INTRODUCTION
Life and Works

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a major philosopher of the 20th century who attempted to proceed philosophically beyond phenomenology and ontology. Unravelling a radical conception of otherness, Levinas's works problematize the traditional meaning of the ethical. He conceives ethics as first philosophy. For him, ethics occurs as the putting into question of the knowing subject. Derrida refers to Levinasian ethics as the ethics of ethics.

Emmanuel Levinas was born in Kaunas in Lithuania on 12 January 1906. His parents were members of an important Jewish community in Lithuania. Russian was the language in which Levinas did his formal education. In the childhood days itself, he was deeply fascinated by the writings of Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. In those days, he got opportunity to read Shakespeare also. These literary geniuses left a significant mark in Levinas's childhood imagination and attitude. However, Levinas learned Hebrew also simultaneously as Talmudic reading and study was part and parcel of his community life.

Levinas's early education was disrupted by the upheavals in Eastern Europe following First World War. In 1916, his family shifted to Charkow in Ukrain. Levinas attended high school classes at Charkow. This was a time when the reverberations of October revolution were shaking the soil. Young Levinas was a witness to the upheavals of Revolution back in Charkow. In 1920, his family returned to Lithuania. At the age of 17, Levinas enrolled at the University of Strasbourg and studied under Charles Blondel, Henri Carteron, Maurice Halbwachs and Maurice Pradines. Levinas's life long friendship with Maurice Blanchot also began at Strasbourg in 1925.

After five years at University of Strasbourg, Levinas went Freiburg to study under Husserl. In 1928, he audited Edmund Husserl's lectures at the University of Freiburg and became acquainted with the then-newly published

---

1 Peperzak, Adriaan T., Beyond : The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1997, p.1
work of Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. During this period, Levinas made serious efforts to study *Logical Investigations*. He was planning to write his doctoral thesis on Husserl’s theory of intuition. Levinas was highly moved by Husserlian phenomenology, especially the analysis of intentionality and its horizons. For him, it was quite a new way of thinking, different from intuition, induction, deduction and dialectics.³

Levinas’s great fascination for Heidegger started during his stay in Freiburg. In 1929, he attended the debate between Heidegger and Cassirer in Davos, Switzerland. He was more indebted to Heidegger in throwing light on the innovative aspects of phenomenology. In 1930, he came up with his preliminary doctoral thesis *Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*. The book had been preceded by a review article on Husserl’s *Ideas I*. It was Levinas who first introduced phenomenology to Sartre and other important figures of French philosophy. Apart from this, Levinas wrote numerous articles on phenomenology. The articles were published in 1998 under the title *Discovering Existence with Husserl*. This work includes some articles that he had already published in a French work titled *Discovering Existence with Husserl and Heidegger*.

Levinas became a naturalized French citizen in 1931.⁴ He got married to a French woman. He got a job also in the School of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris. Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris was an institution that laboured much to help Jews from the Mediterranean region. During this period, Levinas found some time to attend the course of Leon Brunschvicg at Sorbonne. He also attended Alexandre Kojeve’s lecture series on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Levinas’s first essay on Heidegger was published in 1932 under the title ‘Martin Heidegger and Ontology.’ Levinas’s plan was to write a book on Heidegger. Later, he abandoned that idea on account of Heidegger’s involvement with Nazis. In fact, the essay ‘Marin Heidegger and Ontology’ is a fragment of the

---

³ Peperzak, 1997, p.1
⁴ Hand, 2009, p.16
book he was writing.\textsuperscript{5} However, Levinas published his article ‘On Escape’ (De l’ evasion) in 1935. It was a daring attempt by Levinas to free himself from Heidegger’s ontology.\textsuperscript{6} Levinas was successful in deriving the central theme of his later writings in this thematic essay. The theme is nothing but an enquiry: is it possible to transcend, in thinking, the horizon of being?

When France declared war on Germany, Levinas was ordered to report for military duty. He offered his service as an interpretator of Russian and German. During the German invasion of France in 1940, his military unit was defeated and forced to surrender. Levinas spent the rest of the world war period as a prisoner in a forest camp at Fallingbostel near Hannover in Germany.\textsuperscript{7} Levinas was assigned to a special barracks for Jewish prisoners. They were forbidden any forms of religious worship. Levinas had often been forced to chop wood and do other menial works in the camp. Other prisoners saw him frequently writing down on a notebook at regular intervals. Later on, these jottings became his book \textit{Existence and Existents} (1947) and a series of lectures published under the title \textit{Time and the Other} (1948).

It was Maurice Blanchot who helped Levinas’ wife and daughter to survive the holocaust. They spent war period in St. Vincent de Paul monastery in Orleans.\textsuperscript{8} With the help of Blanchot, Levinas was able to keep in touch with his family through letters and other messages. Back home in Lithuania, Levinas’s mother-in-law was deported, while his father and brothers were murdered brutally. It is a fact that the memory of holocaust was haunting his imagination and thinking till death.

Following the war, Levinas returned to Paris to become the director of L’Ecole Normale Israelite Orientale. There he resumed his philosophical writing also. In 1947, he published \textit{Time and the Other} and \textit{Existence and Existents}. Both of these works advance his preliminary ideas on ethics. In 1947, he also undertook intense Talmudic studies with an itinerant scholar, M. Shoushani. He gave an

\textsuperscript{5} Peperzak, 1997, p.2
\textsuperscript{6} ibid
\textsuperscript{7} Hand, 2009, p.17
\textsuperscript{8} ibid
annual series of Talmudic commentaries right from 1960s. Some of these commentaries have been translated and published in his *Nine Talmudic Readings* and in other essays. In 1949, he published the French version of *Difficult Freedom*, a compilation of essays on Jewish themes. In 1961, Levinas published his first magnum opus *Totality and Infinity*, a book that established him as a major continental philosopher. In 1974, he published what many regard as his second magnum opus, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. In 1982, another collection of essays was published (in French), *Of God Who Comes to Mind*. He received several academic appointments. Eventually, in 1973, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne. Levinas died at the age of eighty nine in 1995.

**Philosophy of Levinas: A Brief Sketch**

Levinas's works seeks to describe primordial ethical experience. His essential critique concerns ontology. It is foregrounded in his radical conception of the other. The other, in Levinas, retains its alterity. He describes the relation with the other as non-reciprocal relation. Relating alterity to infinity, Levinas opens a royal road to ethics. The ethical, in Levinas, is the location of a point of alterity that cannot be reduced to the same.

Infinity, Levinas asserts, is alterity: According to Levinas, the infinity is the absolute other. Its alterity is transcendent and exterior to the subject. Infinity is an idea that cannot be conceptualized, represented in consciousness. It is a surplus upon thought. The relationship with the other precedes all ontology. Hence, the other cannot be reduced to the same.

Levinas conceptualizes the human contact with alterity as an encounter with the face of the other. The face is not merely an object of consciousness. The face signifies an epiphany or a revelation. It represents a transcendent entity. In

---

9 ibid, p.34  
the concept of the face, Levinas connects transcendence with concrete existence. The epiphany of the other is produced in his face.\textsuperscript{12}

According to Levinas, transcendence designates a relation with a reality infinitely distant from my own reality. For Levinas, 'the idea of infinity is transcendence itself.'\textsuperscript{13} Thus, conceiving a radical transcendence, Levinas distances himself from Heidegger's classic study of ontology and Hegel's absolute idealism. Hegel conceived reality as a rational march toward the concrete universal. In Hegelian conception, the totality of the whole presupposes a certain affinity of the parts among themselves. In Heidegger also, singularity is dissolved into the universality of being.

In contrast to the mutuality of Buber's I-Thou relationship, the basic Levinasian position is that the relationship with the other is asymmetric. I am infinitely responsible to the other, whereas the other owes me nothing. Furthermore, in \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, he argues that subjectivity is a subjection to the other. Responsibility is the locus of Levinasian subjectivity.\textsuperscript{14} We are held hostage by the other. Inaugurating a radical change from phenomenological tradition, Levinas announces that face is the site where intentional changes to the ethical. This attempt makes Levinas to come directly out of the tradition established by Descartes, Kant and Husserl. The tradition of rational thought denies the other its autonomy. Levinas calls this violence 'totalization.' Totalization occurs whenever I limit the other to a set of categories.

Levinas's ethical primacy is not in tandem with the tradition of rational thinking that upholds the autonomy of the self. Levinas is impressed by a radical critique of totalization developed by Rosenzweig. He is very much indebted to the radical intervention of Rosenzweig. According to Rosenzweig, philosophical systems respond to a desire to know both what exists and why. In that process, they take God, world, and man and reduce two of them to the third. Philosophy always deals with the general. It fails to respect the difference of world, god and

\textsuperscript{12} ibid, p.194
\textsuperscript{13} ibid, p.80
Philosophy declares the triumph of the same, of the self. For Levinas, the Platonic expression 'the same' refers to the domain of self.

Totalization is a denial of the other's difference. It is the denial of the otherness of the other. Levinas looks not to reason, but to sensibility, to explain transcendence of the other. Sensibility, for Levinas, 'goes back to a point before thought originates, before the ordering of a world into a system or totality.' Sensibility is passive, and it is characterized primarily by enjoyment.

Unlike Heidegger, Levinas maintains that human beings live from things as nourishments. Levinas writes:

Nourishment, as a means of invigoration, is the transmutation of the other into the same, which is the essence of enjoyment; an energy that is other, recognized as other, recognized.... as sustaining the very act that is directed upon it, becomes, in enjoyment, my own energy, my strength, me.

This taking on of what nourishes me conveys a separation. This separation, Levinas upholds, is between me and thing of nourishment.

Thus, in enjoyment, Levinas explains that the self emerges already as the subject of its need. Enjoyment is made of the memory of its thirst; it is a quenching. Before enjoyment, there is me and the other thing that has yet to nourish me, even if the otherness of what will nourish me becomes apparent only in enjoyment. I can represent the bread, but this will not feed me. I must eat it. Here evinces a separation between the bread and me. This separation makes Levinasian self unique.

Levinas finds on the level of sensibility a subjectivity that is more primordial than rational subjectivity. Sensibility reaches further out into the domain of the extra-mental. Sensibility is not a moment of representation in

---

16 Levinas, 1991, p.114
17 Levinas, 1969, p.111
18 ibid, p.113
19 ibid, p.109
Levinas. On the other hand, sensibility is described as the instance of enjoyment in *Totality and Infinity*.\(^{20}\)

Establishing subjectivity on the level of sensibility, Levinas says that human subject is passive. Passivity has no sense other than in the one-for-the-other. The other is a transcendence that comes from beyond the categories of my thought. The face of the other indicates proximity. The immediacy of the other is proximity. The very meaning of being a subject is to be for-the-other. According to Levinas, “subjectivity is being a hostage.”\(^{21}\)

*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* establishes that the birth of subject occurs in obligation, where no commitment was made.\(^{22}\) Levinas brings the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* to explain the subjectivity obsessed by the other. The speaking subject is exposed to the other in the *saying*. The *saying* is not reducible to objectification. Levinas doesn’t see a reciprocal relationship in obsession and substitution. According to Levinas, “in substitution my being that belongs to me and not to another is undone, and it is through substitution that I am not another, but me.”\(^{23}\)

Levinas distinguishes responsibility from reciprocity.\(^ {24}\) In contrast to the mutuality of Buber’s I-Thou relationship, the basic Levinasian position is that the relationship with the other is asymmetric: I am infinitely responsible to the other, whereas the other owes me nothing.

Here Levinas deviates much from the traditional epistemological approaches. Along with Heidegger, he shares the idea that comprehension of being is a human openness to being. Comprehension of being characterizes man. Comprehension determines not the essence, but existence of man. According to Levinas, the essence of man is always at the same time his existence. Comprehension occurs primordially in modes. For Heidegger, these modes of

---

\(^{20}\) ibid, p.136  
\(^{21}\) Levinas, 1991, p.127  
\(^{22}\) ibid, p.140  
\(^{23}\) ibid, p.127  
\(^{24}\) ibid, p.84.
openness are anxiety, boredom, delight etc. But Levinas names these modes of being as enjoyment, desire and labour.25

On the basis of the distinction between the saying and the said, Levinas asserts that man is a plurality of activity. The worth of philosophy lies in the encounter with the other.26 Levinas is looking for the meaning and possibility of revelation in history. He is also looking for the ground of reason and sociality. Meaning, for Levinas, is a feature of everyday life.27 He hesitates to reduce meaning to linguistic meaning.

Following Husserl, Levinas is of the opinion that no object of consciousness is given without a horizon. All that the object means comes from its location in the world. Levinas contrasts his position with empiricist approach that treats given as without meaning. Levinas speaks of the horizons of meaning. Being embedded in the horizon of meaning, word, act and objects are present to consciousness.28 He is for a set of culturally and historically diverse meanings.

In his essay, 'Meaning and Sense,' Levinas contrasts meaning as plural with sense as single and unique. For Levinas, meaning is constructed. But sense is not constructed. He speaks of sense that orients. Moreover, he relates sense with face-to-face and primordial responsibility. Levinas asserts that face and responsibility makes every meaning possible. Face signifies a sense. It signifies a meaning. The primordial responsibility for the other gives meaning a sense. In 'Meaning and Sense', Levinas strongly states that norms of morality make all meaning possible.29 For him, moral consciousness is not an experience of values. It is rather a delineation of the meaning of the ethical. This is to disrupt traditional moral thinking. Levinas treats culture as a world of meanings and practices constructed in a very specific sense. But morality is the demand registered by the

26 ibid, p.48
27 Morgan, 2007, p.115
28 ibid, p.117
29 Levinas, Emmanuel, Meaning and Sense, in Basic Philosophical Writings, eds. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996, p.59
face of the other person. For Levinas, 'morality doesn't belong to culture. Morality enables one to judge it.'³⁰

Throughout his works, Levinas is for a distinction between subject and being. Levinasian ethics is premised on this separation of being from beings. In Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, Levinas looks for a new way of addressing the same separation. As I have already pointed out, this new approach is foregrounded on the distinction between the saying and the said. This distinction is employed to explain as to how the ethical signifies within the ontological language.³¹ This is also employed to show how the obsession for the other is not a reciprocal relation. The saying is the event of being in relation with the other. It is 'non-thematizable ethical residue of language that escapes comprehension.'³² The Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence explores the interruption of ethical saying within ontological said.

I would like to analyze first the thematic focus of Levinas’s earlier works and then come back to the distinction between the saying and the said.

In The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology (1930), Levinas explores intuitionism in Husserl’s works. Levinas observes that Husserl is vehemently against psychologism. Psychologism presupposes a theory of being. While elaborating the concept of intentionality, Husserl asserts the primacy of theoretical consciousness.³³ By noesis, Husserl means the subjective side of intentionality. By noemata, he means those things of which consciousness is conscious of. The relation between noeses and noema cannot be reduced to the relation between consciousness and its intentional objects.

Levinas writes:

The object of perception of a tree is a tree but the noema of this perception is its complete correlate, a tree with all its predicates and especially of the modes in which it is given: a tree that is green, lighted, given to perception or to an act of imagination,

³⁰ ibid, p.57
³¹ Critchley,1992, p.7
³² ibid
given clearly or indistinctly etc. The nocmata of a tree is related to the tree as object.\textsuperscript{34}

Levinas explains that theory and representation, in Husserl, are forms of intentionality. In a section titled ‘Intuition’, Levinas distinguishes between intuitive acts and signifying acts in Husserl. Husserl borrows the concept of signifying act from linguistic field. Intuitive acts reach its object. Signifying acts aim at it. In signifying acts, ‘objects are not seen. They are meant’\textsuperscript{35}

In \textit{Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phénomemenology}, Levinas explores Husserl’s conception of consciousness robustly. Levinas states that reduction to an ego can be only a first step of phenomenology.\textsuperscript{36} We must further discover others and the intersubjective world. Levinas extends his rethinking of the relation of being and the human in his post-war essays such as \textit{Existence and Existents} and \textit{Time and the Other}.

Levinas, in his essay ‘On escape’ (1935), reverses his involvement with Heidegger. In his crucial essay ‘Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism,’ Levinas states that barbarism is not a reaction of a moment of madness. It is not the outburst of ideological aberration. On the other hand, it implies ‘the possibility of the elemental evil.’\textsuperscript{37} Levinas feels that Hitlerism throws into crisis the very principle of civilization. It uproots the political notion of freedom. Similarly, ‘it challenges the ahistorical notion of freedom.’\textsuperscript{38}

The first appearance of a mature philosophy of Levinas can be found in \textit{Existence and Existents} and \textit{Time and the Other}. In \textit{Existence and Existents}, he undertakes a critical re-articulation of the relation between subject and being. He elaborates the specificity of his approach with regard to the question of being and the ontological difference.\textsuperscript{39} He indicates his intention to start with being and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{34} ibid, pp.54-55  \\
\textsuperscript{35} ibid, p.65  \\
\textsuperscript{36} Hand, 2009, p.26  \\
\textsuperscript{37} ibid, p.28  \\
\textsuperscript{38} ibid, p.29  \\
\end{flushleft}
move towards existence. He reverses the manner in which Heidegger approached the question of being.

*Existence and Existents* was preceded by the publication of a fragment under the title *Il y a*. Aiming to transcend metaphysics of being, Levinas, in this work, points to transcendence. It is good that commands an exodus beyond the limits of being. *Il y a* is the name of a dark and chaotic indeterminacy that precedes all creativity and goodness. *Il y a* is described as being in general. It is an anonymous current of being, which submerges every subject. It is not something that can be derived from something. *Il y a* doesn’t exist in a dialectical relationship with absence. It transcends inwardness as well as exteriority. In other words, distinction between interiority and exteriority disappears before *il y a*.

In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas intends to formulate a non-ontological experience of being. He addresses a course away from existence and towards existent. This formulation involves ‘a movement away from Heidegger’s questions about being towards an effort and fatigue.’ He addresses a movement away from an idea of freedom inherent in western philosophical account right from Plato through Marxism to Heidegger. During the academic period 1946-47, Levinas gave a series of four lectures on the relationship of time and the other at Sorbonne. The text of these lectures was published in the same year. The essay *Time and the Other* expresses the core of Levinas’s later works and arguments.

*Time and the Other* marks an important stage in the way Levinas uses phenomenological structure to move beyond the *noetic-noematic* correlation. Levinas is trying to show that time is nothing but subject’s very relation with the other. *Time and the Other* establishes the independent voice of Levinas in the

---

41 ibid
42 Hand, 2009, p.31
43 ibid
post-war scenario. He generally deals with being, solitude, materiality, suffering etc. In this work, he strongly registers his disagreement to both Hegelian dialectics and Bergsonian duration.

In this work, Levinas declares that existence is pluralist. By plural, Levinas is not denoting multiplicity of existents. Instead, a plurality insinuates itself into the very existing of the existent. According to Levinas,

the relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other's place; we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with a mystery. The other's entire being is constituted by its exteriority or rather its alterity, for exteriority is a property of space and leads the subject back to itself through light.45

Levinas emphasizes that alterity is not purely the existence of another freedom. In this work, the conception of freedom is not based on virile power. It is not based on solitude also. Death and freedom remains ungraspable and beyond virility.46

Levinas refutes the idea of time in a subject alone. Apart from this, he refuses to speak of a purely personal time. The relationship with the other is the situation in which an event happens to a subject. The very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future. For Levinas, 'future is what is in no way grasped.'47 The condition of time lies in the relationship between humans. The situation of the face-to-face is the very accomplishment of time. Levinas tries to say that the time is neither the horizon of being nor the existential structure of Dasein.48 Time is that which constitutes the subject into intersubjectivity. David R. Fryer observes that

the work is an adept demonstration of Levinas's phenomenological method, in which he takes single moments of time and expands up on their existential and ontological attributes. The moments of time herein treated are 1) the solitude of being prior to the intervention

45 ibid, p.43  
46 Hand, 2009, p.34  
47 Levinas, 1989, p.43  
of the other 2) confrontation with death as the first intervention of the other self.49

In Time and the Other, Levinas asserts his point that the intersubjective space is not symmetrical. The relationship with the alterity is neither spatial nor conceptual. Similarly, 'the difference between the sexes is a formal structure.'50 The difference between the sexes cannot be considered as a contradiction.

Discovering Existence with Husserl and Heidegger (1949) is a collection of pre-war and unpublished works on phenomenology. Later on, essays like 'Language and Proximity' were added to it. Many consider Totality and Infinity as the magnum opus of Levinas. In Totality and Infinity (1961), Levinas takes serious effort to formulate a position against Husserl’s transcendental idealism and Heidegger’s philosophy of being. Levinas is strictly against Hegelian lines that conceive self as a negation of the self. He is continuing the philosophical project undertaken by Existence and Existents and Time and the Other. In the preface to the German edition of Totality and Infinity, Levinas writes:

This book challenges the synthesis of knowledge, the totality of being that is embraced by the transcendental ego, presence grasped in the representation and the concept, and questioning on the semantics of the verbal form of to be – inevitable stations of reasons – as the ultimate authorities in deciding what is meaningful.51

Totality and Infinity identifies transcendence as a movement towards the other. In other words, the other is aligned with the notion of infinity. Totality and Infinity starts with the phenomenology of eros.52 Levinas's phenomenological critique of economy starts with a radical distinction between needs and desire. Desire is something that transcends economy. Desire doesn’t assimilate or integrate. Desire transcends economy by desiring the other.

Levinas has put forward his strong argument that the other phenomenologists neglected primordial experience of enjoyment. Levinas devotes

49 ibid, p.33
50 Levinas, 1989, p.48
52 Peperzak, 1997, p.163
many pages to describe the manifestations of primordial experience of enjoyment. Objects are at one’s disposal. One is free to live on them. According to Levinas, egocentric views do not do justice to the experience of other person. The other person is not an alter ego. He is not a mere object to be subsumed.

*Totality and Infinity* sets the whole philosophical agenda of Levinas clearly. Levinas takes efforts to explain how the self comes to ascertain its identity out of its concrete egoism. It happens in relation to the world. Self establishes itself through the moments of enjoyment, labour, dwelling, possession, representation etc.⁵³ According to Levinas, relation to the other is not need, but desire. At the same time, ‘the ‘I’ is not a contingent formation.’⁵⁴

According to Levinas, the egoist spontaneity of the same is at the heart of western ontology. Platonic world, where knowledge is identified with vision, reduces other to the same. So does Heidegger who upholds truth as a disclosure. Levinas feels that ‘the economy of the same turns the other into a theme and silences it.’⁵⁵

The face embodies all of Levinas’s aim in *Totality and Infinity*. Face manifests other’s inviolability. Similarly, face manifests the existence of a fundamental pluralism.⁵⁶ Other exists before the self. Justice emerges only from a non-negotiable responsibility for the other.

In *Totality and Infinity* itself, Levinas conceives language as a way that retains the otherness of the other intact. In the introduction to *Totality and Infinity*, John Wild writes about Levinas’s emphasis on language and communication:

> By speaking to the other, I enter into a relation with him. But this speaking doesn’t bind me down or limit me, because I remain at a distance from what is said. Hence, the real conversation with an other cannot be exhaustively planned. I am never sure just what he will say, and there is always room for reinterpretation and spontaneity on both sides. My autonomy remains intact. In fact, in so far as I have any, it is stimulated to further intensity by

---

⁵³ Levinas, 1989, pp.35-40
⁵⁴ ibid, p.39
⁵⁵ Hand, 2009, p.40
⁵⁶ ibid, p.43
searching questions from a point of view that is not merely opposite and therefore correlative to mine, but genuinely other. I can always say what I wish, and even begin once again de novo. The same is true of the other.\textsuperscript{57}

Above all, \textit{Totality and Infinity} is a defense of ethics as first philosophy.\textsuperscript{58}

\textit{Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism} (1963) deals with Levinas’s special concern for politics, Judaism and the state of Israel. There are forty seven essays collected in \textit{Difficult Freedom}. It dates back from the late 1940s through early 1960s. It is a period when Levinas was writing his \textit{magnum opus}, \textit{Totality and Infinity}. \textit{Difficult Freedom}, which was published in 1963, is a first of Levinas’s non-philosophical works. Levinas keeps a distinction between philosophy and non-philosophy. But he recognizes the interplay between them. It can be said that such a distinction breaks down with the publication of \textit{Of God Who Comes to Mind} (1975).

Levinas upholds an altogether different project in \textit{Difficult Freedom}. He tries to render explicit the hidden aspects of the Judaic tradition. Certain very important aspects of Judaism have been hidden due to the dominance of Greco-Christian tradition. Levinas is for a reinscription.\textsuperscript{59} Levinas brings forth the alternative intelligibility of Judaic tradition.

For Levinas, the function of Jewish ritual life is to break up spontaneity to reach the terrain of the ethical. ‘Judaism is a passion distrusting its pathos. A passion interrupting its pathos would be the contribution of a reinscribed Judaism.’\textsuperscript{60} One can sense the reverberations of Jewish pride in \textit{Difficult Freedom}. Levinas writes in \textit{Difficult Freedom}:

\begin{quote}
At the dawning of the new world, Judaism has the consciousness to possess, through its permanence, a function in the general economy of Being. No one can replace it. Someone has to exist in the world who is as old as the world. For Judaism, the great migrations of the people, the migrations among the people and the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{57} Wild, John, ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Totality and Infinity}, p.14
\textsuperscript{58} Bergo, 1999, p.55
\textsuperscript{60} ibid, p.13
upheavals of history have never presented a deadly threat. It always found what remained to it. It has a painful experience of living on; its performance accustomed it to judging history and refusing to accept the verdict of a History that proclaimed itself judge. Perhaps Jewish thought in general consists today in holding on more firmly than ever to this permanence and this eternity. Judaism has traversed history without taking up history's causes. It has the power to judge, alone against all, the victory of visible and organized forces – if need be in order to reject them. Its head may be held high or its head may be down, but it is always stiff-necked. This temerity and this patience, which are as long as eternity itself, will perhaps, be more necessary to humanity tomorrow or the day after tomorrow than they were yesterday or the day before. 61

At the same time, Levinas writes that his biography is dominated by fear and the memory of Nazi horror. He is working out a notion of politics in which the name of the individual is subsumed. Israel makes room for both individual and universal. Difficult Freedom consists of Levinas's aspirations for the state of Israel. 62

Humanism of the Other (1972) is a philosophical reaction to popular nihilism in the 1960s. In Humanism of the Other, Emmanuel Levinas argues that it is of the highest demand to understand one's humanity through the humanity of others. Taking distances from the phenomenology of Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty, the idealism of Plato and Kant, and the scepticism of Nietzsche and Blanchot, Levinas rehabilitates humanism of being and restores its promises.

He expresses his disappointment over the revolutions that became mere bureaucracies and totalitarian governments. He views that most of the national liberation movements eventually led to oppression and international wars. Philosophical tradition defines the human as rational subject of synthesis and identification. This is unambiguously at the heart of persecution and murder. Humanism of the Other looks for a philosophical solution over and against subjugation, persecution and murder. According to Levinas, 'proximity announces limit of transcendental apperception. It shows the end of synchrony and the

62 ibid, pp.164-166
tyranny of the same which is the root cause of subjugation and persecution.\textsuperscript{63} The rupture in the transcendental unity of apperception in terms of diachrony signifies another order that points towards a beyond being.\textsuperscript{64}

Levinas strongly condemns the dehumanization which reached its zenith in Hitler and Nazism. He does not underestimate the difficulty of reconciling oneself with another. The humanity of the human, Levinas argues, is not discoverable through mathematics, rational metaphysics or introspection. Rather, it is found in the recognition that the suffering and mortality of others are the obligations.

Levinas has devoted his second \textit{magnum opus} \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence} to those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions of all confessions and nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man. It was published as a book in 1974, but it is based on articles and lectures dating back some seven years.\textsuperscript{65} Even though it continues with some major implications of the project outlined in \textit{Totality and Infinity}, \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence} radically disrupts some tenets of \textit{Totality and Infinity}.\textsuperscript{66}

In \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, Levinas analyzes the connection between economy and Being in the frame of phenomenological ontology. There is a change in ground and method from \textit{Totality and Infinity} to \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}. In \textit{Totality and Infinity}, the relationship with the other was presented as a contestation of the pure sensibility. \textit{Totality and Infinity} began its approach to sensibility by contrasting enjoyment with intentionality. He then explains 'how the subject encounters with the other and discovers an ethical sense which contradicts the movement of affective self-positing in enjoyment.'\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence} relates responsibility with sensibility in a different manner. According to Levinas, both

\textsuperscript{63} Levinas, Emmanuel, \textit{Humanism of the Other}, trans. Nidra Poller, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, 2003, p.6
\textsuperscript{64} ibid
\textsuperscript{65} ibid
\textsuperscript{66} ibid
\textsuperscript{67} ibid
\textsuperscript{67} Thomas, 2004, p.141
perceptions and sensations are wholly sustained and structured by ethical responsibility.

Here, Levinas is presenting alterity as an experience and as an *a priori* to all experience. Substitution is the key term of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. His notion of substitution is essentially foregrounded in this conception of alterity. It builds upon Levinas's earlier investigation of sensibility in *Totality and Infinity*. In substitution, identity is inverted. Levinas speaks of the inversion of intentionality in the *saying* to the other. This is the inversion of intentionality into sensibility. According to Levinas, in substitution,

the self liberates itself ethically from every other and from itself.
Its responsibility for the other, the proximity of the neighbour, does not signifies a submission to a non-ego; it means openness in which being's essence is surpassed in inspiration.

Levinas revises his notion of sensibility as openness to exteriority. Levinas reworks both his conception of transcendence and the 'I' in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. It can be said that Levinas is here responding to the Derridean criticism on subjectivity in *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity*, remarked that transcendence always entails immanence. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas construes transcendence as the meaning of the uniqueness of the subject. While explaining transcendence, Levinas has explained his position on time more clearly. For Levinas, atemporality of the self is as important as the vulnerability of the self.

In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas gives an essentially human meaning to the exigency of justice. The simultaneity of the other and the third party is the locus where the exigency of justice emerges. The ethical imposition comes to subjectivity as its deliverance from the anonymity of being.

In the thirteen essays collected in the volume Of God Who Comes to Mind (1982) Levinas proceeds to address his key philosophical positions. He takes up philosophical questions concerning politics, language, and religion. The volume

---

68 Bergo, 1999, p.155
69 Thomas, 2004, p.148
70 Levinas, 1991, p.115
situates his thought in a broader intellectual context than that of his previous works. In these essays, alongside the detailed investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, Rosenzweig, and Buber that characterize all his writings, Levinas also addresses the thought of Kierkegaard, Marx, Bloch, and Derrida.

Some essays deals with Levinas's philosophical core. 'God and Philosophy' is perhaps the single most important text for understanding Levinasian philosophical project. According to Levinas, God situated is the 'being par excellence.' The idea of infinite is the passivity of the self. Philosophy has to account for this primordial experience. 'From Consciousness to Wakefulness: Starting From Heidegger' illuminates Levinas's relation to Husserl and thus to phenomenology. But he never abides by the limits phenomenology imposes. In 'The Thinking of Being and the Question of the Other,' Levinas not only addresses Derrida's 'Speech and Phenomenon' but also develops an answer to the later Heidegger's account of the history of Being by suggesting another way of reading that history.

Other topics examined in the essays include the Marxist concept of ideology, death, interpretation, the concept of evil, the philosophy of dialogue, the relation of language to the other, and the acts of communication, mutual understanding etc.

*Entre Nous* (1991) is a major collection of essays representing the culmination of Levinas's philosophy. It can be said that the book gathers his most important works and reveals the development of his thought over nearly forty years of committed enquiry. The essays generally engage with issues of suffering, love, religion, culture, justice, human rights and legal theory. Taken together they constitute a key to Levinas's ideas on the ethical dimension of otherness.

The essays are arranged in chronological order of their appearance in various philosophical publications.71 ‘Is Ontology fundamental?’ (1951) gives a general sense of what will be discussed in the subsequent essays. While exploring

---

71 Levinas, 2007, p. vii
the dynamics of intersubjective relation, *Entre Nous* deals with the question of ethical subjectivity. In the preface, Levinas writes:

> What motivates these pages is not some urgent need to return to ethics for the purpose of developing *ab ovo* a code in which the structure and rules, good private conduct, public policy, and peace between nations would be set forth, however fundamental the ethical values implied in these chapters may appear to be. The main intent here is to try to see ethics in relation to the rationality of knowledge that is immanent in being, and that is primordial in the philosophical tradition of the west: even if ethics – ultimately going beyond the forms and determinations of ontology, but without rejecting the peace of reason – could achieve a different form of intelligibility and a different way of loving wisdom; and perhaps even – but I will not go that far – the way of Psalm 111: 10.\(^\text{72}\)

Levinas locates the natural history of human beings in the blood and tears of wars between individuals, nations and classes. Having analyzed the interpersonal relation to the core, Levinas argues strongly that the proximity and the uniqueness of the other man is in no way the repudiation of politics. For him, the face of the other preserves the ethics of the state. Human multiplicity cannot be an excuse to keep oneself away from the original sociality. Levinas writes: “The third party, different from my fellowman, is also my fellowman.”\(^\text{73}\)

Levinas’s Talmudic readings offer a living and enduring lesson of ethical enquiry. Talmud, for Levinas, is not just an extension of the Bible. Talmud’s relation to Bible is neither superior nor inferior. Levinas conceives Talmud as a second layer of meaning.\(^\text{74}\) For Levinas, Talmudic language is both dialectical and argumentative. He even links ‘evocation of hermeneutics with Talmud’s argumentative language.’\(^\text{75}\) Levinas approaches religious texts rationally. He prioritizes a rational and articulated route to infinity in them.

Derrida reflects on the relationship between Hebraic and Greek worlds of wisdom in Levinas. Even though there is a fundamental difference between

\[ TH-16864 \]
philosophy and Talmud in terms of the references and approach, Levinas's Talmudic readings reflect his philosophical concerns. According to Sean Hand,

In the way Talmudic text transpose in to a more domestic and personable form of certain fundamental philosophical concerns with originality of discourse, the emergence of truth, synchrony and representation, and even use the precise vocabulary of the philosophy, the Talmudic readings not only enact ethical saying but also opens up again those assumptions which even Levinas's philosophy was making regarding the forms and means of expression to be chosen for a grand message of infinity or being-for-the world.76

There is obviously a logical transition from Totality and Infinity to Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence. Levinas's Talmudic writings of the same period give a picture of these changes. According to Levinas, both Judaism and philosophy are grounded in the same ethical relation. Both address the question of transcendence and justice. For instance, justice, third party, proximity etc are the key terms of Judaism. Talmud shows an intermediary space of ethical relation. Talmudic readings also seek to be a critique of a philosophy that annihilates other in its otherness.

Levinas's essay, 'A Religion for Adults' illustrates the reciprocal relation between Talmudic readings and philosophy. Talmudic conception of freedom is deviation from the notion of freedom inherent in western tradition.77 Talmud supports Levinas's idea of otherwise than being or otherwise than freedom. For Levinas, 'freedom is undone by suffering. Condition of hostage is an essential modality of freedom.'78

The fundamental dynamic of Talmud is irresolution. It is more or less like a ever-growing text as it questions the entirety of the text. It problematizes presenter's own understanding and the understanding of the addressee.79 Similarly, the situations encountered in the texts are also being presented as being

76 ibid, pp.84-85
77 ibid, p.88
79 Hand, 2009, p.85
absolutely contemporary. Above all, Talmudic texts are enriched with pedagogical tools that are sometimes missing from philosophical works.80

**The Passage from Totality and Infinity to Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence**

All most all of the commentators of Levinas emphasize a fundamental continuity in Levinas's thought. But they point out a passage beyond philosophy and ontology in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. That is what makes *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* unique and innovative. The distinction between the *saying* and the *said* makes this passage possible.81 *Totality and Infinity* establishes the radical transcendence of the other. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* tries to describe the repercussion of this transcendence in the ethical constitution of moral subjectivity. Both of these works uphold the priority of ethics. Levinas's philosophical insights conceive a fundamental reorientation of western philosophical spirit. *Time and the Other, Existence and Existents, Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* elaborate and refine his philosophical project.

Stressing on the continuity among Levinas's works and his basic philosophical project, Richard A. Cohen writes:

At the heart of all his original works lies the irreducible ethical proximity of one human being to another—morality; and through that encounter, the relation of one to all—justice. Each successive texts branches out, filigrees, presents, successively richer, fuller, or more nuanced analysis testifying to the cornucopian geneus of Levinas's central ethical vision. Almost organic, this process of amplification is on intensifying and compelling method. Built on, or starting with phenomenology, it does not, as we have seen, ultimately remain there, but rises to the ethical.82

Cohen is of the opinion that Levinas's later writings were exegeses on the early works. A sentence expressed in an early work may become a section in

---

80 ibid, p.86
81 Bergo, 1999, p.143
another work. In another work, there may be an entire chapter devoted to it.83 Time and the Other and Existence and Existents explore the notion of transcendence. Totality and Infinity and Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence deepen the concerns already expressed in these works. When we compare Totality and Infinity and Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, there could be a change both in focus and emphasis. For instance, Totality and Infinity explains transcendence in terms of cares, voluptuosity, fecundity and paternity. Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence pronounces transcendence by focusing on passivity of ethical subjectivity. In Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence 'the alterity of the other is not less radical than it was in Totality and Infinity. The priority of other before self and the asymmetry of I-Thou continue in a different fashion.84

Similarly, Totality and Infinity itself conceives discourse as a relation with the other. For Levinas, a linguistic expression presupposes interlocutors. It presupposes plurality and asymmetry. Formal structure of language announces the ethical inviolability of the other.85

Derrida, in his article ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, objects to the method and language of Totality and Infinity. Derrida observes that language of Totality and Infinity is not devoid of ontological proclivities. He objects to Totality and Infinity’s understanding of being as a plural production of beings or modes of being. Derrida asserts that if being is a plurality, then we may speak of the being of the same and the being of the other. He is for some underlying unity of being. If no fundamental unity of being is conceivable, then it is senseless to speak of the being of the radically other.86 The radical other cannot be thought. Remaining faithful to his project of thinking the radical transcendence of the other, Levinas brings about changes in method and language in Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence.

Commenting on these changes, Feron says that transcendence is conceived in Totality and Infinity as the excess of the infinite relative to all ontological

83 ibid, p.147
84 ibid, p.148
85 Levinas, 1969, p.155
86 Bergo, 1999, p.136
totality. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, transcendence is conceived as an overflow of meaning relative to being. When compared to *Totality and Infinity*, there is more profound analysis of the notion of meaning in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. In *Totality and Infinity*, the concept of being is limited to make room for a transcendental sense that affirms the existence beyond being. In the case of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, being encompasses the meaning of all that exists. 87

According to Ciaramelli, there is a significant change in Levinas’s approach to sensibility in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. This change entails crux of Levinas’s ethical thought. 88 *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* construes sensuous existence as vulnerability. Ciaramelli says that Levinas discerns a connection between vulnerability and language in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Semantic operation misses a deeper level of possibility of language in vulnerability. The *saying* is the pre-original signification of for-the-other. It is the ethical prior to the ontological.

Critchley explains that in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas addresses to the core ‘the linguistic and logocentric recoils that arise when the ethical saying is thematized within the ontological said.’ 89

Peperzak says that the self of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* is not identical with the ‘I’ of enjoyment and labor as explained by *Totality and Infinity*. It is not simply that these two books differ only in their problematic and focus. He writes:

Whereas *Totality and Infinity* attempted, with Plato, to think beyond the totality of all beings and closed with eschatological questions, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* goes back to a (under) ground: it attempts to trace down the underlying fundament and subject of the various relations that it describes. 90

---

87 ibid, p.138
88 ibid, p.141
89 Critchley, 1992, p.12
90 Peperzak, Adriaan T., *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, 1993, p.212
Levinas, says Peperzak, moves out of the existentialist phenomenology of *Totality and Infinity*. The reduction of subjectivity to a self of poor affection grounded in the vulnerability of the other is at the heart of the *said-saying* distinction in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*.\(^9^1\)

Stephen Strausser stresses the point of Peperzak. Both of them identify a specific shift from *Totality and Infinity* to *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* in terms of language and method.\(^9^2\) Derrida explains *Totality and Infinity*'s reliance on the language of ontology. Stephen Strausser observes that Levinas sticks to the transcendality of being in *Totality and Infinity*. In *Totality and Infinity*, transcendence amounts to breaking out of being into infinite being. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, the attempt to thematize infinity is suspended. Apart from this, Levinas asserts the primacy of metaphysics over ontology in *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas used the term metaphysics to denote his conception of first philosophy. The term metaphysics gradually disappears from his writings after *Totality and Infinity*.\(^9^3\)

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas gives account of paternity and filiality which point beyond their origin to explain the face-to-face. Levinas addresses an ambiguity of eros in *Totality and Infinity*.\(^9^4\) Erotic relation introduces an inversion of face-to-face. Secondly, it introduces symmetry and reciprocity in the face-to-face relation. The equivocity of the eros makes face-to-face ethical and sub-ethical simultaneously in *Totality and Infinity*.\(^9^5\)

Later on, in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas redefines love in terms of ethico-prophetic wisdom. He suspends his account of love in terms of eros. In other words, we can say that dialectic of eros is no more relevant in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. The distinction between the *saying* and the *said* is elaborated to explain the phenomenology of pure immanence in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*.

---

\(^9^1\) Bergo, 1999, p.146  
\(^9^2\) ibid, p.72  
\(^9^3\) ibid, p.73  
\(^9^4\) ibid, p.115  
\(^9^5\) ibid, p.118
Similarly, up to *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas conceives alterity as exteriority. The subject of enjoyment keeps its separation from the world it enjoys. It does not coincide with it. But, on account of Derrida's and Blanchot's critique, Levinas distances himself from this kind of a conception of alterity. Exteriority is no more significant in the conceptual repoirte of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Substitution is the key word of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. For Levinas, substitution remains a relationship with another, and as such it stays in discontinuity, in diachrony, without coincidence. Substitution is not a result and does not signify a lived state. It is like a process on the reverse side of the essance that posits itself. Substitution, in which responsibility does not cease, thus remains otherwise than being.  

The Saying and the Said: The Study of Subjectivity and Language in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas

*The Saying and the Said: The Study of Subjectivity and Language in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* is an attempt to reflect upon Levinas's radical break with the philosophical tradition of the west. Levinas distances both from Husserl and Heidegger, his phenomenological predecessors. He seeks to invert the philosophical inclination of the west right from Parmenides to Heidegger.

According to Levinas, philosophy is haunted by the tyranny of the same. It remained ontology in letter and spirit. The concept of totality dominates western thought. There is no separation between beings and being. In other words, there is no distinction between subject and being. Levinas starts from beings and moves towards being. He, first of all, reverses the priority of his philosophical conception. In this attempt, Levinas eventually reverses the nodal points of western philosophical tradition. Ontology looses its overwhelming register in Levinas’s philosophical inversion. For Levinas, ethics, not ontology, is the first philosophy.

---


97 Levinas, 1969, p.21
Levinas inaugurates a semantic reversal of the ethical. As I have pointed out, his first philosophy is foregrounded on a separation between subject and being. The *saying* and the *said* is a significant dimension of this separation. All other aspects of his philosophy, in many ways, could be seen as supplementary to this basic theme. The work is an attempt to explore how the various nodal points of his philosophy supplement his general premise.

Levinas prioritizes diachrony over synchrony. He prefers eschatology to history. ‘Eschatology institutes a relation with being beyond totality.’ He prioritizes heteronomy over autonomy. He sticks to the view that primordial responsibility is antecedent to freedom. He says that subjectivity is subjection. It is vulnerability. In *Language*, there exists an ambiguity of the ethical *saying* and the ontological *said*. I would like to analyze all these aspects in the light of Levinas’s conception of subjectivity and language. Both language and subjectivity is intertwined within his conception of alterity. Levinas explains the notion of transcendence on account of his new conception of language and subjectivity. His conception of alterity undergoes some unavoidable changes in order to withstand criticism. This is, first of all, directly translated into his views on language and subjectivity.

In the first chapter titled *Method*, I have made efforts to explore philosophical background of Levinas. Intentionality is the basic theme of phenomenology. In Levinas, there is a conversion of intentionality to sensibility and primordial responsibility that upholds the separation of being and beings. For Levinas, ‘thought remains an adequation to the object in intentionality’ Levinas is indebted to the phenomenological reduction and other basic tenets of phenomenology. I have tried to analyze both Heidegger and Husserl on the basis of Levinas’s own engagement with their writings. Levinas recognizes that certain aspects of their philosophy presuppose the inevitable change that he conceives. For instance, Husserlian separation between meaning and object anticipates Levinasian distinction between the *saying* and the *said*.

98 ibid, p.22  
99 Levinas, 1991, p.50  
100 Levinas, 1969, p.27
Apart from phenomenology, the other major influences would be Jewish sources and dialogical philosophy of Buber and Rosenzweig. First of all, Jewish tradition ties meaning of all experiences to ethical relation. Secondly, the notion of revelation questions the autonomy of reason. Levinas heavily draws upon Jewish tradition in order to explain his notion of God as third party. God, for him, is not a theological or epistemological object. He conceives ethics as 'optics of the divine.'

Levinasian staunch opposition to totality is inspired both by the dialogical philosophy of Buber and Rosenzweig’s critique of totality. Rosenzweig considers revelation as a ground that provides meaning to human existence. Similarly, god, world and human beings cannot constitute a totality. Rosenzweig upholds the irreducibility of one to the other. This irreducibility is at the core of Levinasian conception of infinite and the separation between being and beings. Levinas borrows from Buber the idea that self is not a substance, but a relation. Buber distinguishes between I-Thou relations from Ï-It relations. Levinas, however, distances himself from the mutuality of I-Thou.

In the first chapter, I have further explored existentialist and post modern tenets in Levinas’s approach. Similarly, I have focused on his conception of god, other, freedom and diachrony in this first session.

In the second chapter titled Subjectivity, the notion of separated subjectivity is further explained. Subject coincides with the object in both Husserl and Heidegger’s account of subjectivity. Levinasian separation of subject and being is foregrounded in his conception of hypostasis, il y a and eschatology. The subject of enjoyment in Totality and Infinity is separated from the objects through the desire for the infinite. Subject is responsible for the other that pushes it towards a true transcendence. Subjectivity is subjection or substitution in Otherwise than being or Beyond Essence. Thus Levinasian intersubjectivity is not reciprocal one.

101 ibid, p.29
In the third chapter titled *The Saying and the said: A Philosophy of Language*, the separated subjectivity is seen in the light of philosophy of language. The *saying* and the *said* is simultaneously a separation and an intimate relation between two irreducible moments – the ethical and the ontological. Diachrony accounts for these moments of invocation and moment of representation which are irreducible. To put it more clearly, 'obsession is irreducible to consciousness.'\(^{102}\) In this chapter, I have focused on the philosophy of language of Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot and Walter Benjamin. A brief account is given on their critical engagement with Levinas.

In the fourth chapter titled *Ethics as First Philosophy*, I have briefly described Levinas's philosophical approach in the background of irreducibility of the *saying* and the *said*. According to Levinas, human relationship is based on this irreducible structure of the *saying* and the *said*. That is what makes his philosophy unique. For him ethics, not ontology, is first philosophy. Ethics is not a second order philosophical enquiry. Ethics resists the tyranny of the same, the totality or any attempt to suppress transcendence. In this sense, Levinas views scepticism as 'a refusal towards the hegemony of the same in history of philosophy.'\(^{103}\) These refusals find a concerted space in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas.

In the concluding chapter, I have explored the notion of political in Levinas. Levinas explains the relation between ethics and politics. Face-to-face is prior to history, state and institutions. The third party approach explains the universalization of singular ethical relation to a political whole.

\(^{102}\) Levinas, 1991, p.101

\(^{103}\) ibid, p.168