein*, to

breathe, possibly meaning the continuity of one's life? When *psyche* was gone, so was life.[43] Other terms which refer to the essential in the human are affiliated with breath - one is inspired with creativity and ideas, has spirit and is spirited, expires when breathing no longer.

Breathing, however, is two phased; it is not a linear, continuous process. It is both inspiratory and expiratory and does not simply represent continuity. It varies in rapidity and in stridor. As such, the connotation of breath is consonant with Levinas' description of the temporality of subjective identity. Foremost in an exposition of the psychical is a reminder that it is with breath which words are formed. The psyche, to Levinas, is the process wherein language is formed. It is the "preliminary intelligibility of signification" [OTB 69]. And its animation, its origin, is in the other whose touch has instigated subjectivity's inversion into language.

The identity of the subject is not, like a thing, continuous. It is unremittingly disrupted through *the requirement to turn into words*. Is it not curious that thinking itself is a speaking, which whenever conscious, is expressed as to another? Does not the disruption of the social disturb even the most intense reverie, the most private of experiences, as the process of representation drains the experiential into the expressive?

When I eat I do not sink, like Freud's infant, into oceanic atemporality. I find that the paradisiacal enjoyment which would be me alone with my pleasure is invariably interrupted by the articulation of the sense into symbol. Like a wine taster who savors and then renders taste into adjectives for others to consume, subjectivity is wrested from resting by narration.

The psyche, to Levinas, is a "dephasing" which prevents a substantive and self-positing identity; instead of Cartesian thought, which thinks itself, Levinas' psyche is disruption. Like breathing, one may not persist in any state; one must always inhale after one has exhaled and exhale after inhalation. The disruption - prevention of identity to be at one with itself - is the imposition of another upon oneself. This imposition comes from *within*, like an obsession.

Obsessions, according to the accepted clinical definitions are unwanted and disturbing thoughts. The thoughts are *ego-dystonic*, seemingly coming from elsewhere. Levinas uses the same term to describe the relationship with the other, but there are significant differences from the clinical definition.

Obsession is pre-cognitive. Thoughts arise out of obsession. They are thematizations arising out of an unassumed (pre-choice) *obligation* to the other. Not an appendage or result of consciousness, obsession is the

having *always already* been preoccupied by the other
[OTB 55]. An obsession (in both the clinical and
philosophical sense) is uncomfortable, painful, because one
cannot put oneself at a distance from it. Before the
distancing of representation, the other has entered into my
boundaries. Yet my obsession with the other, occupation by
the other, is not a cage for the other. We must not assume
that the other is somehow encapsulated. On the contrary,
subjectivity finds that it has already been affected by the
other - yet the other eludes presentation.

Obsession is characterized by "extreme urgency"
[OTB 88]. Although Levinas does not pair *obsession* with a
philosophical cognate for the clinical *compulsion*, it is
fruitful to speculate. In the clinical situation a
compulsion is understood as action taken in response to an
obsession. In the stereotypical case of the obsessive-
compulsive bather, obsessions regarding disease and filth
are acted upon through incessant handwashing, presumably to
reduce anxiety.

We may view our *philosophical* "compulsion" as an
unwilled movement of articulation. It is articulation into
consciousness which occurs within and on a base of
obsession. The movement, affectively experienced as
restlessness, is the temporal *élan*, the upsurge of the
instant.

Saying and Said

If we were to infer the kind of experience that a speaker of our language has, we would assume a world containing relatively clearly bounded areas or entities — and transformations which occur to these entities. Yet if our temporal experience was characterized by the incessant movement of sensations and impressions — William James' "stream of consciousness" — or, similarly, if our experience of time was of a constant flow from past to present to future, would we not have a language which more or less reflected or conveyed such a flux?

Certainly we can conceive of an analogical language which would reflect a world characterized by Jamesian flux or homogenous flow; such a language would detail the subtle and seemingly constant fluctuations in spectra of color, pain, weight, lumination, etc. It could have tonal, syllabic, and phonetic features which would vary analogically with what the terms represented. Instead, our language depicts via nouns a world fixed in idealities and quiddities, as it also documents via verbs the transformative moments between those states. The language we have does not seem to well represent a world of uninterrupted flow.

However, it could well be that instead of language failing to adequately represent such experience, that the description of experience as simple flux is flawed. Our

language may already be analogical, may already reflect our temporal experience.[44] Indeed, as stated *supra* (*The Presentation of Being*), language is more than the encoding of phenomena. Language is part and parcel of our temporal experience. And that experience, rather than one of perpetual flux and flow, is of punctuated instants, the coming into the present of articulated terms.

Language, according to Levinas, arises in sensibility. He believes that one is, at first, a *sensible* and *vulnerable* subject (*sensible* in the sense of feeling and perceiving — and *vulnerable* in the sense that sensibility is absolutely passive and open to the imposition of impacts upon that sensibility). Further, upon sensing, one is transformed immediately from a sensible subject to a signifying subject. This is an *ethical* turn, even if not willed. Sensing becomes articulation, identification of the sensed. Levinas identifies — in this momentary transformation from sensing to articulation of the sensed — a movement in which subjectivity becomes a sign, an articulation for, or *as if* for, the other. This transformation demarcates the instant, the movement from *saying* to *said*.

Levinas' distinction between language as *saying* and language as *said* should not be confused with other commentators' bipartite differentiations (*langue* and *parole*, *signifié* and *signifiant*, competency and production, code and message, etc.) It is true that there is a similarity between

Levinas' *said* and Saussure's *langue*; Saussure's term refers to language as a synchronic system, and Levinas' term refers to language which has entered into such a system. The *said* is the systematized present, the synchronic terms of the world, and as indicated, Levinas is indebted to the structuralists for its conception. But Levinas' *saying* is a term for a temporal event which has no comparable concept in the technical lexicons of linguists and psycholinguists. The *said* is completed articulation [OTB 45] and has entered into the systematized synchrony which is the present. *Saying*, the movement preceding the *said*, is a movement toward the other person, a process or state of articulating for another. And, as stated above, the *saying* arises from a bed of sensibility — the site (or *time*, since "site" implies spatiality) of subjectivity.

Sensibility is *subject-to*, exposedness, "having been offered without any holding back," [OTB 75] complete passivity. Levinas alludes to the surface of the skin to illustrate the openness of sensibility, but sensibility is open to enteroception, sound, light, and other assaults. Indeed, the picture painted by Levinas is of an extended surface without an interior or reverse side which would shelter escape. Sensibility is as a Mobius strip, where all sides are exposed as surface. Sensibility is acted upon rather than being an actor. Sensibility is openness to the other.

But a reversal occurs. When one senses — cold steel, light feathers, headache, sunlight — one both senses and signifies. The ambiguity of embodied sensibility is that it is a "duality of the sensing and the sensed" [OTB 72]. Sensibility experiences what is imposed upon it and then immediately, in staccato fashion, turns outward with its signification. Sensibility is at the crux of the dephasing of the instant, the disturbance which is the temporal correlation of the saying and said. Such a dephasing is a dehiscence, since the *for-oneself* of sensibility is turned inside-out and via signification becomes *for-the-other*. Even in enjoyment, the *for-oneself* of what Levinas deems *conatus* (self-preservation — Spinoza referred to it as *amour propre*, self-love) is undone in its self-orientation through an unwilled signification. The moment of sensation is overtaken with an outward turn of articulation.

From the first *sub-jection* into the *saying*, the turning into sign, from the sensing to the sensed, sensibility moves into knowledge and consciousness. The dehiscence propels the upsurge of the instant; one moves from a time alone into the synchronic time of others. At the acme of the *élan*, the "top of the moment," subjectivity is a participant in the synchronous system of the *said*, consciousness. Levinas refers to this as a time of "theoretical receptivity from a distance" [OTB 75], since sense has been re-presented. Yet it reverts in the next

instant to the passivity of sensibility, it moves back to the unique *me*.

Can we experientially validate these claims of Levinas? The question asks if one may become aware of the temporal movement of an experience, the micromovement from sensing to signing. The answer is not an unequivocal yes or no. Levinas has portrayed a reversal within the instant, *saying*, a change from sensing to signifying, which occurs just before articulation. As such, it is always just out of reach of the thematization of language, *including the language of evidence or validation*. Admittedly, this dissertation is replete with unequivocal statements equating sensibility, subjectivity, passivity, and openness, and terms of the said have been freely used to describe what is presumably prior to such adequation and delimitation. But to experience "*Saying* is this" or "*Saying* is that" is undermined by the fact that *saying*, in the moment before the *said*, precedes the language operations which assign quiddity. Nonetheless, though the evidence is elusive and rests in the inadequate retention of a temporal past which must always remain past, Levinas refers to a "reduction" — presumably of language — which can "extract" what is before the systematized *said*, *saying*, from the *said*. Yet before examining Levinas' approach, it is helpful to see what we can find in everyday experience as well as in previous psychological research.

If we attempt to reflect on experience to catch hold of the sensing/*saying* moment of reversal, such reflection might involve attempting to rid oneself of representational content, "clearing one's mind." Even in such an attempt, however, sensations and thoughts come into awareness. The experiences one has — itch on the knee, memories of what one was supposed to get at the store, soreness on the lip — are experienced as *something*. They are already *as if* labelled, are clearly articulated, *whether or not there are communicative labels readily available in the common language*.[45] Our attempt to experience the moment before the coming to presence is frustrated by the presence itself. One's experiences are already bounded within the present — are nouns. The Gestaltists pointed out over fifty years ago that experiences (perceptual and otherwise) are experienced in *wholes*. Perception, for instance, is not a process of adding together partial experiences — dimensions, colors, sounds, textures — until one achieves the experience of an object. "Partial" experiences are always derived from the experienced wholes.[46]

Nonetheless, we all have experienced the prelinguistic pause before words come to mind. The pause is not, however, the lack of articulation; it is the lack of a ready communicative label. In *tip of the tongue* studies researchers investigated the common experience of elusive memory, where subjects knew various attributes of the word

they were attempting to recall except the word itself.
Although the emphasis of these studies was on the cognitive
psychological ramifications of memory retrieval, they
illustrate a pre-articulate process *which remains
unsatisfied until the articulation is complete.*[47]

Perhaps the closest psychological studies to approach
Levinas' depiction of the *coming into meaning* have been
those known as microgenetic studies; their task was to try
to catch perceptual and cognitive processes in their early
evolution. Microgenetic research has purported to show that
perceptual and cognitive experiences are in fact (rapid)
movements from the more primitive and less differentiated to
the more sophisticated and specific. Arieti describes
microgenesis (microgeny) as the "immediate unfolding of a
phenomenon," the stages through which one goes when reaching
a judgement or perception.[48] The various studies have
investigated psychopathologies, brain damaged persons,
subliminal perception, and other methods of obtaining
thoughts and percepts which failed to achieve full
microgenetic maturity.

One problem in such research, at least for the
phenomenologist, is the same as that for physicists who wish
to understand the underlying nature of subatomic particles:
one must interfere with that which one wishes to understand
and then infer what it must have been like before the damage

was done.[49] One does not experience the prearticulation of the sensing/*saying* reversal.

Another problem, once again, is that one's attempts always result in a clearly articulated *something*, even if it is not the same phenomenon control subjects would report. Experimenters in microgenetic research might have stopped the processes which occur in perception and cognition, processes involving movement from global and bipolar affective states to specific and more diverse states; however, the meaning of the *saying* qua *saying* still remains elusive. The reports of the microgeneticists are still in terms of the *said*, the *what* that the process entails. It is the characteristics of the *who* of the *saying* that Levinas stresses and which are missed in the microgenetic researchers' emphasis on the *what* of the processes.

If our attempts to catch hold of, to scrutinize, the *saying* have resulted in frustration, how is it that Levinas performs the maneuver? It is not through documenting experience that Levinas' claims are validated; what Levinas claims, that the *saying* occupies a past which is *always* past, must not be ignored. In lived time, the past is the past as it is retained in the present. The attempts to experientially catch hold of *saying* as it transpires will always be frustrated by the fact that the present, including the past as retained in the present, is in the terms of the *said*.[50] Though Levinas refrains from an explicit

discussion of his method, Reed has examined Levinas'
reduction in great detail. One starts with the *said*, which
"always signifies more than is stated in it," and performs
an "*unsaying*" (*se dédire*), either through negating and
restating — and through iteration.[51] Burdening (or
bludgeoning) the language and its fixed terms through this
reduction yields excess, the trace which eludes the language
of being, but mostly it results in *ambiguity*, a space in
which the clear boundaries of the *said* are rent.[52]

Before giving examples of this "reduction," it is best
to deal with the anticipated objections to the tactic. The
suspected complaint would probably be that Levinas, rather
than giving us a technique to improve our memory or a way to
make our experiential reflections more acute has instead
used a form of poetry to persuade. This objection would
wonder how negation, restatement or iteration, certainly not
traditionally respectable forms of persuasion — and
seemingly merely manipulation of terms, could aid in the
elucidation or memory of the *saying*.

But it is language and its process of emergence from
sensibility which is under examination. Levinas' technique
of *unsaying* results in a disruption of the clear boundaries
of the *said* and places the hegemony of the system of the
said under question. The *literary* technique of Levinas
milks language for excess meaning, and as a result the

adequacy of the *said* is called into doubt. For example,

Levinas states:

> The self is characterized by a passivity that cannot be
> taken up....It is an offering oneself which is not even
> assumed by its own generosity, an offering oneself that
> is a suffering, a goodness despite oneself. The
> "despite" cannot be decomposed into a will contraried
> by an obstacle. [OTB 54]

In this example, Levinas, explicating the self's

"qualities," counters "offering oneself," which one

understands as a matter of will or commitment, with "not

even assumed," which means *not willfully chosen*. What is

stated is unsaid. *To offer* is an act. Yet it is stated

that this offering oneself is not an act. The consistent

unsaying serves to break up the fixed meaning of terms, and

the nuances which remain depict an origin of language where

(rather, *when*) qualities reside that are inapplicable to any

thing, uniquely human qualities (but note, as my own example

of *unsaying*, that the term *qualities* carries significance

for *things*, as in the "qualities" of building materials).[53]

Yet we are constrained to describe those qualities in the

language of the *said*.[54]

When discussing subjectivity, Levinas constantly

returns to what he has said and dismantles it *by qualifying*

or disqualifying any positive assertion. Through the

dialectic between assertion and unassertion, the *saying* is

revealed, not as certainty, but in traces revealed through

the disruption of the *said*. And the terms that Levinas then

uses, the extractions of the *saying* from the *said* and placed

in terms of the *said*, become shorthand for what inadequate

language cannot convey. For example, Levinas writes in

Useless Suffering:

> Suffering is surely a *given* in consciousness, a certain
> 'psychological content', like the lived experience of
> colour, of sound, of contact, or like any sensation.
> But in this 'content' itself, it is in-spite-of-
> consciousness, unassumable. It is unassumable and
> 'unassumability'. 'Unassumability' does not result
> from excessive intensity of a sensation, from some sort
> of quantitative 'too much', surpassing the measure of
> our sensibility and our means of grasping and holding.
> It results from an excess, a 'too much' which is
> inscribed in a sensorial content, penetrating as
> suffering the dimensions of meaning which seem to be
> opened and grafted on to it.[55]

Levinas asserts that suffering is a given in consciousness,

but that is "in-spite-of-consciousness," that it both is

present in consciousness but also exceeds consciousness,

that it results from a nonquantitative excess which is

present in what resides in sensibility. It is a poignant

example of what Levinas insists constitutes lived time.

Through this *unsaying*, Levinas uncovers the subject whose

sensibility goes through dehiscence into signification. *Far*

from dispassionately manipulating communicative signs, the

subject undergoes the transformation from sensibility to

signification, even when the signification is one of

torture. The "act" of communication is purported, through

Levinas' method, to be at its roots, "unassumability"

itself, a passive acceptance [before any chance of

rejection] of the impact on sensibility, of the

transformation into a sign for-the-other, and of the responsibility that one *is* and *carries* for the other.

Our communicative language may, through its nouns and verbs, be in accord with the experienced world after all, since our temporality is linguistic in character. But the language has a difficult time extricating from itself the *one* who through responsibility is the *saying*. The reduction informs us that the scope of subjectivity — sensibility, *saying* — exceeds the power of words to say and for thought to hold. The "hither side of essence" — before the *said* — is characterized by an unlimited responsibility. The terms Levinas uses, like "unassumability" and "despite oneself," are terms which are used with the recognition that the terms themselves are inadequate for their referents. They mark a recognition that *something* happens in time which, though fully human and constitutive of the lived world, escapes presentation. And they signify that that *something* is *someone*, a someone who answers, before all choice and through metamorphosis, with "Here I am."

As-If a Sacrifice: Ageing and the Subject

Temporality qua articulation, as the *punctuation* of time, has been described in this chapter as occurring before choice.[56] It is undergone with passivity and is characterized by responsibility. One might even place the prefix *ultra-* before each of these terms (i.e., *ultra-*

passivity and *ultra*-responsibility), since the "qualities"
being described are *without limit*. The self is
characterized by the passivity of *gravity*, "absolute
susceptibility," which is responsibly *grave*, "without any
frivolity" [OTB 128].

I have discussed various arenas of ultra-passivity.
The subject is passive to the whims of the world via its
open sensibility. Subjectivity *substitutes* for another in
that it — *without volition* — finds itself taking on the
responsibility to speak, putting itself in the other's
place. Subjectivity is *torn* from its *conatus* by its
unchosen *obsession* with the other. The subject is *already*
in a world of an *Ur*-language, a language whose terms it
articulates in the turning-into-terms which is the upsurge
of each instant. Consciousness emerges from a sensibility
undergoing evisceration through signification, and at all
points along the nonvolitional route to consciousness the
subject is passive, a *recipient* rather than an *initiator*,
even when the process is deemed an "active" one, such as the
saying of speech.

In regard to *ultra-responsibility*, Levinas is unique.
He appraises the subject's responsibility as infinite, a
responsibility for the entire world.[57] Such responsibility
is to some degree consistent with the original
phenomenological approach to meaning and temporality, at
least in terms of the structures which co-constitute

phenomena. Certainly a form of responsibility is intrinsic to the noetic pole of Husserlian phenomenology's *intentionality*, the *consciousness-of* that makes up half of the noetic-noematic correlation (but it is not the *personal* or *ethical* accountability declared by Levinas). In phenomenology it is axiomatic that there is no *consciousness-of* without something of which one is conscious. Nor is there a phenomenon, an experience, without the contribution of that noetic pole. One might then say that the world as phenomenological data depends upon the noesis and the ego that is conscious-of that world.

But it is not this structural complicity of consciousness, unchosen as it may be, to which Levinas attributes the major responsibility. As mentioned, space as a realm containing objects and bodies is constituted by the demands of multiple others. Time as lived is fundamentally a disruption to signify for-the-other, and as such is a symptom of a pre-occupation by the other. And the terms used by the subject pre-exist the subject, are an *Ur*-language. Others antedate the self, just as the self, a nexus of responsibility for the other, antecedes consciousness. The world is a world which is the others' world, but it is supported by *me*, whose identity is that responsibility.[58] Such a narrative would have the self be as a sacrifice, dragged into consciousness and repeatedly immolated for the sake of the elusive other. Levinas

depicts the self as *expiation*, atonement. He asserts that the price paid by the subject for this nonvolitional responsibility is *ageing*.

What must be present in order for ageing to occur, especially the ageing which Levinas claims is inherent in subjectivity? What integral factors present themselves in the person who awakens to aching muscles or who sees whitened hair in the mirror? Apparently, ageing is indicative of one who undergoes transitions which leave irreversible qualities. But despite the changes that it undergoes, the one that ages must be *one*, an *identity*, since otherwise the transitions would be but differences among entities or among different selves. Ageing requires a *lapse*, a missing time which allows the contrast between *me*-then and *me*-now. There must be an identical self which holds on to its identity, retains remnants of its *youth*, but also "carries" the time, the way the face retains wrinkles. Ageing implies exposure, as wrinkles and sagging skin signify exposure to the assaults of air and gravity. Ageing is effected passively. But it is in consciousness, the realm of encapsulation into the same, that the lapse, the missing time, is manifested as ageing.

Consciousness is the field of ageing. Already self-consciousness, already self-referential, consciousness already presupposes subjectivity, since the knowledge of oneself presumes a preexisting "oneself."[59] Before any

constitution in consciousness, one's identity occurs, *recurs*, "is already formed with absolute passivity" [OTB 104]. It does not arise from intentional correlates or from fundamental historicity.[60] Consciousness apprehends the image in the mirror and the ache in the muscles and retains the memories of hair and mobility from another time. Youth is retained and time has been "carried;" while two schismatic memories are united as the same identical person, there is a time which is missing. The lapse is the absence of that identity which lies before consciousness. It is *I* who am grey-haired and sore; it is *I* that was brown-haired and athletic. But the fulcrum which allows these equivalencies and lends its *unicity* to the identity which unites the two as *me* is absent from the assertions of consciousness. The lapse is not in the continuity of memories which would unite *mes* from throughout a life. The lapse is in the term which would unite those memories, in the *unique me* which is not a part of the discourse except as a marker of responsibility.

The source of text is always already past. Out of the mouth or out of the scratchings on a page (or into the thoughts) comes language. But the sayer, the *saying*, has past. The *I* marks the *saying*, labels it, shows the responsibility of the who one has spoken. But there is ambiguity in the word "I." On the one hand *I* can be a general reference, *referring to any I in general*. As Reed

points out, if the *I* were not generalizable then Levinas'
use of the term would be solely autobiographical.[61] Such a
general reference is common when the *I*, or the ego, is
mentioned (in psychology, as in other forms of discourse),
but such use stems from oneself, the unique *me*. There is a
difference between the general *I* and the unique *I* that I
am.[62] The recurrence of identity occurs in the alternation
between the *I* of the systematic said and the *ultra-*
responsibility of the unique *me*. Once stated, the word *I*
takes on a significance of its own, a significance that I am
subject to. It forms a theme, a trait, a mannerism.[63] The
oneself, subjective identity, then becomes the fulcrum of
the generalized *I*, an *I* which has now become objectified.

Is there naught but response to the other in the
subject? Levinas has emphasized the non-egoistic basis of
oneself. The other animates the subject from both sides of
temporality, past and future. In the *always already* past
from which the subject awakens in speech, the other has
already passed through, leaving a trace where obsession now
reigns. And the *telos* of speech is the other, the
unreachable other who, in its elusiveness, recedes
constantly into the future. Both my unrepresentable past
and the unattainable future are characterized by the
alterity of the human other. We may think of the other in
the past as providing the drivenness toward the other of the
future.

However, if subjectivity is a pure fount of recurrently suicidal altruism, when does volition enter? At what point does unwilled subjectivity become willing sovereign? If subjectivity is grounded in subservient sociality, when does the individual become *solus ipse* and an agent of choice? One might speculate that Levinas is deterministic and subordinates choice to historicity, but he does not believe that the historico-cultural matrix is the sole determinant of one's choices.[64] And there is definitely a difference between what he sees as fundamental to subjectivity and the lived social arena. Is it not clear that the world is not primarily a place of mutual subservience and service, but a place of conflict?

Just as there are two times of the other, past and future, there appear to be two foci for individual life apart from the other. The first, which will not be developed in this work, is primary embodiment, from which subjectivity is wrested when it enters consciousness.

The second focus upon the individual as withdrawn from the demands of the other involves a discussion of justice, to which Chapter 5 is devoted. *This* chapter opened with a reference to war and morality. In a way reminiscent of Hobbes, Levinas depicted being as war, a realm where "allergic egoisms" vie for supremacy. Meaning, the stakes of the war, is captured into the domain of the same. Difference is reduced by reason, which is the realm of

symbolization and strategy. Reason is therefore a form of delayed warfare in which the symbolization itself is a form of capture by the same. However, Levinas has noted that although the war of appropriation still manifests in rational interchange, a "'Good' has already reigned" [OTB 5]. A delay has been perpetuated, and peace, although shaky, has interrupted the *conatus* of beings. That interruption is the interruption of justice, upon which, Levinas believes, consciousness depends. Justice is fairness, and it is significant that *fair* derives from *pax, pacem*, peace.

Chapter 5

JUSTICE

It is important to state at the outset of this chapter that most contemporary connotations of *justice* are not sufficient to encompass Levinas' usage of the term. For Levinas, justice is the level ground from which human life is experienced; it is far more than what is considered by most to be essentially a standard used in society for utilitarian or idealistic reasons. For Levinas, justice is the basis of *being* itself and the "foundation of consciousness" [OTB 159].

This chapter presents Levinas' justice as derivative of subjectivity's other-directedness and as radical in scope. I will summarize certain historical theories of justice from both Greek and Jewish sources; this allows the placement of Levinas' unique conception within its historical context. I then offer a description of how, in light of the previous chapter's description of subjectivity's relationship to the other as asymmetrical, one moves from an unequivocally unilateral concern with another to a realm of *reciprocal* obligation. Further, I consider Levinas' concept of *being* in relation to his claim that it is derivative of justice. Finally, I take up the question of the *philosophical* meaning of *God* for Levinas, a term that he uses frequently in his

philosophical texts. God as a human dimension of *infinity* is claimed to be the source of justice.

Historical Precursors

One need not be a devotee of Hegel to admit that ideas, including ideas of justice, change through history. The current Western concepts of justice consist of a series of contiguous and overlapping ideas which have developed from multiple sources, including both Greek and Judeo-Christian contributions. Any contemporary thinker who produces a concept of justice, no matter how original, must have necessarily done so in an environment influenced by earlier notions. This is certainly true of Levinas.

This section is an overview of a few antecedent conceptions of justice which might have influenced Levinas. While many varied sources can be claimed to have influenced Levinas, attention will be focussed upon a few acknowledged by Levinas to have been of importance in the formation of his ideas.

The primary purpose in writing this section is not to show that his ideas have a genealogy, though they certainly do, but to aid in understanding his particular stance. For while the breadth of Levinas' conception of justice is neither without precedent nor particularly outrageous from the standpoint of a historian of philosophy, to those outside of that specialty it may not seem linked to the

common understanding of justice. I do not mean, however —
by indicating that it has roots within philosophy and
religion — that Levinas' conception differs from his
predecessors' or his fellows' only through slight nuances or
linguistic labels. Levinas' justice, while not divorced
from history, is radical, original and panoramic.

The *Good* and Justice

Levinas' references to Plato occur frequently, and one
is led to believe that Plato had a major influence upon
Levinas' conception of justice. However, most of those
insights Levinas gleaned from Plato regarding justice did
not arise from Plato's discussion on justice *per se*, but
from an argument designed to support the rôle of the
philosopher-kings within an ideal state.

The Republic, one of the Socratic dialogues recorded by
Plato, is a treatise on justice.[1] In the initial sections
difficult questions are raised. (Is doing the right thing
relative to context? Does justice mean that one should help
friends and harm enemies? Would it not make someone happier
to be unjust? Are people only just because they are forced
to be?) Socrates claims that the just person is happy and
that the unjust person is unhappy. But he defers his major
arguments to near the end of the dialogue. Before
addressing the significance of justice to the individual

human, he contends, he must discuss what a just *society* would be.

In a just society, according to Socrates, people are suited to the rôles they perform. There would be three classes in an ideal republic, two of which serve to guide and guard the republic. Both of these protective classes, rulers and soldiers, are considered *guardians*. The third class consists of craftsman (a broad category which includes farmers, doctors, and other members of society who are not slaves, children, or women). The guardians, supported by the craftsman class in exchange for their administration and protection, are housed in lodges which are open to the public. They have very little private property and are denied a private life. Even their mating is regulated eugenically so that superior children, destined to be future guardians, are the result.

Proper selection procedures guarantee that all citizens in the republic perform their rôles well and do not desire to perform another job in society. This consonance and order in society is what Socrates deems justice. Justice in *The Republic* is synonymous with the harmonious interactions of the classes. There is harmony within the state when citizens, appropriately assigned to their classes, perform their duties and do not hinder others from doing the same.

Using this just society as a model for the individual, Socrates then describes what a just person is like. As

society in *The Republic* is composed of different parts, so
is the soul of the individual composed of different parts:
reason, emotions, and desire. These parts of the individual
correspond to the different classes of society, reason to
rulers, emotions to soldiers, and desire to craftspeople.
And as a just society occurs because of the harmonious
interactions of the classes of citizens, in the same way,
within the individual, justice is the harmony of reason,
emotions, and desire. In a just person, each of the three
parts performs its proper rôle, contributing to a balanced
and well-ordered life. And in control of the emotions and
desire is reason.

On the face of it, Plato's just society and just human
seem to have little to do with Levinas' conception of
justice. There are a couple of similarities, however, which
should be mentioned. As will be pointed out *infra*, Levinas
believes that what threatens justice is "vice", an area
which in the Western world we have cordoned off under the
rubric of privacy [AOATW 76]. Socrates' description of
guardians without private life or possessions is in accord
with what Levinas understands as the threat to justice.
Also, Plato's emphasis on harmony could be said to be akin
to the harmonious synchronicity of Levinas' structuralist
interpretation of *being*, a realm founded, he claims, on
justice.

One section of *The Republic*, however, is referred to more than all others in Levinas' writings, the notion of the *Good* and the Allegory of the Cave which follows that discussion. In introducing the *Good*, Socrates compares it to the sun. The sun is the source of light, said Socrates, and makes things visible. It allows vision to occur. Now in the world of the visible, we are confronted with two possibilities. First, images such as shadows and reflections result in *conjecture* as to what the images represent. Second, when we see objects such as trees, *belief* results.

The *Good*, which "illuminates" like the sun, is the source of what is true. Under the rubric of what the *Good* "illuminates" are two possibilities. First, in a mode which results in *understanding*, there are mental images such as geometrical concepts. For instance, in geometry it is the mental image of the square which leads to understanding geometrical truths. The ideal image is superior to the drawn square. It does not suffer from imperfect measurements. Second, Plato writes about a process of thought referred to as the dialectic, which eschews sense data and proceeds from ideal thoughts to "the beginning of all" [ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχήν].[2] This is the exercise of *reason*. Socrates ranks these four modes of the soul on a scale from highest to lowest: the exercise of reason, understanding, belief, and conjecture.

Using this division and hierarchy, Socrates proceeds to relate the Allegory of the Cave. We are, said Socrates, in a situation analogous to being chained within a cave with a fire at our backs. We are condemned to see only the shadows upon a cave wall and to only hear sounds reflected off of cave surfaces. If one of us were unchained, allowed to see the things that cast the shadows and to wander within the sun-lit world above, that person would experience the real, the ideal, the *Good*. It would take a period of time while one's eyes adjusted to the sunlight, but eventually one would come to see what is *real*. Upon return to the cave, one would again have difficulty seeing the shadows on the wall. One would also have difficulty relating what one had seen to those who had never experienced the *real*.

The analogy of the sun as the *Good* and the Allegory of the Cave was meant to illustrate the kind of training philosopher-kings would have to acquire in order to lead the ideal state. But Levinas sees within the story something more significant to his own theory of justice. Levinas sees that Plato has not merely narrated a tale about ideal forms. He has also labelled it the *Good*. It is important as well that Plato does not explain the nature of the *Good* in *The Republic*, why the *Good* is good. But he does indicate that all truth stems from it. For Levinas, as well, it is the *Good* which is the source of all truth.

Levinas credits Plato with discovering the "'Good existing beyond Being' (*agathon epekeina tes ousias*)" [DEL 61]. Plato, Levinas states, has discovered that the ethical has priority over ontology. Our world, Plato says, is an inferior image of the world of the *Good*, and, although he denies that inferiority [OTB 159], Levinas' conception of justice seems to be in accord with such a conception.[3]

Levinas' appropriation of Plato's *Good* is as occupying the same site as subjectivity. I have, in the previous chapter, discussed the temporality of subjectivity and the unrecoverability of a past which is always already past. This subjectivity, which bears full responsibility for the world, is "where" (rather "when") Levinas situates the *Good*. Levinas also understands certain aspects of human life to be derivative of the *Good*, and these aspects are not less momentous than Plato's. They include reason, understanding, and *consciousness* itself.

It is not a world of mind, a realm of Eternal Forms or Ideas, which Levinas sees as the *Good*. It is not a world or realm, but an unrecoverable temporality. The *Good* is the articulat*ing* of the world. The world as articulat*ed* is *being*, the synchronous present in which all terms co-exist. For Plato, the *Good* is the stable and perfect realm which is superior to the unstable and imperfect world of our senses. To Levinas the *Good* is the *for-the-other* of *Saying*. The *Said* is the realm of justice.

Love and Justice

"The work of the Septuagint is not finished," Levinas stated in a discussion of the impact of Judaism upon his work [EEL 107]. Indeed, as stated elsewhere in this thesis, Levinas' work may be understood as an attempt to translate Jewish insights into the language of philosophy, just as the Septuagint translated the Old Testament into Greek in the 3rd Century BCE. But Levinas does not claim that Judaism holds a monopoly upon wisdom, as evidenced in one of his texts, a Talmudic meditation on justice entitled "As Old As the World?" At a point in the meditation where Levinas discusses the relationship between passion and justice (based in the book of the Song of Songs [The Song of Solomon]), Levinas steers his discussion to Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*. Levinas finds surprising correlations between the plot of *The Eumenides* and the manner in which the law of the Torah was administered by the Jewish Sanhedrin [AOATW 77]. The discussion of these similarities reveals a great deal regarding the meaning of justice to Levinas.

The Eumenides is the story of the Furies, the female spirits of vengeance, and their pursuit of Orestes, who has killed his mother in revenge for her killing of his father. The fundamental struggle presented in the play is between the Furies and Apollo, who would pardon Orestes' offense because of its extenuating circumstances (indeed, he advised Orestes to commit matricide). When Orestes seeks refuge at

the shrine of Athena, the goddess puts the question to a vote of citizens. He is found not guilty by a tie vote. The Furies are given a new role within a socially dispensed justice. Wooed by Athena, they become the Eumenides, the well-tempered ones, agents of society and of a new, reasoned, form of justice.[4]

Levinas applauds the resolution. It would not be good for the old law of unremitting vengeance to perish, replaced by "love, indulgence, forgiveness" [AOATW 77]. There is a purpose to the terrible law of retribution. And in both *The Eumenides* and in the Sanhedrin it is left up to a vote of people to decide whether vengeance or forgiveness shall rule. It is through the sober *and shared* deliberation of people that justice is achieved.

The Furies swarmed after Orestes with the unqualified passion of blood lust. Levinas, in his discussion, contends that justice is based in "the mastery of passion" and believes that the danger which threatens justice is vice, "which belongs to the private sphere," which in our current Western world is "'no one's business'" [AOATW 76]. In other words, from both the Greek play and from the Talmudic and Biblical references upon which his meditation is founded, Levinas describes justice as the result of a shared deliberation in which passion is overcome. Both the unequivocal law of retribution and forgiving kindness are

balanced within the shared realm of discussion and
consideration.

On the one hand we have evidence here that the Greeks
independently dealt with issues that were of important
spiritual and juridical consequence to the Talmudic Jews.
As a result, we might suggest that Levinas' role in
completing the task of the Septuagint also involves teaching
Greek to the Jews. On the other hand, and more important to
the purpose of this section, it helps to explain Levinas'
notion of justice in light of its antecedents. For although
the structure of Jewish jurisprudence, insofar as it is a
court composed of a large group of men, is similar to the
jury assembled in the resolution in the Greek play, there is
more within Levinas' text than the realization that more
than one culture developed the jury system.

Mythology, including the gods and goddesses of Greek
plays, is allegory, truth symbolically presented. Like his
interpretation of Plato's *Good*, Levinas understands *The
Eumenides* to be discussing the fundamental human condition.
Life outside of the social realm is passion, based in
enjoyment and satisfaction, forms of self-satisfied
possession. The frustration of enjoyment creates pain and
impassioned anger. Without a level ground upon which reason
can enter into interpersonal relations, war triumphs. In a
social realm governed by rules of exchange war is held at
bay. This realm, a time of shared understanding, is the

synchronous present, *being*. This time of consciousness and cognition, a domain of shared language and meanings, is the domain of justice.

More than an allegory of how Athens received the jury system for those accused of homicide, *The Eumenides* is, to Levinas, a parable of everyday existence. "Isn't Aeschylus enough? All the essential problems are broached there," he states [AOATW 77]. Within his meditation upon the Talmud we hear him opening more than one level of discourse. On the obvious level we hear him lauding the sober dispensation of juridical decisions from a body like the Sanhedrin. A committed jury must be the responsible agent in decisions of such importance as a person's guilt or innocence. On another level, opened by the context of his other writings, we hear him indicating that the very ground which allows such deliberations, the consciousness which allows the postponement of passions, is based in justice itself.

The passions of anger and fear must be held at bay in order for justice to reign (recall *The Republic*, where a just person was characterized by emotions and desire which remained under the control of reason). Yet anger and pain are not the only passions we must be leery of; love is also a passion. Love must also be held at bay. The word "love" is not one that Levinas likes to use, due to its mixing of connotations of need and desire.[5] In one instance, however, Levinas describes the relationship with the other

person as a relationship to a "loved one."[6] Our

relationship with the singular other is with a loved one, a

passion; yet we live in a world of multiple others. There

is the possibility that the one to whom I am responsible may

be the torturer of another to whom I am responsible. A

situation arises which requires an arena of the finite in

which I may weigh the infinite responsibilities to multiple

others.

Levinas also uses Hebrew terms to explain this

attenuation of love in order to provide for justice. The

term *hesed* [חסד] refers to loving kindness or free charity.

The term *sedek* [צדק] is the term used for righteousness or

justice. Levinas states:

> Now, there is the appearance of the Third which is a
> limitation of this *hesed* without measure. Because the
> other for whom I am responsible may be the torturer of
> a third who is also my other. It explains the
> necessity of justice, the *sedek* behind the *hesed*.[7]

Hesed is the selfless devotion of subjectivity toward

the singular other. *Sedek*, justice, derives from the

"appearance of the Third." Through the entrance of a *third*

into the dyad comes a transformation in both the world and

in the self.

Subjectivity's Transformation

The relationship between the self and the other is

asymmetrical. The irreversibility of the relationship is

experientially evident. It is the other to whom obligation

is due, and subjectivity is defined by its being subject to
that obligation. I am always experientially subject--to the
demand of the other, and this subjection contradicts any
communal and equal intersubjectivity that might be presumed.
The brute fact of the other person is the demand made of me
through the quasi--phenomenon of the other's face. That
demand, a command against murder or possession, requires no
abstraction away from the asymmetrical subjectivity which I
am. The face of the other demands responsibility, infinite
responsibility.

I have addressed, *supra*, the unlimited responsibility
to which subjectivity is subject. I have stated that
subjectivity's identity *is* its responsibility, that *I* is
synonymous with *Here I am*, a signification which both
responds and takes up the burden of responsibility. Still,
it is not difficult to understand those who cannot accept
the altruistic nature of subjectivity. Are we not
confronted daily with evidence that contradicts this stance
by Levinas?

The Reality of Self-Assertion

Is it not evident that claims to rights are made by one
who is defined, asymmetrically, by responsibility? In other
words, the words I speak do not always appear to emerge out
of my obsession with the other; they may (and generally do)
claim that I am equal to or superior to others. Indeed, the

first objection that many have to the asymmetry proposed by Levinas is the experiential truth that individuals assert themselves; they *do* claim rights, regardless of the other-oriented base proposed by Levinas. Indeed, the humility of the subject is often very difficult to detect in the angry protestations of one affronted. Whence the shift from responsible subjectivity to claimant of rights?

Such a shift depends upon one's identification of oneself as *one of the others*, as one who stands with one's *fellows* rather than as an outsider before an other. *The shift to self-assertion requires that the intimate dyad of subject-other be breached.* The self who professes itself to be equal to or greater than the other must first be confronted with more than one other.

Before explicating this condition in more detail it is necessary to state that the philosophical requisite being laid out here is not part of what might be assumed to be a causal chain. However, it must be admitted that the principal meaning is simplest to understand when laid out in time-dependent sequence: first the subject is in responsible relationship with the other; the time of justice begins when a third person comes on the scene, causing the subject to withdraw into thought, contemplating how one can be responsible to two infinite demands; then the subject is placed as a member of a community of more or less equivalent humans; and finally, the self is interpreted by the self as

having qualities which may be compared to other humans. Although developmentalists might support or oppose such an evolution, the argument developed here is not meant to be a treatise on ontogenesis. Harkening back to the previous discussions of the coming into words of articulation, we must remember that this movement from immemorable past to the present, the movement into articulation, is a task like that of Sisyphus; it endlessly recurs as subjectivity dissimulates into words.

The responsible agencies for the movement from responsible subjectivity to self-asserting member of the human community are what is being sought here. One might characterize this search as transcendental in that it is an examination of *conditions of the possibility* of self-assertion. We desire to understand the conditions under which a person leaves the self-effacement of subjectivity.

Levinas' Primal Dyad

Levinas has often mentioned what would happen if only two people existed on earth. He speculates that there would be no problem of justice and no evasion of responsibility [CEL 57; OTB 157]. One would be rapt with the other, completely engulfed with the face of infinite demand. In Levinas' dyad, subjectivity would have only one loyalty, one demand, and that would be to the sole *other*. Clearly, however, such a situation is oversimplified; primal dyads

are not found. The most obvious reason is that isolation of a dyad upon this earth is an unlikely scenario. Individuals are not created *ex nihilo* in pairs on deserted islands.

But we can still learn from his thought experiment. Levinas contends that problems arise when the dyad is breached by the advent of a third person. When a third person enters the scene, one is faced with divided loyalties. The face of another manifests as an ethical demand, an infinite demand. But two faces, two demands, two infinities split one's attention, break the rapture. A weighing must occur. A withdrawal into thought must take place in order to weigh the demands of more than one other. One is left in the untenable position of having to weigh infinities against each other.[8]

Levinas claims that rather than being paralyzed by the demands of many (demands which can only be inadequately met) that there is a withdrawal into contemplation which becomes the basis for action. When faced by more than one, subjectivity composes itself to respond, weighs the unweighable, and responds via articulations of meaning (and either spoken or unspoken meaning still remains under the rubric of *language*). The breaching of the dyad with the advent of a third person is the key to understanding how meaning categories arise which can compare persons and which can put *me* on a level with *you* or *her*. But the dyad is

breached in other ways prior to the actual appearance of the third person.

The Breaching of the Dyad Through Language

I have claimed that Levinas' dyad is the product of a thought experiment and is not to be found on the earth. Speculation can give us a scenario in which a woman gives birth to a child on a desert island. Would this not satisfy the criteria of Levinas' discussion of a lone dyad? Even then the dyad has already been breached. The reason involves the linguistic nature of existence. As discussed *supra*, even alone one lives within an *Ur*-language, and *it* carries with it a pre-existing world of others. The articulations of the world, performed via the language categories of others, imply a shared world. The entities of the world are given to the others as well as to me; indeed, the articulations take place in a world which is given as a shared world.

Even in the interactions of a lone dyad on a desert island, the language that is used is a language of *others*. Its categories are from outside the dyad, and its categories transcend the experiences of each person in the dyad. Experiences, framed and depicted by language, are meaningful through language. Words frequently refer to that unseen or unexperienced by the speaker but which is attested to by the others who enter the scene via language. The *Ur*-language

itself already implies others, already brings the others into play. d is a language of *others*. Its categories are from outside the dyad, and its categories transcend the experiences of each person in the dyad. Experiences, framed and depicted by language, are meaningful through language. Words frequently refer to that unseen or unexperienced by the speaker but which is attested to by the others who enter the scene via language. The *Ur*-language itself already implies others, already brings the others into play. distinctions.) The child on the desert island already inherits, via his mother's language, a perceptual outlook which will distinguish certain *Gestalten* over others, which will choose certain things as food, certain entities as dangerous, certain sounds as humorous. The horizon of the earth may be vicariously experienced as threatening or promising, an endless waterfall into the void or the limit of vision on a planet curving away, or in other ways which neither the child nor his mother have witnessed. The articulations of the pre-existing language prepare a world for the child, and those articulations imply a world as perceived and experienced by others than his mother.

Imagining a dyad without an *Ur*-language might provide a primal scheme of subjectivity enthralled with otherness, but it also conveys an impression of sheer animality, *cultureless* life. Through the *Ur*-language and its

conveyance of the cultural, we are already prepared for, and apprenticed to, the social.

The Breaching of the Dyad Through Illeity

I have argued that the *Ur*-language is a necessary environment for the human, that all perception and cognition is based within the categorizations which separate *this* from *that*. I have also indicated that there is, in phenomenology, a "structural" responsibility inherent to the subject insofar as intentionality is concerned. In other words, linguistic categories (a redundancy) of the world arise because of my interaction with the world. I cannot divorce myself from the way that the world is perceived or known. It is indeed *me* who "speaks" the world. When I open my eyes in the morning and contemplate my surroundings, the wall presents to *me* as *that* wall, the carpet presents as a particular color and texture, etc. In other words, the categories of the *Ur*-language originate in my experience, in my intentional relationship with the world.

Yet it is also *not* me that bespeaks the world. The *Ur*-language predates me, not simply because others spoke and perceived the world before my birth, but as demonstrated in my *lived temporality*. I do not create these words and categories which come to mind, but grab hold of them as they are bespoken *to* me. When I open my eyes, I see that tree as

a tree. And though it is *my* perception, *my* cognition, and *my* categorization, the "*my*" signifies that I am the node to which these perspectives are revealed. I am passive to the sensibility and articulation which always go hand in hand. The sensations and articulations are as though visited upon me. The concept conveyed here is paradoxical. Language originates within the sphere of the familiar, insofar as I am involved in the articulation of the world and it is to me that the world is articulated. But it is also alien, insofar as it is not me which is the origin of the terms of the world.

This description of the partition of the world as being both performed by me and visited upon me is an introduction to the difficult concept of *illeity*. Illeity is another way the dyad is breached, and is the basis for its breaching by the *Ur*-language and the other person. The neologism was formed from the Latin *ille*, *he*, and specifies the origin of language and time. (There is little doubt that the "he" referred to is God, an issue which will be addressed here shortly.) The *he* of illeity is not a reference to an empirical third person who interrupts an interaction between self and another, but is a *he* "within" or "before" the *I*.

A bit more should be discussed regarding this schism between the alien and past *he* and the familiar and present *me*. I have suggested that the *ille* of illeity is more than a third person; he is also a *me* of an unrecoverable past.

If I had a deficiency in one of the chromatic chemical bases
for color vision, I might experience a world in radically
different ways than you. The color scheme of my wardrobe
and my room decorations would be different in my experience
than yours. The world would be articulated differently to
me. Yet is this difference not due to *my* difference as an
experiencer? And is it not also something that is *as-if*
visited upon me. The *me* that has had the world's
distinctions visited upon me, who has opened his eyes and
has seen the colors, is not the *ille* of illeity. Illeity
refers to the speaker of the *Ur*-language that is the world.
And that *ille*, *He*, which is always already past, is the God
of Levinas' philosophical texts.

The gender-specific nature of Levinas' term requires
some initial discussion. The lack of a neutral, singular,
and personal pronoun in French and English is a stumbling
block in discussing illeity. There is no apparent reason
why *her-ness* could not be used instead of *he-ness* except
that gender is not the issue. Illeity refers to the
unknowable *humanness* which precedes the *ego*, a humanness
which speaks forth the human world. If that *unknowable*
nature is to be marked with a gender, then the unknowable
has become known, has been marked with an unnecessary
identifying characteristic. To term this humanness the
third instead of *he* avoids some of the problems of a gender-
specific appellation, avoids the annoying characteristic of

creating a distinction which is not intended nor evident in the dimensionality being discussed. It is important, not that gender be specified, but that *humanness* be specified in illeity. The origin of language is not to be attributed to some neutral "it", but to a *person*. Language is *spoken to* someone and *by* someone.[9]

Illeity, or *the third,* is on the fringes of the knowable, is immune to presentation, resists being brought to the present. Illeity is elusive and unencapsulated (and unencapsulatable). This third person is always in the past and cannot be brought to the present. Again we find in Levinas a *time* which cannot be recovered, but a time which is characterized by a *saying* which gives forth the world and its entities.

I have claimed that the advent of a third person, another *you,* breaks into the rapture of the self-other relationship. I have also claimed that the *Ur*-language which provides the environment and terms by which the world is articulated also ruptures the relationship. Now I am claiming that a third person, illeity, is the speaker of the *Ur*-language, and that the third only leaves a trace of having been here. We cannot state that the third leaves *signs,* according to Levinas, merely traces. The difference is that when we uncover a sign we can reconstitute the one who created the sign. We can, by observing the animals portrayed and weapons depicted in petroglyphs, put together

a picture of the stonecarvers. We can, by observing the sign left by an animal in the forest, arrive at the species, size, sex, and state of health of the animal. Signs enable us to bring aspects of the author into presence.

But the trace is not a sign. Illeity cannot be made present. The signs themselves efface illeity. The trace that illeity leaves is in the fact that signs are given forth. They are spoken, or more accurately, *have been* spoken. The speaker is not present, but the signs betray the speaker as occupying a past. Illeity, the third who has spoken the *Ur*-language, although resistant to being made present, has established a realm of justice that enables self and other to meet.

If the other is totally other, how is it possible to meet on any common ground? I would be unable to understand what the other says, nor would I be able to categorize the other in any way. Without *some* reciprocity, some capture of the other, some pigeonholing of the other regarding interests, needs, sense of humor, gender, intelligence, etc., there could be no meeting of the minds, communication, or satisfaction of the other's needs.

It is the *Ur*-language and illeity which provides that meeting ground. Every *I* and *you* relationship is preceded by a third person who granted, in a immemorial past, the arena for the meeting. Each *you* thereby appears in the shadow of a third who prepared the way.

In order to better understand illeity, it is helpful to turn to another of Levinas' Talmudic meditations, "Messianic Texts." In a section entitled *Who is the Messiah?* Levinas introduces a paragraph from the final chapter of *Tractate Sanhedrin*. In the paragraph is addressed the question of the name of the Messiah. Different rabbinical schools are cited as using different names: R. Shila's school names him Shiloh; R. Yannai's school names him Yinnon; and R. Haninah's names him Haninah. One is struck by the similarity between the schools' founders and their names for the Messiah. Levinas explains that the names convey definite spiritual connotations. (Shiloh conveys the meaning of "peace"; "*yinnon*" can signify "justice"; and the latter name signifies "favor" or "love.") But the similarities between the names of the rabbis and the names for the Messiah is significant for Levinas over and above the metamorphoses of the names into descriptive nouns. Indicating another line of the *Tractate* which states that if the Messiah is of the living, "it might be Rabbi himself, or Me" [MT 88]. Levinas states:

> Judaism, reaching out for the coming of the Messiah, has already gone beyond the notion of a mythical Messiah appearing at the end of History, and conceives of messianism as a personal vocation among men. [MT 88]

After reviewing a few other lines of the *Tractate*, Levinas hazards an interpretation:

> The Messiah is Myself [*Moir*]; to be Myself is to be the Messiah.

> We have just seen that the Messiah is the just man
> who suffers, who has taken on the suffering of others.
> Who finally takes on the suffering of others, if not
> the being who says 'Me' [*Moi*]?....Messianism is no more
> than this apogee in being, a centralizing,
> concentration or twisting back of itself of the Self
> [*Moi*].
> Messianism is therefore not the certainty of the
> coming of a man who stops History. It is my power to
> bear the suffering of all. It is the moment when I
> recognize this power and my universal responsibility.
> [MT 89-90]

Levinas' talmudic wanderings thus return to his

philosophical themes. Is this *ille* the Messiah who is *me*?

The *ille* of illeity refers to the *always past* and

unrecoverable *He* who articulates the *Ur*-language of the

world. Yet, as I have claimed in Chapter 4, it is

subjectivity who bears the responsibility, who *says* the

saying, who bears the world through representing it. It is

Me who speaks the world. Not the *Me* of the present, the

experiencer of the articulations, but the transcendental

noetic pole of intentionality, the *He* of the immediate yet

ancient past. The *He* who is the Messiah in Levinas'

religious writings is the *He* who is the *ille* of his

philosophical writings.

However, once again we reach a dangerous zone for

philosophy. The danger is that we will cross the line into

the construction of another - unobserved, unobservable, and

wholly imagined — world. Without doubt, Levinas' Judaism

has been influential in his development of the concept of

illeity. But has his concept of God been simply

appropriated from a religious belief system and inserted

into his philosophical texts? I will re-visit this topic *infra*, in a separate section, and attempt a more thorough investigation. The question which must be addressed is whether Levinas' philosophy must undergo demythologization or whether our preconceived notions of God must be jettisoned in order to understand what he is saying. Until that discussion, it is important to understand illeity as that which provides a synchronous matrix of representations in which I have already been prepared for other people.

Return to Being

When one is confronted with infinite *others* that must be compared and weighed, it is necessary to enter an arena where such deliberation might occur. Such assessment is, according to Levinas, the origin of representation and consciousness. It is, as well, the birth of *logos* and being. Persons, who are unrepresentable except via always inadequate thematizations, are examined side by side. They become subject to questions of "what about...?" which are fundamentally violent since they reduce the infinite "who" to quiddities [OTB 158]. The transcendental is inadequately transubstantiated into the imminent; the other who lures me into a future is re-presented, brought into the present.

It is thus evident why Levinas describes the realm of being (which is conceived as a synchronic linguistic system) as both war and politics. Persons are subjected to the

violence of reductive terms as the system seemingly mows them down in war-like efficiency. And the subsequent comparisons among the terms may be likened to politics.

One might then presume that the systematic and synchronic present, conceived by Levinas to be a realm of idealities and representation (and of ontology and *being*), would be disparaged because persons are represented in terms of *whatness*, in terms which would reduce their alterity. Again, inherent in consciousness is the adequation of consciousness' object (i.e., the object of consciousness is made adequate for consciousness' grasp). Idealities are formed in which objects are already exemplars of classes of objects. Such a realm seemingly fixes people, as well as things, through a leveling language.

Rather than receiving Levinas' unequivocal antipathy, the systematic present is held to be in service to and derived from the ethical exigencies of subjectivity's altruism. It is when the system is given priority over the personal responsibility which gave rise to it that Levinas' ire is aroused. The system — *being*, the realm of *justice* — is necessary to serve people. While Levinas may laud the passivity of the unassumed responsibility inherent in the immemorable past of subjectivity and proximity, he also acclaims its derivative in the present, justice.[10]

It is helpful to remember the "superstructuralist" or linguistic approach which Levinas takes; the world is

textual insofar as its currency is *meaning*. The present is composed of a matrix of interconnected references. We may examine the "language" of phenomenological entities to uncover further meanings just as we can mine the terms of the particular tongue we use to uncover further meanings. Thus, such an investigation into the nature of the world and being is not only an investigation into the grammar and syntax of a world structured as a language. It is also an investigation into the language we use to express that world. In other words, how an entity manifests itself may be quarried for meanings regarding its relationship to other entities, just as the terms that are utilized in our language for that entity may be scrutinized as well.[11]

Levinas' understanding of *being* includes both of these distinctively linguistic dimensions. When Levinas inscribes *being*, it is helpful to think of the present tense, *is*, and to consider it as involving two parts, *the nature of coming into what is*, or what may be termed articulation or *essence*, and *what is* insofar as it is the interconnected and systematic *present*. *Being* then is understood as both a verb, the movement into *what is*, and as a noun, the systematic present. The nominative character of Levinas' *being* therefore corresponds to commonly accepted definitions of *being* (i.e., *being* is the whole of what is). But *being* as the articulation of *being* (i.e., how beings become articulated into the present) functions as a verb and can be

studied as such. Indeed, much of Levinas' task can be understood as an investigation of this coming into presence.

Such a study suggests not only that we have been subject to a misleading visualism, but also that what we tend to accept as commonsensical, the notion that something is identical to itself, betrays a diachronic dimension (in Levinas' sense).

Identity and Vision

The etymology of *interest*, a term Levinas uses in relation to being, reveals *inter-esse, between being*, a reference to the synchronism of being. "*Esse* is *interesse; essence* is interest" [OTB 4]. Examining his use of the word helps us to understand why Levinas relates being and justice:

> Being's interest takes dramatic form in egoisms
> struggling with one another, each against all, in the
> multiplicity of allergic egoisms which are at war with
> one another and are thus together. War is the deed or
> the drama of the essence's interest. No entity can
> await its hour. [OTB 4]

Levinas thus equates *interest* with what grabs hold of entities and brings them into power struggles. If we remember that *essence* is articulation, that *the process does not occur at a distance from me, that it is not divorced from my participation in the coming to be of meaning*, then what reads as a somewhat morose commentary on the universe becomes an existential dilemma. Meaning is articulation. Articulation is the process of perception, thought, and

speech. By being conscious I am involved actively in a war, a war characterized by appropriation and categorization.

Interest is a process of reduction to the same. This use of the word does not subtract the usual meanings of *interest*. *Interest* denotes my involvement in being (and beings); it signifies a profit somehow tied to time. To say that one is interested is to say that attention is fixed upon something, that something is being "taken in," that one gains from it. To be *disinterested* is therefore to be somehow *not* a part of *being*, to not be in a profitable situation.

Levinas relies on more than etymology to justify his use of the term *interest* in relationship to *being*. In order to see how, we must examine and question what seems most self-evident, a thing's self-identity. It is reasonable to agree that an object is identical with itself. The tree in front of me *is* that tree itself. This desk *is* this desk and no other. But there is more to be found in the syllogism than simply common sense. *Identity*, as in the identity of an object, is based in a synchronic *visualism*. The *is* which asserts identity marks a present in which an item *is now* equal to itself, as if both sides of the predication $A = A$ or A *is* A rested in front of the eyes [OTB 38]. Clearly, there are not *two* trees before me. My experience of the tree is temporal. The *experienced* predication might best be represented as A *(then)* $= A$ *(now)*, with the first term held

over as a representation of the past. The identity of the tree in front of me is really a claim that the tree retains its identity from moment to moment.

The timelessness of logical truths rest upon the simple law of identity. But the equation A *is* A itself rests in a presupposition of *presence*, the belief that both sides of the equivalency are present and tied together by the verb *is* and are somehow self-evidently visible before the eyes. But as noted, the law of identity cannot depend upon an experienced synchronicity, but instead depends upon temporality. Can we not say that an object *persists*, or as Levinas states, that "A *As*" [OTB 38]. If, as I have stated, the objects in the world are experienced *linguistically*, are *as-if spoken*, then perhaps the sensory modality which best represents our experience is audition rather than vision. A sound is not experienced synchronically, but through temporal transformation. The identity of a sound is renewed as its lasts. The fan on my desk emits a hum which is renewed from moment to moment.

Why the stress on sensory modalities in relationship to *being*? The first answer is that one may understand the world in a different way than the way Levinas calls Greek. The bias toward vision is part and parcel of the emphasis on *being*, a panoptic desire to view, in the present, all of the presumed whole. In contrast to this is Levinas' emphasis upon the coming-into-presence, *essence*, the movement into

being, and the unrecoverable past which precedes essence, the *élan* of responsibility.

But there is another reason to push for a reinterpretation of the sensory modality we use to explain *being.* I have emphasized that *being* is a form of capture or encapsulation into a system of synchronic understanding. I have also indicated that one cannot separate oneself from the process whereby entities come into *being.* *I* am responsible for the system of meaning which is *being,* if only because *my* consciousness is the site upon which it happens.

If meaning (identity, quiddity, ideality) is not best described as by a synchronic visualism (*A is A,* that desk is that desk) but is best described as a *resounding,* and if *I* collude in the coming to be of meaning, would it not be better to describe consciousness as a *listening?* The "objective" mind's eye which would judge that which is detached and distant from it would be understood then as responding to the direction of a language which is spoken to the senses and cognition. We would be as though hearkening to the direction of the language of the world. More significantly, consciousness would be understood as participating in the articulation of meaning upon a basis of a prior attunement to what is being spoken. (We might say that we listen to what illeity has already prepared for.) The hegemony that the subject has had in modernist

philosophy would be replaced by a fundamental sociality, attention to language.

To be trapped conceptually in the visualistic paradigm of language focuses us only on the language as it is *said*. We pay attention solely to the text. To approach language from an auditory stance is to take a skeptical position, a position that indicates that all is not apparent to the eye. Such an approach might allow what Levinas calls the "confidential" to re-enter a realm of discussion which the very structure of our languages has closed off [EEL 107]. If *being*, consciousness, language, cognition, perception, and our very existence in the present is synonymous with the realm of justice, and if we are constrained by visualism to remain trapped within the constraints of the synchronism of language, then adopting an auditory approach opens us to the process whereby language comes to the present. It focuses us upon the ones who speak, the very ones who demand the justice whose realm we inhabit. It focuses us upon the responsibility which provides the ground for justice.

The God of Ethical Philosophy

For several reasons, God is not generally discussed in postmodern philosophy. First of all, the lack of a demonstrable referent for the term relegates discussions of God to statements of opinion of what is "behind the scenes," or otherworldly. Arguments about the existence or nature of

God are akin to arguing about an afterlife. Without significant and *intersubjective* evidence, it remains a matter of opinion or personal revelation. Further, differences of opinion regarding God seem to be more than simply variations of a common experience, as evidenced by statements which frankly contradict each other from various proponents of religious beliefs (e.g., atheists, Moslems, Calvinists, etc). Also, support for the theological often relies upon faith in some revealed source of knowledge (e.g., The Koran or The Bible). Whereas philosophy can identify and lay bare the underlying faith assumptions, the assumptions themselves lie outside of the realm of philosophy.

Another reason for avoiding discussing God in postmodern philosophy is pertinent for this discussion. *Theology* is literally the *logos* or being of God. To discuss the divine is to thematize God within language. Insofar as Levinas' conviction of *being* is that it is a synchronization of categories within a systematic present, theology would involve subjection of the deity to the motifs and restrictions of syntax. For these reasons and others, discussions of God are eschewed in postmodern philosophy (except perhaps to affirm the death of God insofar as contemporary culture lacks a prime authority).[12]

Levinas, however, persists in bringing the term "God" into his philosophical texts, and it is often difficult to

understand why it is necessary. It is fitting to examine Levinas' context for his references to God as well as the distinctive meaning that he ascribes to the term. The most important reason for doing so is that his use of the term "God" is intertwined in his discussion of justice and illeity. If we are to better understand the relationship between humans and their world and each other which Levinas portrays, we cannot disregard a term which he uses so frequently (and uniquely) in his discussions of those relationships. It should be emphasized from the outset that though his use of the term has been significantly influenced by his Judaic and monotheistic presuppositions, it would be incorrect to think that he is simply attempting to proselyte Gentiles into a Hebraic theodicy. Indeed, Levinas' use of *God* has **philosophical** precursors, though it is certainly not synonymous with those antecedent descriptions.

Levinas has several times stated great admiration for the insights which led to Descartes' proof of the existence of God. The proof depends upon premisses that state that although one has never experienced an infinite or perfect being, one nonetheless has ideas of infinity and perfection. These ideas must be innate, Descartes surmised, and further, placed within one's mind by that infinite and perfect being himself. Though many have assailed Descartes' logic, Levinas extracts from it what he believes to be a unique insight, the concept of a thought overwhelming the mind that

thinks it. Within the basis provided by Descartes is found the notion that cognition itself can be disturbed, that the act of comprehension can be stymied [CEL 61].

There is consonance between the notion extracted from Descartes, the mind dealing with an idea that overwhelms it, and the dilemma faced by the subject who must weigh the infinite demands placed upon it. I have discussed at length those attempts by the subject to encompass what resists categorization, the other person. Both Descartes' and Levinas' notions confront finitude with an infinite which cannot be comprehended (from *com*, "with" and *prehendere*, "to catch hold of").[13] The God of the philosopher Descartes, conceived via methodical calculation as the origin of ideas of perfection, is not, however, the God of the ethicist Levinas.

As noted *supra*, Levinas has also been influenced by Plato's notion of the "Good existing beyond Being" [CEL 61]. Levinas' frequent use of the term "the *Good*" refers to this famous expression. As described, the "Beyond Being," for Levinas, is not a spatial displacement or another world, but is *temporally* prior to articulation. Levinas' retention of *the Good* as an expression is a recognition that it is the *élan* which drives subjectivity into consciousness and speech, and it is a recognition that it is itself responsibility toward others.

The Goodness of the *Good*

What makes the Good good? Platonic philosophy stressed the "forms" that worldly existents mimic imperfectly. Levinas' *Good*, the *élan* which propels the subject into dissimulation and speech, is oriented toward a future which is both ideal and unattainable. The *Good* is teleologically oriented, aiming toward a better state than what is present. This is one reason Levinas' philosophy can be labelled *messianic*, claiming as it does that human consciousness and speech is utopic in direction. The utopia is never reached; it is therefore not the form of messianism which postulates an endtime or time when lions lie down with lambs [CEL 66].

I described Levinas' messianism *supra* as a reference to the *saying*, in the irretrievable past, of the world, a taking on the responsibility for the others by speaking forth a world through which we can navigate socially. I further claimed that the *ille* of illeity and the Messiah who bears the suffering and weight of the world are references to a irrecoupable past. Yet I have also said that Levinas' philosophy has been adjudged as messianic due to its teleology. Is this a paradox, that this Messiah — who *has borne* the world and who is in the past — is teleologically oriented, facing the future? Not when we remember that it is the other to whom the *saying* is targeted. The speaking is aimed for a listener who *will* hear. *Saying* is a response to

other who has already been impressed upon me but who also occupies an unattainable future.

When we return to an earlier theme, the confused temporality becomes clearer. The fundamental impact that the other has upon me can be said to be a command to me to not murder, not appropriate, not reduce the other to a thing in my array of representations. I am commanded to *respond*, and indeed, I find that I have already done so. I am other-oriented. All of this discussion of illeity, messianism, the irretrievable past, passive subjectivity, and the *Ur*-language is done in the awareness that they are oriented to the other person:

> The goodness of the Good — the Good whioch never sleeps or nods — inclines the movement it calls forth, to turn it from the Good and orient it toward the other, and only thus toward the Good. [GP 165]

If illeity bespeaks the world, it is a world in which I may cope with the demands of many others. Illeity creates a world with justice at its base, where the demand of the other's face can take a place next to the demand of a third's face. Temporality circles into itself, with an irretrievable past seemingly coinciding with an unreachable future; the *élan* of the past *saying* reaches toward a future object (which is no object) which is the other.

What makes the *Good* good? The question itself already conspires against its answer due to its reference to a *what* rather than a *who*. The *Good* is obedience to the command of the other, a command which is a prohibition against murder.

Before volition, the *Good* has articulated a response to the other. The giving of a response in discourse is in itself — regardless of what linguistic response it is — a nonviolent action. It is a postponement of assimilation into the same. We might say that the *Good* is good because it is obedience to the law. We are obligated to the other, and the *Good* has obeyed the command of the other; indeed, through its bespeaking a world where terms are synchronous and weighable, it has provided a realm of justice. Although the finite pursuit of the ideal (satisfying the needs of the others) will always fail to satisfactorily achieve its *telos*, and although there will always be miscarriages of justice, the realm which has been *presen*ted through *being* allows what could not take place in the enraptured dyad nor in the egoism of language-free aloneness.

Theomorphic Temporality

Levinas' God is "the other who turns our nature inside out, who calls our ontological will-to-be into question" [CEL 61]. Levinas specifically refutes any attempt to rejuvenate a God who could be captured into a system, who would become a slave of *being*. Levinas does not wish to reinstitute a God who would sit as King of the universe. Such a God would not even be supreme, since He would be a *subject* of *being*, the systematic present. As stated, "*God*" is a term which is generally subservient to philosophy,

since God is conceived of as an entity which exists or has being [GP 154]. Levinas' God is *beyond being* and is the impetus for subjectivity's dissimulation. Indeed, the problematic of interrelationship with others and that of God are intertwined [OTB 17].

The face of the other person, states Levinas, calls our *conatus essendi* (or will-to-be) into question, calls us into responsibility, and obligates us to dissimulate into responsible text. Thus one could readily be led to believe that Levinas equates the other person with God. But he specifically refutes such a correlation.[14] God is not the other person, but is *the temporal disruption which elicits responsibility and consciousness*. God, to Levinas, is "sacred history," what makes the relationship between persons possible and hallowed [CEL 54]. Levinas' God, a god of ethics, is intended both to unsettle philosophy and to shatter the distinction between those who believe and those who do not believe in God's existence. To bear witness of God, Levinas claims, is "precisely *not* to state this extraordinary word" [OTB 149, emphasis mine]. Bearing witness of God is not *what* is spoken, the *said*, but is the *saying*, dissimulation into speech. Levinas' God of ethics might best be understood as lived-time itself, as the movement from atemporality into articulation, the responsible motion into text that characterizes experiential time.

Support for this "theomorphic" notion of time can be found in <u>Totality and Infinity</u> as well, especially in a chapter entitled "The Infinity of Time". Levinas discusses time in terms of discontinuity and fecundity, language which makes reference to the articulation of the instant, the movement from passive subjectivity to the dissimulation into text which is responsibility. Further, Levinas characterizes time by a term which usually has human (or divine) meanings, *pardon*.[15] The pardon, or forgiveness, of time is what allows us to be free from being stuck in our fates. The new instant brings forth new articulations, new significances. And the capitalized "Infinity" and "Infinite" of <u>Otherwise Than Being</u> appear to be interchangeable with "God" insofar as both are characterized as preceding thematization and the present.[16]

"God" as a Term

Still, we are left with a dilemma: why does Levinas use the term "God" to describe the *élan* that propels subjectivity into responsibility when other terms might be more acceptable? Levinas' term "infinite" is defensible and does not initiate quite the same revulsion that many feel when confronted with a word which carries countless connotations. However, the term "infinite" does not carry the attribution of personhood that "God" does; nor does it

necessarily carry divine attributes (e.g., the infinities of mathematics and physics).

It is certain that Levinas understands the advantages of the use of the term "God". His philosophy privileges illeity, the kinship of humans, justice, and the selfless impetus at the origin of subjectivity. The use of a term with parental connotations (God as father) recalls concepts such as the "family of man," "brotherhood of man," and "human family" which Levinas' illeity would seem to promote. The term "justice" also carries with it the idea of a judge. And just as selfless love, *agapē*, has long been discussed in Christian circles as being the divine attribute to which one should aspire, so does Levinas discuss the Hebrew equivalent, *hesed*.

Still, if Levinas, whom I have described as a secular Judaist, objects to the ontological capture of a deity whom he continually places beyond the reach of *being*, why would he use such a charged term? The question is pertinent to the purposes of this dissertation, since any implications that Levinas' philosophy might have for the theory and practice of psychology would be held in great doubt if they were perceived to rest on a theistic base.

The answer may be found in a comment he made in an interview:

> One must wonder...if, from the other's calling oneself into question...life does not start where the word "God" takes sense, where God "comes to mind."[17]

This comment is a somewhat startling one for a postmodernist. Levinas is wondering if the point at which "God" makes sense is the point where life begins! It should be obvious by now that Levinas does not mean that those without a belief in God are not really alive. He is instead labeling a temporal movement or event, the point where adequation fails to be achieved in the idea, where one is interrupted in one's *conatus*.

In confronting an other, as indicated, subjectivity both encounters that which it cannot encompass and, without compromising that inadequacy, finds that it has been prepared to enter into discourse with that other. This instant is the start of life. Consciousness arises in a social arena of meaning. Meanings arise as a part of a language, and they arise out of a community of discourse. Meanings arise when I am ousted from the reverie (of aloneness or enamoredness) and am called to respond. The unconsciousness of the moment transmutes to consciousness when speech erupts from mouth or mind. Phenomenologically, life without meaning is a meaningless designation. Life indeed emerges as the articulations of the world *mean*.

Still, why should this moment of life, *ex nihilo*, be "where the word 'God' takes sense, where God 'comes to mind'"? Is Levinas referring to his interpretation of Descartes' thesis, that the idea of God overflows the thought that thinks it? If so, then for Levinas *all*

language is overflow. The words emerge from a subjectivity which is always past and always responding out of an obligation to respond. Before volition words are spoken. We must then acknowledge that for Levinas any word implies that overflow which is the infinite, or God. Even in the simplest "hello," or in the nod to another, or even in the turning away of one's gaze, subjectivity articulates in response to another. In those *words* is the trace of the God who already spoke them.[18]

As I have stated and re-stated, Levinas attempts to pry what meanings he can out of the instant when meaning emerges, becomes a part of *being*. He seeks to find the conditions under which these meanings emerge, but he is hampered by the fact that what is before articulation cannot be articulated except through apophasis and *unsaying* what has been said. It seems that the conditions necessary for *saying* include an interruption in one's egoistic appropriation, since one *responds* to another by giving forth signs, representations. It seems that such response must occur when one has questioned one's appropriation and given instead of taken. (We might say that one questions one's course and enters discourse.) When one questions one's own appropriation and gives to another, one has relinquished power, granted another power or responded to another's power. Yet this turning of egoistic challenge into a gift of speech is effected before one has a choice in the matter.

Further, one is confronted, when one is in discourse with another, with an entire network of others who may not be physically present. Levinas' investigations seek to understand what happens to oneself when so confronted. What are the conditions necessary for one to deny certain responses to another on the basis of others who are not present? These are the conditions under which Levinas starts his use of the word "God". They are also the conditions under which one enters into discourse.

Levinas' intention may be to show that any notion or connotation of God stems from this time, the temporal upsurge of speech, sociality and meaning. He is aware of the connotations that the term brings to his philosophy (as noted *supra*, he avoids "love" because of unwanted connotations). He is also aware that to postmodernist philosophy, God is dead. But to Levinas the temporal "death" or passing away of God as the *saying* is where God begins to make sense through the creation of justice.

But we must return to why Levinas insists upon the use of the term "God." It would appear that one important reason involves the fact that there is more than one subjectivity. If we refer to my subjectivity and the *saying* of the *Ur*-language and then to some other person's subjectivity and the *saying* of the *Ur*-language, etc., then we reach into a morass of potentiality. As many worlds as people could exist, and since no one inhabits a meta-world

where all the *Ur*-languages can be compared, the possibility
of contradictory worlds arises. Levinas could be seeking to
avoid such a possibility. By equating the speaker of the
Ur-language(s) with a singular God he has avoided the
possibility of ungrounded pluralism. By utilizing "God" he
has been able to keep as foundational (or an-archical) the
ethical universal which bespeaks the realm of justice.

Does this use of "God" need to be carried over into
psychology, if indeed it is to pay attention to Levinas? If
we can agree that what Levinas states regarding subjectivity
is correct — its *saying*, its dissimulation, its devotion to
the other, its "null-site" in time — and if we can agree
with his other descriptions — the elusiveness of the other,
the non-reciprocity of self and other, justice as the ground
of common existence — and, further, if we can agree that we
inhabit *one* world, then the question of God need not be
raised in psychology.

Chapter 6

LEVINAS AND PSYCHOLOGY

Brief Conclusions

Three broad concerns introduced this dissertation: psychology and the quest for a systematic science, the place of the human in psychology, and psychology as normative. As I explained, the three issues are intrinsically intertwined. Since that introduction, I have sketched the context for Levinas' philosophy and explicated some of his pertinent ideas, especially his theory of language. Although the issues raised within this dissertation deserve more than brief summaries and conclusions, the following reviews and deductions help to frame my subsequent considerations of those issues.

Psychology and the Quest
for a Systematic Science

Psychology is the *logos* of the psyche, whether it is conceived of as behavior or mind, yet the various schools which make up psychology involve many different perspectives and forms of discourse. The belief that psychology could or should become a systematic science either rests upon an assumption that one of these many perspectives is the correct view or that the pragmatic benefits of a system

(though it might be flawed) are preferable to unfettered eclecticism or multitudinous competing systems.

However, the schools of psychology are based in historical responses to various philosophical aporias. Any attempt to justify why one system or school is superior to another must necessarily involve those unresolved philosophical issues, many of which involve *what* a human being is (and what methods are valid when used in the study the human).

A good deal of this dissertation has addressed the (inevitable) problem of approaching the human in terms of *what*. The *essential* nature of the human is that the human essence escapes in the act of *saying*. Therefore, those very aporias which conspire to keep psychology from forming a unified system also attest to the human inability to be confined in such a system.

Attempts to found a definitive and systematized science of the human — one that would explain all facets of the human — are based in flawed presuppositions. The first error is that the representational network which is psychology can explain, within its system of language, what is irreducibly human, language as the *saying*. What is lost in the attempt to systematize the human within the *said* is important to psychology's subsequent analyses and recommendations. Further, all that is human may not be

understood via general principles or predications. Finally, self and other are, in principle, not interchangeable.

The various systems and stances regarding the *psyche* are attestations to the elusive nature of the quintessentially human; they reflect the incapacity of the *said* to contain the *saying,* the temporal disruption which recurrently brings the human to consciousness.

Psychology and the Place of the Human

Although the discussion *supra* involving a systematized psychology addressed the place (or time) of the human in psychology, the issue of historicity and its transcendence must also be confronted. Psychologies of various schools rightfully accept that context affects humans. Yet some schools have adopted stances (for either metaphysical or methodological reasons) which contend that *all* that is human is determined by context (and by specific forms of context). While such stances may be eminently useful, skepticism should be maintained.

Levinas maintains that human historicity is transcended by a certain fundamental temporality. While the context of the human, cultural or historical, can explain a good deal, a philosophical investigation of temporality reveals an ethical bearing which transcends historicity. Humans qua selves are social, in fact, are conscious only because they are social. The exception to historicity is the self-

sacrifice that occurs in the upsurge of the instant. The
determinism of historicity is broken when the person
confronts an other who elicits a response. The dehiscence
of that moment opens the human to choices involving others,
an essentially counter-deterministic event.

Discussion of the human qua subjectivity opens
potential investigative routes beyond those of agency,
cognition, and the search for a substantive self. The human
qua *self* can be approached as *primarily* ethical, prior to
cognitivist and other interpretations. The human qua *other*
draws response from subjectivity and hence is both a social
motivator and an impetus to cognition and development.
Another potential investigative route would involve using as
a foundation the nonreciprocity of the primary relationship
of self and other.

Though both human qua subjectivity and human qua other
escape encapsulation within the *said*, conceived of as the
present or *being*, Levinas demonstrates that there are ways
to acknowledge that what is written is not complete. While
the routes suggested here are simply possibilities for
future avenues by psychologists, one behavior by
psychologists would demonstrate more than any other that
they have learned to appreciate Levinas, to couch all
statements regarding fundamental human nature in terms that
would limit the statements to the singular perspective being
used. In other words, psychologists would openly state that

they acknowledge that humanness transcends the limitations
of their *said*.

Psychology as Normative

Psychology bears a great deal of responsibility within
our society for defining what is normal or acceptable. Its
terms become part of the common parlance, and its theories
become simplified explanations for why people behave in
certain ways. It also has authority in areas formally held
by religious and community morés.

As an historical entity (i.e., as a body of knowledge
and data which has been subject to the pressures of its
context) psychology is vulnerable to ideological pressures,
fads, and changes in *Zeitgeist*. Psychologists' decrees
regarding proper conduct are subject not only to the
individual differences regarding the psychologists' own
beliefs and contexts, but also to the inevitable changes in
viewpoints which accompany historical change. Additionally,
psychology's statements are always inadequate as applied to
the individual (and infinite) human being.

If psychology must be prescriptive and proscriptive, it
should preach doctrines tentatively and with humility,
recognizing that the historico-cultural trends which shape
it are not static and that it can promote irrevocable harm
within the lives of those who, either through their own
choice or by being subject to another's choice, fall under

psychology's mandate. Using Levinas' approach to justice,
psychology should acknowledge within its fundamental tenets
that it will always be subject to the limitations of
finitude. Sober and deliberative attention should be paid
to any issue which potentially could affect individual human
lives.

Further Considerations

There are a number of issues raised by the discussion
of Levinas' philosophy which are related to and/or embedded
within the three broad concerns addressed by this
dissertation. The first of these, issues which I address
below, involves whether any *practical* consequence, either
for psychology or morality, can result from this
deliberation of Levinas. Following that discussion,
implications for psychology will be addressed, all of which
are strongly related to the temporality which Levinas
describes.

From Beyond *Being* to Ought

Readers of Levinas have frequently asked questions
regarding whether his texts are prescriptive (or
proscriptive) in nature rather than descriptive. Does
Levinas describe an "is" or preach an "ought"? If he does
prescribe, how does his "is" relate to his "ought"? The
questions involve the relationship between the philosopher's

ontology and ethics. Pragmatic, they ask if from Levinas' philosophy we can derive *praxis*, practical conduct. Although the extent to which Levinas details such derived conduct is limited, and although his philosophy may be interpreted primarily as one which gives a transcendental foundation for any and all moral/legal systems, one of Levinas' four goals in writing <u>Otherwise Than Being</u> was "to derive praxis and knowledge in the world from this nonassumable susceptibility" [OTB xlii].

Levinas describes subjectivity's *anarchical* foundation as altruistic and responsible (without denying the incredible violence that humans perpetuate upon each other). This impetus before all articulation is self-sacrificing and is a movement for-the-other. It is ethical, *prior* to ontology, "beyond *being*," and beyond the "*is*." Through *saying*, *being* is spoken; the realm which Levinas describes as justice is made present. The "beyond *being*," which might be described as both "ought" and "must," gives birth to the ontological, the "is." The question regarding *praxis* asks if an "ought" may now be derived. The question implies a further question, how it is possible to transcend one's place in history, to wrest oneself (or be wrested) from fundamental historicity so that culturo-historical context is not the sole determinant of behavior.

First, it is important to re-state Levinas' belief that choice is available to humans. Although the degree to which

Levinas believes in choice is questionable, that he does so
believe is not an issue. Levinas does not leave everything
other than the *élan* to the forces of history. Humans have
volition, and choices can be made which are oriented via
their consonance with the *Good*.

As for the kind of choice which Levinas asks us to
make, he addresses one near the end of <u>Otherwise Than Being</u>:

> For the little humanity that adorns the earth, a
> relaxation of essence to the second degree is needed,
> in the just war waged against war to tremble or shudder
> at every instant because of this very justice. This
> weakness is needed. This relaxation of virility without
> cowardice is needed for the little cruelty our hands
> repudiate. That is the meaning that should be suggested
> by the formulas repeated in this book concerning the
> passivity more passive still than any passivity, the
> fission of the ego unto me, its consummation for the
> other such that from the ashes of this consummation no
> act could be reborn. [OTB 185]

What are we to make of Levinas' "relaxation of essence to
the second degree"? *Essence*, as stated, is Levinas'
technical term for coming-into-*being*. *Essence* is the
"verbness" of *being*, the articulation of the distinctions of
the world. Much has been made in this thesis about the
unwilled nature of this articulation, the passivity with
which the utterances are made in the *Ur*-language. This
level of living in the language of the world, a time of
passivity, we could call "first degree" essence.

The "weakness," "relaxation of virility," and
"relaxation of essence to the second degree" involve the
will. We are made aware by Levinas that the other who
precipitates response is *unclassifiable* in any fundamental

sense of the term. Surely he or she is of a particular gender, race, class, body type, etc., but the humanness which we actually seek in the face of the other always escapes the classificatory predation of consciousness. It is consistent with Levinas' groundwork that this "relaxation of essence to the second degree" would involve the conscious attempt to avoid the classification of others into nonhuman categories. We are being entreated by Levinas to relax the mode by which we compartmentalize others.

Does Levinas have a particular audience in mind for his admonishments? The context of his discussion leads us to believe that he does: Levinas' Otherwise Than Being is a difficult book. Not many people have or will read it to the end. Those who have or will finish this masterpiece are without a doubt intellectuals. And in the closing paragraphs of the book, after repeating his thesis that subjectivity is called upon to immolate itself out of responsibility, and after pointing to all of the world and saying that every person is virtually "chosen" to be responsible for all others, Levinas names the group whom he addresses, "intellectuals" [OTB 184].

Subverted by a Trojan Horse? Levinas has waited until the end of a major investment of time and effort (by the reader) to spring his jab, his admonition to the reader of his text. It is the intellectuals, he accuses, who as members of elites, forget that every one of the persons on

the earth undergoes the definitively human sacrifice which is speech. And it is intellectuals whose linguistic skills perform violence upon those persons. Those of us who read the pages of Levinas stand accused of compartmentalizing people.

Levinas warns that although subjectivity escapes being put into thing-like categories, escapes *being*'s essence, through its own dissimulation, that when I encounter an other I still do damage through my own categories and subsequent actions regarding those categories. In other words, all people, including myself, sacrifice themselves through their socio-linguistic obsessions with others. But violence still occurs. And that violence occurs during and after a form of cognitive judgement. *I* articulate categories for the others. *I* describe them as worthy, inferior, insane, or retarded. These judgements hold real consequences, especially when made by the elites about those who are not members of the elites.

This then is Levinas' admonition: to withhold judgement against persons, to recognize them as revered and self-renouncing, and to honor the necessity for sober and shared deliberation when persons' lives are at stake. This is the movement from description to prescription, from beyond what is to "ought". Levinas states that we *should* be consistent with what motivates our very temporality. We have been placed in a realm of justice and we should thereby be just.

Although we are compelled by the *Good* to respond, we are not compelled to be just; but to be just is commensurate with what bespeaks the world. *We are being asked to step away from our fundamental historicity and to appreciate the other human.* But is this not simply another call to jump into an unsupported metaphysical system?

We can certainly not escape historicity. We are in the world and not at some eternal fulcrum point which allows transcendence over all points of time. Yet Levinas shows us a way, if not to escape historicity, to at least transcend it for a time. We do not escape the inertia of *being*, but by focussing upon the coming into meaning, the face of the other, and the elusiveness of alterity, we can admit to the finitude of our conceptions, the limitations of the *said*. We do not escape the persistence of the present, but listen for the trace of an irretrievable past.

It is here that the systems of psychology can learn from Levinas. It is not that the systems that psychology develops are necessarily wrong or untrue; the problem is that they are limited by their failure to capture within them what will always escape capture. Systems cannot contain subjectivity nor alterity. The truly human escapes the *said* of the system. The lesson of Levinas in regard to the creation of systems that would circumscribe the human is to pause and consider the inadequacy of the system.

Simply the recognition that a system fails to be all-encompassing enables dialogue which transcends the system. When one remembers the hegemony claimed by behaviorism, the rigidity with which some neuropsychologists cling to neurological reductionism, the unwillingness of some of the "radical psychologists" of yesteryear to consider an organic component to schizophrenia, or any of numerous similar examples, one is confronted with situations which, through lack of "relaxation" of essence to the second degree, can perpetuate harm.

Again, lest I am misunderstood, I am not condemning system-making. Psychological data is nonsensical unless given sense by the system or context of which it is a part. The "ought" or "should" which is urged by Levinas is to consciously allow people to evade our conceptual taxonomies. The various systems of psychology will continue to accrue data, continue to make sense or be superseded by systems which do make sense, but no system will capture the personhood of the people being appraised. To be sure, systems may claim to do so, and in that claim is danger, because though people will escape such attempts at capture, they may not retain their dignity or their lives.

Oneness, Schism, and Psychology

There are myriad reasons why people feel alienated, and although it is not my intention to cover the subject

comprehensively, it is evident that Levinas has a significant contribution to make regarding the topic. Levinas has explicated what might be considered a transcendental interpretation of alienation. In other words, the alienation which he describes, a self-alienation which is the foundation of consciousness and sociality, is the condition of the possibility of the myriad ways in which one can experience alienation.[1]

It is Levinas' contention that alienation from oneself is the fundamental condition of the human qua self and that self-alienation is intrinsically related to subjectivity's ethical basis. Without repeating my discussion regarding subjectivity's dissimulation through *saying* and the entry of the self into *being* and consciousness, it should be apparent that Levinas' self-alienation (the Latin *alienatio* signifies separation or aversion, and *alius* means other) refers to the movement from self-satisfied atemporality to *l'inquiétude* of proximity. Self is alienated from subjectivity due to the advent of the other.

I insist that the nature of self-alienation should be of great concern to psychology; not only is it indicative of what being an individual human being signifies, but it is also not aberrant, not pathological. Irreparable harm has been perpetuated upon people by *some* practitioners and theoreticians of psychology through their belief that the manifestations of this alienation are symptomatic of a

disease state. Reflecting and/or contributing to the
Zeitgeist of recent times, they stress a *fulfillment* model
of psychology, a notion that their rôle is to help people
achieve a sense of oneness. My concern is that there is
little reflection within the discipline relating to this
goal and that these psychologies and psychologists are once
again being swept up by events.[2]

My current discussion is cursory. I recognize that I
have sketched only one side of a multifaceted phenomenon. I
do agree that self-alienation resulting in suicidal
behavior, depression, social inadequacy, and other areas
should concern psychologists and psychology. However, such
concern needs to value the transcendental condition in which
the particular alienation is based. In Chapter 1 I
introduced Wayne Dyer's simplistic notion that guilt and
worry are pathologies, a stance with which I vigorously
disagree. Guilt and worry, as well as grief, are some of
the manifestations of that other-directed alienation from
self which Levinas describes and which are hallmarks of the
human.

What is disturbing about the disparagement of guilt and
worry - and to some degree, grief - is that their
manifestations do not serve the ego, are not means to an
end. They all involve suffering without recompense; one
wonders what ideology would reduce all **ideal** life to
strategies of personal profit.

Unfeigned guilt, worry, and grief are ways of giving unto an absent other without ever recuperating that time spent. If, for instance, a mother worries about her child, late from school, what benefit accrues from the worry? Worry is not the superstition that obsession has magical powers. A mother's worry will not prevent dire consequences or guarantee safe deliverance. Worry, as even those who view it as symptom correctly assess, prevents one from entering into the temporality of self-satisfaction. One remains ruptured, preoccupied with the absent other, and the savor of sheltered enjoyment is disrupted. One remains *conscious* for the other. Yet the precondition for this dehiscence is the vulnerability of a sensibility already carrying the weight of another. Worry, the sacrifice par excellence of oneself, arises out of the ethical stratum in which one is subjected to the responsibility for another.

Guilt also has its genesis in the responsibility for another. The past remains as an obscuring of the pleasures of the now. It is the unwelcome guest. Yet guilt involves one's behavior toward another. Guilt is not self-referential in any simple way. If one is guilty of inadequate attainment of goals, it is either as one is assessed by another or *as-if* one is assessed by another. Without entering into the Freudian notion of the internalized parent who judges we may still understand that the guilty one becomes a judge of him or herself as object.

The basis for guilt is the responsibility for the other that is carried without choice by subjectivity. The action of one against another, carried into the present as a disruption of the pleasure of the now, is a giving of oneself to an absent other. Rather than a symptom of neurosis (although certain guilts could certainly be paralyzing, excessive, and needing of clinical intervention), guilt is a manifestation of the sanctity of a subject who carries responsibility for others in the world.

Grief, as well, does not serve the self. Reason would tell the bereaved that their grief will in no way bring back their loved ones. But grief is not based within reason. It is a manifestation of the *for-the-other* which is the self-alienation described by Levinas. The emptiness felt by the bereaved is not self-serving. It is gratis, self given to the other who is absent.

In these states of existence - guilt, worry, and grief - we see evidence of the righteousness (*hesed, agapē*) of human sensibility. The human is subjected to the other, and responsibility remains for the other in the other's absence. Responsibility remains and disrupts the home. It is no wonder that psychology and especially the psychotherapist would become involved with the worried, the guilty, and bereaved - yet it is a shallow understanding which classifies the hallmarks of the human as deviations from a mythic and self-sufficient ideal oneness.

Coincidence

In one article, "No Identity," Levinas specifically addresses the social sciences, something that his texts rarely do. Levinas believes that the social sciences during the last century have been characterized by the attempt to secure a foundation of knowledge through the "coinciding of self with self" [NI 142] This reference to self-coinciding is similar to references in others of his texts, where the terms *coincidence* and *simultaneity* are frequent. The references, of course, are temporal, and refer to the inability to recover what I have coined the *élan*, the upsurge of *saying*.

If one were to coincide with self, be self-coincidental, then one would not be prey to the wounding and disimulating existence which characterizes being oneself. One might simply *be*, like Sartre's *en-soi*.[3] But instead one is subjected to a recurrent entry into synchronous *being*; and what *is* coincidental is *being*, the synchronic system which allows us to reverse time, to re-run events, to observe as though *now* all events within its purview.

We can make a differentiation between two attempts at simultaneity or self-coincidence. The first could be termed existential and would refer to that motivation to pursue losing the discomfiting and unstable temporality which characterizes human life. The second could be termed

representational/systematical and would refer to the attempt to attain self-coincidence through knowledge and understanding. The differentiation is artificial since in all cases it is the human qua self undergoing the temporal change which is the coming to be of *being*. (In other words, though we may speak of science, psychology, representational systems, *being*, systematic present, or knowledge, it is always the existential *me* which acquiesces to, acquires, or undergoes the transformation of *saying* into *said*.) Nonetheless, I am stressing the differentiation because the ultimate goals of the attempts may be substantially different. *Infra*, I will address one manifestation of what I term the existential attempt. At this point, however, I will return to the knowledge-based representational or systematical approach at self-coincidence.

When we remember that Levinas has portrayed the human condition as the incorporation of what is *other* into the world of the *same*, then this self-coincidence becomes more meaningful: consciousness seeks the complete understanding of itself. In psychology one can think of many examples, for instance Wundt's careful introspection of mental contents and James' pursuit of the Pure Ego.

According to Levinas, the social sciences started in the faith that we could indeed know ourselves, in that Enlightenment notion that we could benefit and improve from self-knowledge; yet subjectivity became suspect when it was

not consonant with the early physical science standards
emulated by social scientists. The subject was eliminated
from investigation; "mathematical identities" came to be
preferred *even in the human realm* [NI 142]. The structures
of determination became privileged over any notion of mind
and freedom. [This unequivocal characterization of the
social sciences is that of Levinas; as Chapter 1 shows,
however, psychology is not sufficiently unified for one to
succeed in such a blanket accusation. Still, many of the
psychologies have ejected the subject from the realm of
study.]

However, this removal of the subject (without its
demise) implies that we cannot in fact know ourselves, that
identity is not or cannot remain self-identical [NI 142].
The faith in the rational which accompanied the rise of the
social sciences has been recompensed by the displacement of
the human as agent, rational or otherwise, and faith that
one can know oneself has been replaced with alienation. The
faith that the human can know the human, that subjectivity
can encapsulate all things including itself appears to be
idealistic and misleading. Who we are escapes our scrutiny.
(Levinas uses Rimbaud's line: *"I is an other"* to describe
this inherent alienation [NI 143].) *I* harbors a schism, an
imperfect identity. The self does not coincide with itself;
it does not possess full knowledge of itself. Also, the
search for the causes of human behaviors does not stop at

individual human agency, desires, or motivation (as deterministic social sciences inform us).

The human sciences have shown that human behavior does not spring forth from a monadic self which is closed in upon itself. They have in their most empiricistic phases subtracted freedom and subjectivity from the subject (and interpreted the subject solely as the subject of their investigations) and denied any covertness or any interiority.[4] Behavior was construed as reactive - and reactive only to environmental stimuli. It is now, in the wake of post-modernism, that the human sciences are beginning to discuss the implications of this relaxation of faith.[5]

The Human in the Human

What makes the human human, according to this dissertation, is sociality. Sociality is based within obsessive responsibility. Responsibility is the prevolitional requirement to speak, to make distinctions, to dissimulate while one gives through articulation. The obsession to dissimulate into speech is performed upon the advent of the other.

When I sit with my daughter, I cannot divest myself of my obsession. Nor, does it seem, can she (if I may be pardoned for indicating the feelings of a nonverbal child). Yet I am referring to a loving relationship. What, an

objector would say, of the abusive parent, the passing
stranger, the uncaring one; if a fundamental description of
the relation of subjectivity to alterity is to hold true,
then it must account for the apparent exceptions to the
description.

It is apparent to me that it does. The abusive parent
is still obsessed by the otherness of the child. The
weakness of the child still conveys a power *to command
attention and to respond through articulation*. The passing
stranger who steels himself to ignore the homeless one is,
in the steeling, responding. If humanness is defined by
one's sociality, the one who abuses or ignores is no less
human. According to this standard of humanness, an objector
would have to cite the example of one who was not obsessed
with another.

There are those instances of psychopathology which dare
us to state that there is no obsession with the other
person. Certainly such *seems* to be the case with *some*
autistic children and some children with "failure to
thrive," though I make such extrapolations cautiously.

Can we claim that the human being who stares through us
as though we are transparent or as though we are an object
is in fact a *human person*? Such radical questioning is not
designed to inspire infanticide or inhumane treatment of
autistic children. It is merely intended to be a reminder
of what it is that we fundamentally understand as humanness

or personhood. Whatever the *cause* of the disorder suffered
by autistic children (and I recognize that the term
"autistic" probably signifies a variety of disorders; I am
calling attention to a common symptom of some labelled with
this diagnosis, the apathy when encountered by another),
they seem to lack a fundamental attribute of humanness.[6]

In the recent opening of Romania to Western visitors we
have seen orphanages where children lie without expectation
of being held or cuddled. In many cases, as shown in early
studies by Spitz, the result of such lack of holding is
death from *failure to thrive.* Anecdotal evidence from
Romania, which has had its orphanage system for a number of
years, demonstrates that such results have often occurred.
Another result of such treatment is the child who shows no
recognition of other people, a kind of autism created by
neglect. In such cases we may claim that the exception
proves the rule, that the obsession with the other has in
fact destroyed a personality.[7]

In describing what it is to be a human subject, a
person, I skirt dangerously close to denying some humans
their personhood. If subjectivity is obsession with the
other person, I seem to say, and certain humans are absent
such obsessive subjectivity, then they are not persons.
However, the point of this dissertation is to engender
respect for the unknown, to challenge any all-encompassing
reductionism. In claiming that obsessive subjectivity is

the hallmark of the human, I do not wish to close the door
on other descriptions. I certainly do not support
infanticide or abandonment on the basis that autistics and
others *appear* to fail to have a quality. Others may not
seem to respond to me, but I do respond to them; I am
responsible for them. Even those of us who would interpret
Levinas must be vigilant to avoid allowing our categories to
lead us into actions incommensurate with the *Good*.

Language, Research, and Listening

It is metaphorical whenever a reference to a sensory
modality or similar expression is used to describe the
representational process by which we represent the universe.
When the expression "I see" is used to signify "I
understand" it is generally recognized that it is idiomatic.
Even the expressions "understand" and "grasp," "comprehend,"
and "fathom," all of which may be used to convey the same
meaning, are metaphorical and refer to bodily orientations,
prehensions, or senses. It would be wrong to state that
these are purely arbitrary phrases; these bodily forms of
acquisition and perception are indeed similar to the
cognitive process of comprehension. However, the process of
representation and understanding is larger (if we think
spatially) than these expressions indicate. It seems that
we are limited to terms signifying concrete embodiment

whenever we wish to discuss what we in the West tend to think of as mental and abstract.

It would therefore be foolhardy to claim simply that audition is superior to the other expressions signifying embodiment. To claim that "I hear" is superior to "I see" would not solve the body-mind issue implied by the previous expressions. However, the addition of this expression to the psychologist's language (and methodologies) might make some significant contributions to the quest to understand the human world.

First, it is important to reiterate that I am not censuring those research methods which rely on visual metaphor (and I am including as visual metaphor the common method of conceiving time as a *spatial* continuum). These methods, which include statistical analysis (e.g., different groups of subjects are compared *as-if* contained within a panoptic view), behaviorism (stimulus and response are correlated *as-if* present side by side), as well as a wide variety of research styles *do* provide important analyses and truths.

It is important to recognize, though, that while these methods provide truths that they do not provide absolute Truth. A research method which is based in spatialized time (time as a line upon which the world moves, etc.) will only provide information within the frame allowed by such a restriction. Another way to put this would be to state that

the language system used limits the results to placement within that language system. A linguistic system that utilizes numbers to represent the behavior of groups of subjects will report its results in numerical terms. A system which defines an emotional state as only a measurable state of body excitation will report results regarding emotion in measured units of bodily excitation. And while people do behave similarly to other people in ways in which numbers can fairly represent those similarities, and emotions certainly include (or are associated with) measurable states of bodily activity, there is more to the phenomena being studied. The language systems used provide different perspectives (a visual reference) which are limited by the languages used.

However, it is significant that so many systems of psychology utilize systems based in vision. Of course panopticism allows systematic synchronism, while *pan-audition* would be cacophonous. Vision as metaphor encourages the placement within the perspective of multiple items, factors, persons, or concepts. Audition is more severely focused and encourages specificity to what is being attended.

In Chapter 5 I discussed an auditory approach to the articulations of the world and to consciousness. When we focus our attention on specific items in our perception we find that we can change the metaphor we use to "apprehend"

them. The print of *Las Meninas* which hangs over my desk can be approached in terms of how it *resounds*. The different shapes come to prominence, recede in favor of other shapes, then return renewed. The colors persist, then fade as a thought or notion comes to mind, then are recreated. When we utilize audition, even in the realm of visual perception, temporality — *lived* temporality — becomes more apparent. The instant is accentuated. The newness of a refurbishing moment become manifest in the study. It is through such study that one can ask what *Las Meninas* says, what it tells us. We can ask what Velazquez intended when he painted it.[8]

In the study of humans, which extends far beyond the perceptual analysis of an item or the textual analysis of a painting, the auditory approach which I am emphasizing here helps to preserve within our attention the human being studied. An auditory approach changes the language system being used. (I do not mean by an auditory approach simply listening to and recording the words and actions of another human. Such an approach could still be a visualism.[9]) By emphasizing the auditory approach we are forced to recognize that the source of the renewing instant, the source of the speech, does not end by being enclosed within a system. The other, when approached as a continually replenishing source of temporal change, cannot be satisfactorily pigeonholed within diagnostic, research, or other terms. Such

categorizing occurs when it is believed that there is
nothing new within or from the other, that the other is a
static entity, ready to be placed within a system. (And
again, for methodological reasons — for example,
epidemiology — there are perfectly valid reasons for
approaching humans in this way.) By emphasizing the source
of endless change, unmanageable fount, we preserve in our
attention the heart of the human.

Audition as a description of consciousness was also
touched upon in Chapter 5. If we recognize in our
assimilation and articulation of the world that it is not
foreign, that we are in fact within a world which is
familiar to us, then we get closer to a recognition of our
fundamental sociality. The world, world of things and
others, is *as-if* made for us. The emphasis that has been
placed on illeity in the previous chapter was to stress this
point. In our own reception of the other person is the *for-
the-other* which Levinas terms responsibility. Consciousness
reflects (in visual terms) this basic sociality.
Consciousness listens to the world and hears a world
articulated for self *and* others, hears a world articulated
in common categories.

When does consciousness fail to hear the same
categories as others do? When does a solipsistic world
arise? These are questions which are implied by this
approach to the human qua self. Through an auditory model

of research more may be understood (seen, grasped, comprehended, or *heard*) about such domains.

Terms

Throughout this dissertation I have discussed the inadequacy of language qua the *said*. All expressed language begins with the "death of God", the dissimulation of subjectivity, the escape of the illeity who prepared the way for sociality. Psychology, of course, consists of several forms of discourse which are subsumed by this expressed language. The syllogism is thus simple: language as expressed is inadequate — psychology is expressed language — therefore, psychology is inadequate. Yet that truth does not diminish the importance of psychology. Another syllogism can also be stated: expressed language is within the realm of justice — psychology is expressed language — therefore psychology is within the realm of justice.

Those two rudimentary deductions are not very helpful, however. Levinas' justice is a transcendental concept. The realm of justice is a state of possibility; it is indeed sociality, but it leaves open *any* consequence. In other words, though Levinas lauds this realm of justice as based in the ethical imperative which is subjectivity — and though he wishes us to acknowledge that *all* words start with illeity, it is clear that language as words and systems can maim, torture, and kill. Levinas' justice is really the

condition of the possibility of what we usually think of as
justice and, further, is based in an elusive ethical
imperative. The systematization of psychology is not
enslaved to the Good, though it derives from it. The
practical question which must be asked is whether anything
can be done to encourage remembrance of that ethical
imperative and just basis.

I would interpret the question as asking whether the
knowledge of the inadequacy of expressed language can be
reflected within the use of that language. Can our
assertions be hedged through the very terms of our
assertions? I believe that although such an endeavor is
bound to fail, it should be pursued. One reason the task is
bound to fail is that we lose memories of the original
meanings of terms. (For example, *disease*, once a euphemism,
now signifies differently than it did when coined.
Additionally, as I stated, *understand* derives from a spatial
relationship which is not recognized in the use of the
term.) Any attempt to incorporate signals of their
inadequacy within terms will also fail as time passes and as
the terms are used by different people. Without a clear and
concrete referent (and subjectivity, illeity, and the
elusiveness of the *élan* are neither) any distinctions
intended by such terminology will be glossed over or
relegated to the scrap-heap of mysticism. The goal of
achieving a language of infinity (or a language which

signifies infinity), like the goal of perfect justice, will never be reached.

Still, the attempt to achieve a time for the human within the language of human science is not, despite its inachievability, completely futile. As Levinas indicates, *all* expressed language suffers from the same inadequacy. Although text must be throttled, it *can* convey some idea of what is missed by language. Consider a term which recurs frequently in Levinas' texts, *infinite*. The way he uses the term signifies in-*fin*-ite, without end or *eschaton*.[10] The human as infinite cannot be depleted of meaning. No phenomenological investigation of a human will reveal an *eidos* which captures an unalterable essence. No last word will be found which will end the search for the quintessence of the human. No discussion of morality will reduce the unending ethical demand of the human qua other or the responsibility of the human qua subjectivity. And no psychology will succeed in reducing the human to a totally examinable entity. The word *infinite* and the discussion of what it means signifies these limitations and more.

Should we expect such discussions whenever psychologists express their data and theories? Should we expect either a reference to *infinity* (or *in-fin-ity*) in any learned discussion regarding human psychology? I think not. Yet I believe that it is incumbent upon psychologists to recognize that their discourses are limited and that those

discourses which do strain and contort in the attempt to express the ethical are not inferior to their own.

In part, I am reasserting the priority of philosophy to discuss the nature of the world and the human who inhabits it, and, in part, I am subjugating psychology to the discourse which gave rise to it. Even still, the "Greek" of philosophy must be breached by a skeptical discourse, a breaching of visualism, and a questioning of any category which threatens to reduce the limitlessness of the human. This counter-discourse recurs in the texts of religion and in works of prose and poetry. It recurs in the conversations of the clinic and the encounters in the living room. The counter-discourse stems, not from attempts to incorporate all into one systematic view, but from attempts to convey the unique particularity which is *me*. It is pluralistic.

So while I am partly suggesting that psychology engender a respect for philosophy as a field in which important areas may be discussed, I am also urging that both psychology and philosophy listen to a discourse which is not limited by disciplinary bounds. The everyday speech of the world conveys the grief, suffering, hilarity, and milestones of the *lived*. A respect for the *ones* who speak might better enable the discourses of reason and analysis to approach the *telos* which inspired them, justice. Both psychologists and

philosophers *should* listen to the terms expressed by the ones whom their sciences describe, and while listening they might recognize that the terms emerge from *one* who will always escape capture in terms.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1.   Edith Wyschogrod, "Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of
Ethical Metaphysics"; Awerkamp, "Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics
and Politics"; Kunze, "The Origin of the Self: A
Presentation of the Philosophy of Levinas From the
Standpoint of his Criticism of Heidegger"; Grob, "The
Renewal of Philosophy: A Study of the Thought of Sartre and
Levinas"; Cohen, "Time in the Philosophy of Emmanuel
Levinas"; Smith, "Totaliter Aliter: The Argument to the
Other in the Thought of Karl Barth and Emmanuel Levinas";
Reed, "The Problem of Method in the Philosophy of Emmanuel
Levinas"; Chanter, "From Time To Time: Levinas and
Heidegger". In general, one can see increasing specificity
of investigation and contentiousness over the
interpretations of other commentators.

2.   For instance, it is of philosophical concern whether
Levinas' notions regarding subjectivity are transcendental
(i.e., is he using arguments regarding the condition of the
possibility of subjectivity?). Although I have tangentially
addressed the question, I have attempted to demonstrate that
access to Levinas' unique understandings is possible through
reflection upon one's own experience. Such reflection,
which is phenomenological in nature, is indeed

philosophical, yet the depth and thoroughness of the investigation is limited in light of the goals of the project, e.g. to introduce Levinas' philosophy to psychologists and to show its relevance.

3. Fernandez-Zoila, "*Le Visage Pris aux Mots.*" Ricoeur, "The Self in Psychoanalysis and in Phenomenological Psychology."

4. Halling, "The Implications of Emmanuel Levinas' Totality and Infinity for Therapy"; Beets, "Ego-Psychology and the Meeting Face-to-Face in Psychotherapy"; Heaton, "The Other and Psychotherapy"; and O'Connor, "Who Suffers?"

5. EE 65-67. Heaton (*supra*, note 4) utilized this analysis in order to understand a client's experience.

6. TI 256-266. Levinas uncovers a sexuality which is more search than possession, where implicit in the endless roving of the caress is the fact that the object of the caress, the other person, escapes its grasp entirely. Such a description is consistent with some currently successful treatments of certain sexual problems (inhibited sexual excitement), such as Masters and Johnson's sensate focus, which deemphasize the orgasmic end of the sexual encounter in favor of the exploration and caressing of the partner.

7. Wolff, What is Psychology?, p. 336.

8. Lefton, Psychology, p. 2.

9. John Watson's opening sentences in his founding paper of behaviorism ("Psychology as the behaviorist views it"),

leave little doubt regarding his definition of behavior:

> Psychology as the behaviorist views it is a purely
> objective experimental branch of natural science. Its
> theoretical goal is the prediction and control of
> behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its
> methods . . . (p. 158)

B.F. Skinner was the inheritor of the behaviorist

mantle, and the basic views on psychology's proper subject

matter and methods that he drafted in Science and Human

Behavior did not change substantially during his life (cf.

"Whatever Happened to Psychology as the Science of

Behavior?").

10. McGeoch, "The Formal Criteria of a Systematic

Psychology."

11. Ibid., p. 1.

12. Ibid., p. 6.

13. Ibid., p. 4.

14. Boring, "Psychology for Eclectics." Boring has written

a significant history (A History of Experimental

Psychology,) in which he stressed the Zeitgeist approach to

history. The same approach to history was used in the

former work and received McGeoch's scorn.

15. Klein, "Eclecticism versus System-making in

Psychology." Klein stated:

> We do not find a medley of "systems" in physics, one
> based exclusively on the law of hydrodynamics, another
> on Ohm's law, a third on laws of refraction, and a
> fourth on the laws of thermodynamics. Each law,
> principle, or explanatory formula is utilized in its
> relevant context. (p. 491)

He accuses the system-builder of ignoring data which might

conflict with the system (p. 496).

16. Kuhn, <u>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</u>.

17. Koch, "The Nature and Limits of Psychological Knowledge: Lessons of a Century qua 'Science'," p. 92.

18. Ibid., p. 93.

19. Robert Watson, "Psychology: A Prescriptive Science." For similar findings, performed by using factor analysis upon ratings of prominent psychologists from 1880 – 1959, see Coan, "Dimensions of Psychological Theory."

20. Ibid., p. 439.

21. Ibid., p. 442.

22. Kendler (<u>Psychology in Conflict</u>) concluded his investigation into the conflicting schools of psychology with a muted plea for collective understanding:

> A choice of competing methodological alternatives cannot be made by purely rational means although society may encourage one form of psychology at the expense of others because of the manner in which society interprets its social responsibilities. The best that can be hoped for within psychology is a mutual understanding of the competing methodological positions and an appreciation of the decisions that led to their adoption. (p. 371)

23. Descartes, "Discourse on Method." See also Kockelmans, <u>Edmund Husserl's Phenomenological Psychology: A Historico-Critical Study</u>, p. 37.

Still important to today's psychology, Descartes worked out precursors to current ideas of reflex, innate ideas, localization of mental functions within the brain, and

optical psychophysiology.

24. Copleston, Volume 5, p. 11.

25. Stagner, A History of Psychological Theories, p. 67.

26. Once again, the variety of psychologies requires me to make this statement conditional.

27. Harré, Personal Being, p. 8. Theorists such as Freud and Piaget belong to the first group, and Wittgenstein and G.H. Mead are in the second group.

28. See, for instance, Ross, "The Intuitive Psychologist and His Shortcomings: Distortions in the Attribution Process."

29. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, (Sec VI. "Of Personal Identity").

30. James, The Principles of Psychology, p. 300-301. James admits (p. 299) that others might criticize his commingling of the spiritual and physical sensation, so he indicates that the results of his introspection may not be generalizable.

31. Ibid., p. 253.

32. Cf., Ibid., p. 305.

33. Buckley, "The Selling of a Psychologist: John Broadus Watson and the Application of Behavioral Techniques to Advertising," p. 217.

34. Watson and Watson, Psychological Care of Infant and Child. Hothersall, History of Psychology, p. 387.

35. Dyer, <u>Your Erroneous Zones</u>, p. 89-116.

> The world is populated with folks who are either
> feeling horrible about something they shouldn't have
> done or dismayed about things that might or might not
> happen. You are probably no exception. If you have
> large worry and guilt zones, they must be exterminated,
> spray-cleaned and sterilized. Wash out those little
> "w" and "g" bugs that infest so many sectors of your
> life. [p. 90]

Cf. p. 222-234.

36. See, for instance, Heidegger, <u>Being and Time</u>, pp. 312-348; and Buber, <u>The Knowledge of Man</u>, pp. 122-148.

37. Buber (*supra*, note 36) was critical of a psychoanalyst's treatment of guilt as pathology for precisely this reason.

38. Kuhn, "Reflections on My Critics." Feyerabend, <u>Against Method</u>.

39. Sampson, "Cognitive Psychology as Ideology."

40. Woolfolk and Richardson, "Behavior Therapy and the Ideology of Modernity."

41. Prilleltensky, "Psychology and the Status Quo."

42. Wallach and Wallach, <u>Psychology's Sanction for Selfishness: The Error of Egoism in Theory and Therapy</u>.

43. Cushman, "Why the Self is Empty: Toward a Historically Situated Psychology."

44. Baumeister ("How the Self Became a Problem: A Psychological Review of Historical Research") has described the self in terms of self-knowledge/self-conception, self-definition, fulfillment, and relation of individual to

society. He reviews historical and literary depictions of each of the above in various post-medieval eras.

Chapter 2

1. Johnstone, What is Philosophy?, pp. 1-3.

2. Hegel, The Philosophy of Right:

   The march of God through the world, that is what the state is. (p. 279)

3. Nietzsche, The Gay Science, p. 181.

4. Cf. Wheelis, The Quest For Identity.

5. Heidegger (Poetry, Language, Thought) explained:

   Night is falling. Ever since the "united three"—
   Herakles, Dionysos, and Christ -- have left the world,
   the evening of the world's age has been declining
   toward its night. The world's night is spreading its
   darkness. The era is defined by the god's failure to
   arrive, by the "default of God." But the default of
   God which Hölderlin experienced does not deny that the
   Christian relationship with God lives on in individuals
   and in the churches; still less does it assess this
   relationship negatively. The default of God means that
   no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself,
   visibly and unequivocally and by such gathering
   disposes the world's history and man's sojourn in it.
   [p. 91]

However, we need not go to the Continent to find the legacy of God's death documented. Stephen Crane (The Collected Poems), the American poet-novelist of the nineteenth century, expressed anger over this "failure." Though he found some solace in interpersonal relationships in the face of this terror, he wrote of the "monsters" released in the wake of God's death, not the least of which was the eventual triumph of death:

God lay dead in heaven;
Angels sang the hymn of the end;
Purple winds went moaning,
Their wings drip-dripping
With blood
That fell upon the earth.
It, groaning thing,
Turned black and sank.
Then from the far caverns
Of dead sins
Came monsters, livid with desire.
They fought,
Wrangled over the world,
A morsel.
But of all sadness this was sad--
A woman's arms tried to shield
The head of a sleeping man
From the jaws of the final beast.
[p. 72]

Crane's poetry also documented a recognition that the lack of a governing hierarchy leads to the possibility of nihilistic relativism, although his portrayal of one who chooses that option is not complementary:

Once there was a man--
Oh, so wise!
In all drink
He detected the bitter,
And in all touch
He found the sting.
At last he cried thus:
"There is nothing--
No life,
No joy,
No pain--
There is nothing save opinion,
And opinion be damned."
[p. 51]

Crane's reaction to the crisis of meaning which arose in this era of tumbling heavens was not that of the above "wise" man, but one which affirms the romantic dyad, even though it too will cease in death:

> Should the wide world roll away,
> Leaving black terror,
> Limitless night,
> Nor God, nor man, nor place to stand
> Would be to me essential,
> If thou and thy white arms were there,
> And the fall to doom a long way.
> [p. 12]

I include these poems to emphasize that Nietzsche's sentiments were not solely his; nor were they confined to obscure Germanic philosophy. The *Zeitgeist*, if we may look to it for responsibility, was not impounded within European borders.

6.   Lyotard (The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge) describes postmodernism as a time when faith has waned in the grand narratives that presume to make sense of history and society.

7.   Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, p. 1-6. Levinas was co-translator (with Gabrielle Peiffer) of the work into the French language.

8.   Natanson, Edmund Husserl, p. 11.

9.   Richardson ("Heidegger and the Quest of Freedom") states:

> Dasein is not its own master—it does not create itself but finds itself as a matter of fact in the world.
> [p. 166]

10.   Merleau-Ponty discussed various approaches to phenomenology in the introduction to Phenomenology of Perception, p. vii-xxi. See also Strasser, "Phenomenologies and Psychologies"; Silverman, "Phenomenology"; and

Kockelmans, "Phenomenological Psychology in the United

States: A Critical Analysis of the Actual Situation."

11. See Minkowski, Lived Time; also Strauss, "The Relation

to the Allon."

12. Similarly, Lewin's topographical psychology, Principles

of Topological Psychology, represented only present

situations, since the past is irrelevant except as it is

present (pp. 30-40).

13. Phenomenological psychology is often acceptable to

mainstream psychologists in areas of psychopathology because

it is recognized that understanding the way a patient

relates to the world is important in diagnosis and

treatment. The belief seems to be that phenomenology is

merely a way of describing the subjective mental state while

a Lockean world, conceived as "out there," unchanging in

relationship to experience, and connected to a mind via

neural transmission of sense impressions, is commonly

believed to be fact. Documenting erroneous perceptions and

beliefs is the usefulness that these psychologists would see

in phenomenology.

However, the phenomenologist understands that the

meanings - and can there be any perception, any knowledge,

any understanding divorced from meaning? - of the immutable

world "out there" are derived from the primary experiences

of that world. We are present in a world of meaning.

When Merleau-Ponty stated that we are condemned to meaning (_Phenomenology of Perception_, p. xix), he was indicating more than that we navigate through the world on the basis of what the things we encounter mean. He was also pointing out that there is naught but meaning in our relation with the things. Can we perceive or imagine anything without it consisting of human meaning? The density of physics is more than numerical indices in an equation. It is to great degree the imagined experience of the heavy anvil, the sparceness of an air-filled empty room. The submicroscopic atom is imagined to be macroscopic particles.

Phenomenology, by placing the starting point of investigation within the phenomenon, shows that time is a lived state, that what we generally think of as time, some sort of line upon which all things move, is derivative of the lived. In other words, the linearized time dimension which we normally think of, is a construct based in culturally inherited metaphysics. Mind and matter are seen to be perspectival derivatives from the primary phenomena under investigation.

14. Heidegger, _Poetry, Language, Thought_, p. 189-210. Heidegger has contributed in other ways as well to the contemporary scene regarding textuality. Derrida, (_Positions_) whose contribution to Continental thought is discussed _infra_, states that his work would not have been

possible without Heidegger's discussion of, among other

things, the ontico-ontological difference (pp. 9-11).

15. For a discussion of the characteristics that are shared

between the written text and the verbal and nonverbal

behavior of humans from a hermeneuticist, see Ricoeur, "The

Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text."

16. See, for example, Harland, Superstructuralism, p. 3-4.

Also, Piaget (Structuralism] included Foucault's analyses as

examples of structuralism, a charge which Foucault (The

Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences)

vehemently dismissed:

> In France, certain half-witted 'commentators' persist
> in labelling me a 'structuralist.' I have been unable
> to get it into their tiny minds that I have used none
> of the methods, concepts, or key terms that
> characterize structuralist analysis. [p. xiv]

17. I acknowledge that the cause to which I refer, more or

less synonymous with Aristotle's efficient cause, is not the

only form of causation which is recognized in the various

psychologies. Humanistic psychologies such as those of

Maslow and Rogers, as well as Adler's individual psychology,

are examples of approaches which incorporate teleology,

similar to Aristotle's final cause. Nonetheless, I do not

believe that I have strayed far from the form of causation

accepted by most psychologies.

18. Cf. Henriques et al., Changing the Subject; and Hare-

Mustin and Marecek, "The Meaning of Difference: Gender

Theory, Postmodernism, and Psychology."

19. Every week I receive critical commentaries and studies on deconstruction which operate on the assumption that what they call "post-structuralism" amounts to saying that there is nothing beyond language, that we are submerged in words -- and other stupidities of that sort . . . . I totally refuse the label of nihilism which has been ascribed to me and my American colleagues. Deconstruction is not enclosure in nothingness, but an openness towards the other. [Kearney, "Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," p. 123-4]

20. Megill, Prophets of Extremity, p. 266.

21. I think that there is still in Heidegger, linked up with other things, a nostalgic desire to recover the unique name of Being. To be fair, however, one can find several passages in which Heidegger is self-critical and renounces his nostalgia: his practice of canceling and erasing the term in his later texts is an example of such a critique. [Kearney, "Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," p. 110]

22. Two recent commentaries have described Derrida's deconstruction as inherently ethical. Critchley (The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas) describes it as "ethical demand" when ethics is understood "in the particular sense given to it in the work of Emmanuel Levinas" [p. xi]. Cornell (The Philosophy of the Limit) relabels deconstruction with the term which forms the title of her book, arguing that rather than destructive, Derrida's techniques expose "the quasi-transcendental conditions that establish any system" (p. 1). Both of these works emphasize the similarities between the philosophies of Levinas and Derrida.

Chapter 3

1. Strasser ["Emmanuel Levinas (Born 1906):

Phenomenological Philosophy"] has written that although biographies are not important when it comes to understanding certain philosophers, knowing about the life of Emmanuel Levinas is essential to understand the progression of his thought:

> His life is not only "entangled in stories"...as is that of every human life, it is entangled in history itself, into the history of Europe in the twentieth century obsessed by passions and so rich in atrocious catastrophes.   [p. 612]

2.   "Signature," a sparse autobiographical essay, first appeared in 1963. A 1976 revised version of the essay was annotated for English readers by Adriaan Peperzak in 1978. Another English translation by Séan Hand appeared in 1990. Citations will be from the 1976 version.

The title, "Signature," may be better understood when one considers that Levinas believes that one cannot be the historian of one's own philosophy:

> On ne peut pas se faire l'historien de sa propre philosophie. C'est difficile et prétentieux. [EEL 107]

It seems that Levinas is content with allowing others to judge the transcendence of his work over a particular historical epoch or how it is an expression of that historicity. It is left to us to decide what is commentary and what is enduring. Such a stance is consistent with Levinas' emphasis upon the other person as a focus of demand and the ultimate judge. The title "Signature" is a statement which comments on the responsibility that Levinas bears for

his work and is a reflection of the very philosophy he writes.

3.   Chanter ["From Time to Time," pp. 224-5, n2] discusses the - admittedly equivocal - evidence for the primary influence upon Sartre of <u>The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology</u>.

<u>The Theory of Intuition</u> was not the only publication that Levinas penned for the French. An early (1931) article written by Levinas, "*Fribourg, Husserl et la phénoménologie*," remains a clear and succinct description of Husserl's phenomenological method. Written as a primer, it also conveyed the excitement felt by new disciples of the foundational philosophy.

4.   Aronowisc [in "Translator's Introduction," Levinas' <u>Nine Talmudic Readings</u>] indicates that Levinas refutes those commentators who describe him as returning to Judaism. [p. xxxvi, n19] However, in an interview Levinas admits that his interest in Judaism was "latent" or "dormant" until his study with the Talmudic scholar, Chouchani [DEL 54].

5.   However, Levinas does not fail to give Husserl credit for creating the basic method:

> *Même quand on n'applique pas la méthode phénoménologique selon toutes les recommandations de Husserl, on peut se dire élève de ce maître par une attention spéciale à l'allusif de la pensée. [EEL 104]*

> Even when one does not apply the phenomenological method according to all Husserl's recommendations, one must say that he is a student of that master because of the special attention given to the allusiveness of thought.

6.   Cohen, "Emmanuel Levinas: Happiness is a Sensational Time," p. 197.

7.   TI 29. Levinas is stressing that ethics is a primal access; ethics is generally thought to be derivative of ontology. Levinas states that ethics is the basis for philosophy. We can see that he has expanded the meaning of ethics past a set of moral injunctions. He believes we are fundamentally and irreducibly ethical; from ethics stems morals.

8.   Cohen, "Happiness." Cohen's article is an excellent review of Levinas' break with (or modification of) intentionality, although it concentrates on the origins of subjectivity.

9.   Charles Reed, "The Problem of Method in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas," stated:

> All of Levinas' method is constituted between these two
> poles: on the one hand in the realization that
> consciousness is not perfectly present to itself and
> that this lack of presence can be described
> experientially, and on the other in the movement toward
> an ever more radical attempt to describe this
> disruption of presence as a relation to an absolutely
> Other, as an ethical relation which is constantly
> betrayed by the very language which says it.
> [p. 38-39]

10. For a better overview of the history and details of Levinas' analysis of Husserlian phenomenology, cf. Levinas, The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology. André Orianne gives a good overview in his translator's foreword. See also Vasey, "Emmanuel Levinas: From Intentionality to

Proximity"; and Reed, "The Problem of Method in the

Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas." Reed has done an admirable

analysis of Levinas' relationship to Husserlian

phenomenology and uses the term "diachronic

transcendentalism" to describe Levinas' unique approach.

Despite an excellent exposition, Reed has subsequently

stated, in "Levinas' Question":

> Although I do not doubt the scholarly merit of my
> endeavor, and while I hope someday to make it available
> in a more readable and condensed format, I am now
> firmly convinced that the question of method is simply
> the wrong entrance into Levinas' thought. [p. 74]

Despite Reed's doubt, his work demonstrates the ways by

which Levinas has relied upon, augmented, and broken away

from Husserl's phenomenology. Strasser, "Emmanuel Levinas

(Born 1906): Phenomenological Philosophy," has also examined

this theme. Levinas, he states, has given us "a

phenomenology, but a novel phenomenology" [p. 648].

11. *C'est toujours avec honte que j'avoue mon admiration
    pour le philosophe. On sait ce que Heidegger a été en
    1933, même s'il l'a été pendant une période courte et
    même si ses disciples, dont beaucoup sont trés
    estimables, l'oublient. Pour moi c'est inoubliable.
    On peut avoir tout été, sauf hitlérien, même quand on
    le fut par mégarde.* [EEL 104]

    It is always with shame that I confess my admiration
    for the philosopher. It is known what Heidegger was in
    1933, even if he was so for only a short period and
    even if his disciples, of whom many are very estimable,
    have forgotten. For me it is unforgettable. One may
    have been anything, except - even inadvertently - a
    follower of Hitler.

12. See his reference to Heidegger in "Toward the Other,"

Nine Talmudic Readings, p. 25. Levinas does not, however,

allow his antipathy for the Heidegger of post-1933 to remain
solely at the personal level. There is little question of
separating the man from the philosophy for Levinas. The
question which is constantly addressed in Levinas'
philosophy is whether the ontology of Heidegger (and indeed,
"Greek" ontology in general) is not essentially fascistic.

13. "Signature," p. 181.

14. Peperzak notes that the French title, *De l'existence à
l'existant*,

> radically reverses the order of Heidegger's thought
> process which goes from being (*Seiendes, existant*) to
> Being (*Seing, existence*). ("Signature," p. 181 n27)

In that work and others Levinas challenged fundamental
notions of Heidegger. Levinas used the term "*il y a*,"
"there is," in an attempt to illustrate the essential
neutrality of being. (Heidegger's "*es gibt*," "it gives,"
stresses being as gift.) Levinas has also challenged
Heidegger's "*Mitsein*," "being-with," as not characteristic
of human sociality:

> We therefore are also radically opposed to Heidegger
> who subordinates the relation with the Other to
> ontology...rather than seeing in justice and injustice
> a primordial access to the Other beyond all ontology.
> [TI 89]

Care, Heidegger's fundamental ontological state of the
human, also became to be understood as insufficient to form
a basis for existence:

> Life is not the naked will to be, an ontological *Sorge*
> for this life. Life's relation with the very
> conditions of its life becomes the nourishment and
> content of that life. Life is love of life. [TI 112]

15. Another who studied with the little-known Chouchani was Elie Wiesel [Aronowisc, "Translator's Introduction," p. iii].

16. In response to a question regarding the very important word "face" in Totality and Infinity Levinas addresses the change in his language after that book:

> There is the ontological terminology: I spoke of being. I have since tried to get away from that language. When I speak of being in Totality and Infinity, what remains valuable is that, above all, it indicates that the analyses should not be taken as psychological. What is described in these human states is not simply empirical, but it is an essential structure. And in the word "essential" there is the word "esse," being. [POM 171]

In "Signature" Levinas indicates that he will henceforth avoid the ontological language used in Totality and Infinity (p. 189). Robert Bernasconi ("Levinas and Derrida") defends the thesis that this change occurred because of the influence of Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist critique ("Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas").

17. Cf. Keyes, "An Evaluation of Levinas' Critique of Heidegger." Derrida also remarked on Levinas' productive mis-reading of Heidegger (at Vanderbilt University, October 6, 1987). Even Levinas has admitted the possibility that he distorts Heidegger:

> These lines, and those that follow, owe much to Heidegger. Deformed and ill-understood? Perhaps. At least this deformation will not have been a way to deny the debt. Nor this debt a reason to forget . . . [OTB 189, n28].

This remark appears just before a section on the amphibology of being and entities - the section might be Levinas' adaptation of Heidegger's ontico-ontological difference.

18. See, for example, O'Connor, "Being and the Good: Heidegger and Levinas"; Bouckaert, "Ontology and Ethics: Reflections on Levinas' Critique of Heidegger"; Smith, "Totaliter Aliter: The Argument to the Other in the Thought of Karl Barth and Emmanuel Levinas," p. 96-116; and Kunze, "The Origin of the Self: A Presentation of the Philosophy of Levinas from the Standpoint of his Criticism of Heidegger."

19. It is significant that Ludwig Binswanger admitted his own productive misreading of Heidegger - which resulted in a viable approach to clinical psychology. In the same way, the insights of Levinas, grounded as they may be in *ressentiment* or polemic, are unique to philosophy and significant to psychology.

20. Levinas understands the bifurcation of his works as pursuing different forms of exegesis, different languages [DEL 54]. He frequently refers to these separate languages - a philosophical language he terms "Greek" due to a "specifically Greek lexicon of intelligibility" [DEL 55] and an alternative language of "folklore," which retains a confidential form [EEL 107].

21. For example, following his keynote speech at the 1987 Merleau-Ponty Circle, Claude LeFort was asked about the

similarity between Merleau-Ponty's and Levinas' works - his response dismissed Levinas' works as primarily theistic or theological in nature. As an example of the other criticism, see Michael Wyschogrod, The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election, p. 181. The author argues that ethical interpretations of Judaism are inadequate for this age.

22. Levinas' philosophical writings are certainly attempts to convey the meaning of his Judaic beliefs. But those Judaic beliefs are primarily ethical. Regarding his religious writings, Aronowicz ["Translator's Introduction," Nine Talmudic Lectures] states:

> Levinas's formulation of the religious dimension may seem to many to be irreligiousness itself, for here, as elsewhere, his approach is thoroughly *secular*. There is no "other" world besides the one we all live in, and there is no eternity outside time. Yet one cannot emphasize enough that this secularization is not a claim that, in the end, there is "merely" the world and "merely" history. For this world and these times contain, in Levinas's view, a *hidden* dimension, something infinitely more than we might expect, which remains hidden even when it reveals itself, and the relation to which makes human life what it is.
> [p. xxviii]

23. Edith Wyschogrod ("Emmanuel Levinas and the Problem of Religious Language") emphasizes the experiential nature of the evidence about the face and its ethical demand, despite the exalted language used [p. 6].

24. Nobody can really say *I believe* - or *I do not believe* for that matter - that God exists. The existence of God is not a question of an individual soul uttering logical syllogisms. The existence of God the *SeinGottes*, is sacred history itself, the sacredness of man's relation to man through which God may pass.

God's existence is the story of his revelation in biblical history. [DEL 54]

25. In a reference to the early translators of the Old Testament into Greek, Levinas states that the "Septennium is not complete, that the translation of biblical wisdom into the Greek language remains unfinished" [DEL 55].

26. Levinas, "To Love the Torah," p. 220.

27. In its deep-seated fear life attests this ever possible inversion of body-master into body-slave. [TI 164]

28. To be a body is on the one hand to stand [se tenir], to be master of oneself, and, on the other hand, to stand on the earth, to be in the other, and thus to be encumbered by one's body. [TI 164]

29. The caress consists on seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a future never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though it were not yet. [TI 257-8]

30. Paternity is a relation with a stranger who while being Other...is me, a relation of the I with a self who is not me. [TI 277]

31. Irigaray, The Fecundity of the Caress, p. 235.

32. It is not necessary that those who have no children see in this fact any depreciation whatever; biological filiality is only the first shape filiality takes; but one can very well conceive filiality as a relationship between human beings without the tie of biological kinship. [EI 71]

Chapter 4

1. Heraclitus (c. 500) also characterized being as war, but as a war of opposites.

2. Levinas refers to Lévi-Strauss and prioritizes langue over parole in a way which shows his debt to structuralism:

> The communication which language ensures appears as a subsidiary function, so much so that, as a pure and simple circulation of messages, it could be compared with the circulation of women and of merchandise in a society. [LP 109]

3. In analyzing the sensible in the ambiguity of duration and identity, which is already the ambiguity of the verb and the noun that scintillates in the said, we have found it **already said**. Language has been in operation, and the saying that bore this said, but goes further, was absorbed and died in the said, was inscribed. [OTB 36]

The "*saying*" and "*said*" and their time will be

discussed infra.

4. Harland [Superstructuralism] unites the two within a

Foucaultian *epistēmē* he terms "superstructuralism," a

"complex multiplicity" [p. 2] which seems to be bound by

common history and the gulf which has to great extent

separated it from Anglo-Saxon trends.

5. Psychology has approached this subject before in the

linguistic relativity, or Whorfian hypothesis. Whorf

[Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of

Benjamin Lee Whorf] believed that the grammar and vocabulary

of a language determined a person's perceptions, ideas, and

world-view. Experiments to test the hypothesis have

determined that people most likely have similar experiences

in color perception; however, memories for colors vary

according to whether a culture has specific terms for those

colors. [See Bourne, Dominowski, and Loftus; Cognitive

Processes, p. 125-129.] The concept of language used by

cognitive psychologists is intertwined with an information
processing model of language as code used to transmit
information about the world.

6. One philosophical problem of describing what eludes
language is that the language of philosophy was originally -
and, according to Levinas, continues to be - Greek, a tongue
which has left its imprint:

> *Mais il faut en arriver à ce langage de tous les
> philosophes, ce que j'appelle le langage grec....Ce
> langage qui utilise, somme toute, des termes qui n'est
> jamais incomparables, qui ne remontent pas à quelque
> chose de confidentiel....Et nos langues européennes
> sont calquées là-dessus.* [EEL 107]

> But it is necessary to attain the language of all
> philosophers, what I call the Greek language...which
> utilizes, after all, terms which are never
> incomparable, which do not return to anything
> confidential....And our European tongues are patterned
> upon that.

7. OTB 23.

> . . . the question "what?" in its adherence to being
> is at the origin of all thought (can it be otherwise,
> as long as thought proceeds by determinative terms?) .
> . . . [OTB 24]

8. In the "who is this *who*?" it asks "what about this
who?" to which the look turned on being is given. Thus
on all sides the privilege of the question "what?", or
the ontological nature of the problem is affirmed.
[OTB 27]

9. I will use the term "other" or "another" to refer to
the individual person, not the person as categorized or
classified into qualitative differentiations (e.g., as
friendly, schizophrenic, parsimonious, sad, overweight,
etc.) The other resists encapsulation.

10. "The face is present in its refusal to be contained"

[TI 194].

11. "It escapes representation; it is the very collapse of

phenomenality" [OTB 88].

12. I am not at all sure that the face is a phenomenon. A
    phenomenon is what appears. Appearance is not the mode
    of being of the face [POM 171].

13. The sound behind me is but a paper in the breeze. Oh,

it is you! The difference is telling.

14. Murder still aims at a sensible datum, and yet it finds
    itself before a datum whose being can not be suspended
    by an appropriation. It finds itself before a datum
    absolutely non-neutralizable. [TI 198]

15. "It is the frailty of the one who needs you, who is

counting on you" [POM 171].

16. The caress consists in seizing upon nothing, in
    soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a
    future never future enough, in soliciting what slips
    away as though it *were not yet*. It *searches*, it
    forages. It is not an intentionality of disclosure but
    of search: a movement unto the invisible. [TI 257-8]

17. This closeness without distance, this immediacy of an
    approach which remains approach without what approaches
    being circumscribable, locatable *there*, Levinas calls
    proximity. The other, my neighbor (*le prochain*)
    concerns, afflicts me with a closeness (*proximité*)
    closer than the closeness of entities (*prae-ens*).
    [Lingis, "Translator's Introduction", OTB xix]

18. The other in the same determinative of subjectivity is
    the restlessness of the same disturbed by the other.
    [OTB 25]

19. The exposure to another is disinterestedness,
    proximity, obsession by the neighbor, an obsession
    despite oneself, that is, a pain. [OTB 55]

20. Despite having a plethora of poets, much of

contemporary culture generally accepts one meaning as the

real or explicit meaning of a word, what the word *denotes*;

the *connotations* are generally understood as the

metaphorical debris that accompany the denotation. Yet such

a scheme, while lending precision to utterances and prose,

presupposes a somewhat one-sided view of language and the

world: it assumes that terms used correspond (in general) to

the *real* world (of which it is assumed we now have a good

understanding) and that the histories of the terms

themselves reveal but superstition, ignorance, or (what

might be more unsettling) ambiguity.

21. Skinner, "Whatever Happened to Psychology as the
Science of Behavior?"

22. Ibid., p. 780.

23. Wood, "Translator's Introduction," p. 14.

24. Is Wood's "primordial" phenomenon a relic from early

Indo-European tribal life or is it currently experienced

(yet seldom described prereflectively)? Such a question

cannot be answered with certainty, but the fact that

expressions utilizing "heart" continue to be used in their

abundant varieties may indicate that it continues to be an

experience of preflective centeredness. On the other hand,

it could also be argued that the language has simply

perpetuated a single term for a diversity of referents,

unattached from each other.

25. This reduction is then an incessant unsaying of the
said, a reduction to the saying always betrayed by the
said, whose words are defined by non-defined words; it
is a movement going from said to unsaid in which the

meaning shows itself, eclipses and shows itself. [OTB 181]

26. For example:

In the non-indifference to a neighbor, where proximity is never close enough, the difference between me and the other, and the undeclinability of the subject are not effaced, as they are in the situation in which the relationship of the one with the other is understood to be reciprocal. [OTB 138]

27. Cf. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in Poetry, Language, Thought.

28. The privileged role of the home does not consist in being the end of human activity but in being its condition, and in this sense its commencement. [TI 152]

29. I cannot discuss embodiment and phenomenology without acknowledging the enormously influential works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. See The Phenomenology of Perception, The Primacy of Perception, and The Visible and the Invisible.

30. Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 145.

31. This is certainly not intended to denigrate those studies in clinical, developmental, personality and social psychology which assess the relatively enduring ways that one interacts with the world and with others. The examination of the hypostasis (the term, like understanding, is a spatial metaphor, but in this case refers to a temporal basis) of identity in fact aids in understanding the facets uncovered by the above studies.

32. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, (Sec VI. "Of Personal Identity"); William James, The Principles of Psychology, p. 300-1.

33. Consciousness is always correlative with a theme, a
present represented, a theme put before me, a being
which is a phenomenon. [OTB 25]

34. For the philosophical tradition of the West, all
spirituality lies in consciousness, thematic exposition
of being, knowing. [OTB 99]

35. Although theoretical consciousness conveys power, it is

not the power of the subject. At the point where

subjectivity becomes consciousness it is already a

functionary of the system of articulation which is *being*.

36. I am "unique in my genus" [OTB 139].

37. Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 67-69, 149-153.

38. Yet while identity is based in relationship to the

other, it is not as simple opposition which could be

assembled into complementary halves of a whole. Levinas

rejects any sort of Hegelian totality would could be

conceptualized to encompass self and other in reciprocal

determination.

> If the same would establish its identity by simple
> *opposition to the other*, it would already be a part of
> a totality encompassing the same and the other. [TI 38]

39. Cf. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 340-400.

A stare is experientially significant, despite the

Western world-view which would reduce it to perception.

Even infants recognize when they are being gazed upon, and

many cultures developed traditions around the "evil eye."

Also, the social prohibitions and prescriptions surrounding

the "placement" of one's gaze argue forcibly that looking is

"something."

40. Gerard, <u>Violence and the Sacred</u>, p. 146.

41. Lacan, *Écrits*; Frosh, <u>The Politics of Psychoanalysis</u>, p. 129-138.

42. Levinas stresses that self is grammatically *accusative* without a nominative form (*se* in French) and experientially *accused* in the etymological sense of the term, i.e., called to account.

> *I* is the accused before the other, the movement to account to the other.Despite-me, for-another, is signification par excellence. And it is the sense of the "oneself," that accusative that derives from no nominative; it is the very fact of finding oneself while losing oneself. [OTB 11]

43. Jaynes, <u>The Evolution of Consciousness</u>, p. 270.

44. To speak of time in terms of flowing is to speak of time in terms of time and not in terms of temporal events. [OTB 34]

45. I am making a distinction between language as it is commonly understood, as competency in a shared lexicon of voiced or written signs, and language as discussed earlier, Levinas' *being*. Although one experiences the world via the terms of the latter, one may be unable to produce the verbal labels of the former for them. Nonetheless, I do not wish to sever the two from each other. Language as a communicative form is certainly dependent upon and a part of language as articulation.

46. One of the prominent theories which seems to favor early amalgamation of partial experiences as preparatory to the ability to experience wholes is object relations theory.

Object relations theorists such as Klein have speculated on the early formation of "part" objects in an infant's representational array. (For instance, a "good" breast is said to co-exist in the child's mind with a "bad" breast.) [See Klein's The Psychoanalysis of Children.] Such theories are premised upon a mind — world schism in which the child's worldview is conjectured to be incongruent with the *real* world. It is when the "part" objects merge in the child's representational matrix that the child is said to be in contact with reality. Nonetheless, even if such a scheme is correct, the experiences of the child, as experiences, would be complete articulations, whole experiences. But even Klein agreed that such part objects are *unconscious* in the preverbal child. In other words, *from the view of experiential research*, such theory is derived from speculation and remains unfounded.

47. Brown and McNeill, "The 'Tip of the Tongue' Phenomenon."

48. Arieti, *The Microgeny of Thought and Perception*, p. 76.

49. Flavell and Dragguns, "A Microgenetic Approach to Perception and Thought."

50. As soon as saying, on the hither side of being, becomes dictation, it expires, or abdicates, in fables and in writing. [OTB 43]

51. Reed, The Problem of Method in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, p. 157.

52. Ibid., p. 157-9.

53. The identity of entities refers to a saying, teleologically turned to the kerygma of the said, absorbing itself into it to the extend of being forgotten in it. [OTB 37]

54. There is clearly much more to Levinas' method. Reed's work is strongly recommended.

55. Levinas, "Useless Suffering," p. 156.

56. To be sure, there is that form of *active* temporalization which occurs in the said, within consciousness. This active process involves the retention of memories as past and the anticipations of what might come, along with their placement within the synchrony of an organized system [OTB 51].

57. The self is a sub-jectum; it is under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything. The unity of the universe is not what my gaze embraces in its unity of apperception, but what is incumbent on me from all sides . . . accuses me, is my affair. [OTB 116]

58. *Thrownness* is an existential concept derived from Kierkegaard and Heidegger; it refers to the unchosen fact of our existence here in this culture and this world. Levinas' subject, as *sub-jectum*, *thrown under*, provides another perspective on thrownness. The subject *supports* the universe, but has been as if thrown under its weight.

59. OTB 102.

Although philosophy has tended to substantialize this self (e.g., Descartes' *res cogitans*) or has looked to its attributes within the realm of consciousness (Sartre's *pour-soi*) [OTB 103], this identity is neither a thing nor

equivalent to consciousness. Nor is it the result of synthesizing images into idealities. Such synthesis would be a function of consciousness and would occur after subjectivity was already an identity.

60. It is indeed in consciousness that there is a constitution of *me* as a constellation of traits, as something, as a part of a web of sociality that would make me a person like any person in a social world with qualities, "traits", or attributes. This systematization of humanity (which Levinas subordinates to *justice*), necessary as it may be to human intercourse and social structure, nonetheless does not capture the *no-thingness* of subjectivity, does not convey the dutiful nature of the self.

61. Reed, p. 276.

62. The subject which is not an ego, but which I am, cannot be generalized, is not a subject in general; we have moved from the ego to me who am (*du Moi à moi qui suis moi*) and no one else. [OTB 13-14]

63. If our temporality were different, if we were not (experientially) subject to ageing, what would be the necessary conditions? In other words, what would temporality be like if there were not this punctuation or articulation which results in the self-consciousness which is ageing? Sensibility, I have indicated, is the flip-side of articulation. If sensibility were simply inspiratory, simply the taking-in without its subsequent expiration in

the disturbance of signification *for-the-other*, would the
eternal now reign? Would the stupor of plenitude fade to
the bliss of taste and the emptiness of hunger? Would
existence simply be the movement from sensation to
sensation? Indeed, if the reversal — sensibility to
signification — were not fundamental, then there would be no
memory, no retention. [Critics of the positivistic argument
of Condillac, who postulated that a single sense could be
the basis of all mental functions, have pointed out that he
failed to acknowledge that retention of an experience from
one time until the next refuted his first premise. Indeed,
he failed to acknowledge that raw sensation cannot be
retained. Representation is essential.] How could there be
retention of a segment or part of life if it had not been
articulated, segmented or parted from the whole?

64. When Levinas was asked by Malka if he believed
Heidegger's following of Hitler was "inadvertent," Levinas
responded:

> *Je ne peux pas vous dire si c'était par mégarde. Dans
> quelle mesure n'appartenait-il pas à ce qui dans une
> certaine culture germanique et certains milieux nous
> est profoundément étranger et hostile?* [EEL 104]

> I cannot tell you if it was inadvertent. In what
> measure did it belong to a certain Germanic culture and
> certain milieux which were profoundly alien and hostile
> to us?

Levinas seems willing to attribute some responsibility

to the culture, but not all. The question is "In what measure?"

Chapter 5

1. Plato, "The Republic."

2. Ibid., p. 311.

The term for "beginning" (ἀρχή or *archē*), has its own history in philosophy, including its use by Anaximander, Plato, and Aristotle; it has been thought of as "prime matter" and "first cause". Levinas generally avoids the term, understanding its use as a symptom of Western philosophy's hegemony. If we forget the difference between *saying* and *Said*, and if we forget that in order to discuss the *saying* we must twist our language via apophansis, then we are led to "self-consciousness and origin, archē" to where "Western philosophy leads" [OTB 78].

Instead of using *archē*, Levinas frequently uses a related term, *anarchic*. Plato wrote that the philosopher can, through devotion to the *Good* and the exercise of reason, reach the *archē*. Levinas writes that the *archē* is unrecoverable, that it is *beyond being*. For Levinas, the *archē* cannot be adequately brought into the present (into *being*); it is in an irretrievable past. Nonetheless, it is in this unrecoverable past that I am compelled to respond by *saying*.

Levinas' understanding of the search for an *arché* is that it is fundamentally limited, since it is "truth for the order of *things*" [OTB 110].

> Western philosophy, which perhaps is reification itself, remains faithful to the order of things and does not know the absolute passivity, beneath the level of activity and passivity, which is contributed by the idea of creation. Philosophers have always wished to think of creation in ontological terms, that is, in function of a preexisting and indestructable matter. [OTB 110]

For Levinas, an *arché* is unrecoverable precisely because it would precede any *said* which would attempt to retrieve it.

3. It is important if not essential in this postmodernist era for Levinas to avoid the *other-worldly* metaphysics of Plato in his appropriation of his scheme of the *Good* beyond *being*. Plato has presented us with a spatial and visual metaphor which, if acquired without demythologization, falls into the same trap that all other-worldly scenarios are prey to. Saying that the world outside of the cave is the *real* world is analogous to saying that the afterlife will present as a place of judgement and a heaven and hell (and Plato indeed uses this myth to explain that the just are rewarded with happiness and the unjust are punished after death).

Levinas is aware of the problem of other-worldly metaphysics. It is stated in the opening sentences of the first chapter of <u>Totality and Infinity</u> ("'The true life is absent.' But we are in the world." [TI 33]) and that

awareness has in fact influenced the way he presented his ideas in <u>Otherwise Than Being</u>.

For Levinas, it is the obsessive responsibility that *I* have to *you* which reveals the fundamental impetus for the world. It is not that the world is somehow inferior to this *élan*; rather, it is that the shared world means multiple others. For Levinas, the world — a world of networks of responsibility leading from me to you to him and her — is based in justice, a necessary diminution of responsibility to *you* in order that I am may be responsible to everyone. As a result, the "inferiority" of Plato's world is, in Levinas' scheme, *my* finitude and inadequacy in relation to *my* responsibilities.

The means for understanding the inspiration that Plato has for Levinas' *justice* in its relation to his metaphysics is to realize that Levinas is nowheres pointing to another *place* outside of the Cave. The Cave to Levinas is the real world. But its basis is justice. The light which for Plato comes from without is for Levinas the legacy of a time before now which cannot be recovered.

4. Aeschylus, *The Eumenides*.

5. In <u>Totality and Infinity</u> I do not often use the word "love" because by love is often understood what Pascal called love with concupiscence.   [POM 174]

6. That which I call responsibility is a love, because love is the only attitude where there is encounter with the unique. What is a loved one? He is unique in the world. [POM 174]

7. *Maintenant, il y a l'apparition du Tiers qui est use limitation de ce «hessed» sans mesure. Parce que l'autre pour qui je suis responsable peut être le bourreay d'un tiers qui est aussi mon autre. D'où la nécessité d'une justice, d'un «tsedek» derrière le «hessed».* [EEL 111]

8. (W)e are obliged to ask who is the other,to try to objectively define the undefinable, to compare the incomparable in an effort to juridically hold different positions together. [DEL 57]

9. Derrida addresses the issue of gender in Levinas' work, including his concept of illeity, in his demanding "At this Very Moment in this Work Here I Am"; Critchley unpacks Derrida's article in "'Bois' — Derrida's Final Word on Levinas."

10. In no way is justice a degradation of obsession, a degeneration of the for-the-other, a diminution, a limitation of anarchic responsibility, a neutralization of the glory of the Infinite . . . [OTB 159]

11. From a traditional linguistic standpoint the former approach may be considered a synchronic investigation while the latter looks to the history of the terms and is therefore diachronic. (Although Levinas uses these same terms it is important to understand the differences between his usage and Saussurean usage. Levinas' diachrony refers to the immediate yet unrecoverable past of each moment while the other usage refers to the evolution of the terms of expression through history.)

12. One (of many) exceptions to this avoidance is the text of a 1988 Duquesne University symposium (Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, <u>Phenomenology and the Numinous</u>) which

deals with phenomenological philosophers and the *numinous*,

Otto's term for the divine encounter.

For a postmodernist approach to "atheology" see

Taylor's <u>Altarity</u>.

13. The idea of the Infinite, which in Descartes is lodged
     in a thought that cannot contain it, expresses the
     disproportion between glory and the present, which is
     inspiration itself. [OTB 146]

14. *A face does not function in proximity as a sign of a
     hidden God who would impose the neighbor on me.* It is a
     trace of itself, a trace in the trace of an abandon,
     where the equivocation is never dissipated. [OTB 93-94,
     emphasis mine]

15. Pardon refers to the instant elapsed; it permits the
     subject who had committed himself in a past instant to
     be as though that instant had not past on, to be as
     though he had not committed himself. [TI 83]

16. Witnessed, and not thematized, in the sign given to the
     other, the Infinite signifies out of responsibility for
     the other, out of the-one-for-the-other, a subject
     supporting everything, subject to everything, that is,
     suffering for everyone, but charged with everything,
     without having had to decide for this taking charge,
     which is gloriously amplified in the measure that is
     imposed. [OTB 148]

     Witness is humility and admission; it is made before
     all theology; it is kergyma and prayer, glorification
     and recognition. But what is proper to all the
     relations that are thus unfolded - and what a deception
     for the friends of truth that thematizes being, and of
     the subject that effaces itself before Being! - is the
     fact that the return is sketched out in the going, the
     appeal is understood in the response, the "provocation"
     coming from God is in my invocation, gratitude is
     already gratitude for this state of gratitude, which is
     at the same time or in turn a gift and a gratitude.
     [OTB 149]

     In "God and Philosophy" Levinas definitively equates

God and Infinity:

> We have designated this way for the Infinite, or for God, to refer, from the heart of its very desirability, to the non-desirable proximity of others, by the term "illeity".... [GP 165]

17. *Mais on doit se demander...si, à partir de cette mise en question de soi-même par autrui...ne commence pas la voie òu le mot «Dieu» prends sens, òu Dieu «vous vient à l'idée».* [EEL 109]

18. Derrida repeats the words «*il aura obligé*» ("He will have obligated") throughout "At this very moment in this work here I am" in order to convey the uncanniness of Levinas' thesis:

> At this very instant, you hear me, I have just said it. He will have obligated.   [p. 11]

In what I now say to you, illeity — God, the Infinite, the one-for-the-other, the subjective — will have already obligated me to you.

Derrida also creates a term "*entre(el)lacement*", which inserts "*el*" in the middle of interlacing. *El* in this case refers to God, Emmanuel Levinas (E.L.), and she (*elle*) and he (*il*) interlaced. The neologism serves to represent the sociality dependent upon God and the rôle that Levinas plays in bringing that dependence to our awareness; it also serves to bring the question of gender to the forefront [Critchley, The Ethics of Deconstruction, p. 118].

Chapter 6

1.   This transcendental approach to self-alienation is somewhat similar to, and probably is a response to, the

approach toward guilt taken by Heidegger in <u>Being and Time</u> [p. 329]. For Heidegger there is a "*primordial Being-guilty*" which establishes the ontological foundation for any indebtedness experienced by the human, but this is too egocentric for Levinas. Levinas' alienation is alienation from oneself so as to respond to the other.

2. Recent events and trends in the political and social arenas have lauded greed as a virtue; *fulfillment* has become a goal which many believe can be attained through money, status, and/or sensuality.

3. The ego is not in itself like matter which, perfectly espoused by its form, is what it is; it is in itself like one is in one's skin, that is, already tight, ill at ease in one's own skin. It is as though the identity of matter resting in itself concealed a dimension in which a retreat to the hither side of immediate coincidence were possible, concealed a materiality more material than all matter - a materiality such that irritability, susceptibility or exposedness to wounds and outrage characterizes its passivity, more passive still than the passivity of effects. [OTB 108]

4. The psyche and its freedoms (*in which the exploratory thought of the scientist himself unfolds*) would be but a detour taken by the structures in order to link up into a system and show themselves in the light. It is no longer man, of his own vocation, that would seek or possess truth, but truth that raises up and maintains man (without depending on him!). [NI 142, emphasis mine]

One is reminded in the emphasized portion of the quotation of the paradox of the investigator who, though repudiating freedom and claiming all things to be determined, would demand credit for discoveries. Chein [<u>The Sciences of Behavior and the Image of Man</u>] argues that if

one, as a psychologist, adopts the common mechanistic view

of the human that one must exempt oneself:

> No man can act in terms of the image of himself as a
> totally impotent being. On any attempt to do so,
> determinism degenerates into fatalism. We cannot
> dispose of the issue with a "What will be, will be."
> The latter may be the case, but, if this is so, it is
> only, in part, because of what Man will do (including,
> if this happens, because he adopts a fatalistic
> attitude and does nothing), not despite what he will
> do. Now the class *Man* includes the psychologist who
> adopts the image of Man as an impotent being; this
> psychologist, like everyone else, cannot live by this
> image. He may try to apply it to everyone else, but he
> cannot apply it to himself as a basis of action. He
> thus professes a faith in an order of law that applies
> to everyone else, but, implicitly at least, he reserves
> to himself a special order of law. He knows that he
> can intervene in events, but he claims that no one else
> can -- and this in the name of science! [p. 17]

5.   Although the existential, ethical, legal, and social

implications of Nisbett and Wilson's 1977 review article

("Telling More Than You Can Know: Verbal Reports on Mental

Processes") were barely discussed by the authors, the impact

was significant upon social psychology. Persons believe

they have near complete understanding of what motivated them

to behave in certain ways in particular situations, Nisbett

and Wilson maintain. But a series of studies demonstrates

that they misattribute the reasons for their behavior. The

fascinating insight provided by the review was not that

people misattribute causal factors; it was that the people

discussed in the article were certain that they completely

understood their behavior. The faith that the social

sciences had that they could achieve self-understanding,

though shattered (according to Levinas), is akin to the faith of the persons described in the article.

6. I do not believe that we can isolate the *cause or causes* of autism in outmoded "refrigerator mother" family dynamics; although our understanding of the tragedy of autism is still woefully poor, the most common defect is apparently organic. Nonetheless, it is not causal attribution which is being discussed here.

7. It matters not that similar results can be demonstrated in other species, as Harlow's studies revealed in monkeys. There is no claim being made here that humans are not similar to other animals. But there is also no reduction being made that says that since humans and animals share characteristics that humans are *merely* animals.

8. A print of *Las Meninas* does indeed hang above my desk, and I am grateful that Foucault, in <u>The Order of Things</u>, provided an essay on the painting as an entry into his text. The painting speaks to human scientists, and meanings arise from and resound while observing it.

9. There is obviously some ambiguity regarding the visualism-audition bifurcation that I have laid out. If, for instance, my appreciation of *Las Meninas* results in my identification of seven themes of significance which the painting has for social science, have I not turned the *resounding* into systematic text? The point is not to

eliminate the one in favor of the other but to better appreciate the phenomenon by emphasizing lived temporality.

In the approach to the human being we can also listen to another while still systematizing. The option would be to be at rapt attention as any content to the other's speech simply slipped away, the sole motivation being to gaze upon the other.

10. Critchley, The Ethics of Deconstruction, p. 89.

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