CHAPTER 1

THE METHOD
Phenomenology of Husserl

Husserl's philosophy, writes Richard A. Cohen, is one of the greatest advances of human thought in twentieth century.¹ His phenomenology was a source of inspiration for major continental philosophies of twentieth century, from Heidegger's ontology to Sartre's existentialism to Claude Levi-Strauss's Structuralism to Derrida's deconstruction. Primarily, Husserlian phenomenology advocates a turn to things in themselves. Other phenomenologists seem to differ from Husserl's phenomenology in terms of their fundamental focus and theoretical emphasis. For instance, Heidegger puts his emphasis on being as the manifestation of history and the verbality of language. Levinas upholds the primordial responsibility of one for the other.² Levinas has extensively written on Husserl and his method. He asserts that his method is primarily phenomenological despite the impact of various undercurrents of systems and thought.

In The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology, a dissertation written on phenomenological method, Levinas recognizes Husserl's distinction between meaning and object.³ Levinas charges that Husserl continues to think from an objectivistic point of view. He privileges representationalist and objectivist mode of thought. However, Husserl's distinction between meaning and object opens up further possibilities to question the supremacy of the representative model of thought.

Levinas has been highly indebted to the basic tenets of Husserl's phenomenology such as phenomenological reduction, intentionality and evidence. However, Levinasian response to Husserl's distinction between the meaning and object is something that decisively contributed to the evolution of his thought. The first task of phenomenology, for Levinas, is to determine the true nature of the human. Phenomenology upholds that 'intentionality or man's transcendence in relation to himself is supremely concrete in man.'⁴ In Levinas's reading of

¹ Cohen, 2004, p.53  
² ibid, p.59  
³ Peperzak, 1997, p.44  
⁴ Levinas, Emmanuel, Discovering Existence with Husserl, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1998, p.34
Husserl, intentionality is the fundamental property of consciousness. In order to be fundamental, the relation itself precedes the terms that are related. Phenomenology, according to Levinas, has begun to find a meaning in what is not cognitive. A sentiment, an act, or a decision also has a meaning. Husserl expressed this in stating that 'psychological states are not only states, but intentions. Every sentiment is already a sentiment of something sensed.'

According to Husserl, all consciousness is a consciousness of something. Husserl inaugurates a methodological revolution in philosophy by introducing phenomenological reduction. This is to bracket out everything outside consciousness. Consciousness always intends something other than itself. Every being has a meaning for human consciousness. Being is being constituted for and by consciousness. To put it more precisely, consciousness transcends itself. For Levinas, Husserl's intentionality means a genuine act of transcendence. It is a prototype of all transcendence.

According to Levinas, Husserl's great originality is to uphold the relation to the object as the primitive phenomenon. Husserl's methodological orientation is based on a separation between noema and noesis. Husserl called the object of intending of consciousness a noema and the intentional act a noesis. However, the noemata of consciousness is not identical with the object of consciousness. His doctrine of intentionality implies that selves are primarily embedded in a world of things, persons, and so forth. Self occurs in various forms of self-world nexus. Self is not something that exists first and then relates to objects. The primordial phenomenon, for Husserl, is self's relation with objects.

According to Husserl, the other person is not extra-mental other. The other's coming into the world is contingent upon the subject's intentionality. The very act of knowing establishes objects as objects. In that sense, meaning is the result of subject's intentionality. Levinas acknowledges that the distinction

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5 Levinas, 2000, p.186
6 Levinas, 1995, p.37
7 ibid, p.39
8 ibid, p.40
9 Levinas, 1995, p.54
10 ibid, p.41
between meaning and object is Husserl’s main contribution to philosophy. First of all, this distinction implies a variety of prospects. For instance, Heidegger converts such a theory of knowledge into a theory of being.

In his article, ‘The Work of Edmund Husserl’, Levinas tries to rediscover the problem that he could not sort out in *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*. Levinas observes that Husserl failed to give an account of the essence of man. Husserl could not address the question of freedom to the core.

As Levinas is highly critical of Bergsonian notion of freedom and intuition, he turned to Heidegger for a methodological support to face Bergsonian challenge. For Bergson, freedom is to be found in pure spontaneity. Bergsonian intuition implies the voluntary aspect of freedom. However, Heidegger defines the essence of man in terms of historical situation. Historicity and temporality form the very substantiality of man’s substance. But Levinas strongly feels that the outcome of the Heideggerian Dasein is not freedom, but destiny. In Heidegger, the human is defined in terms of the being of the past.

Levinas himself finds a way out as he discovers a strong account of metaphysical essence of freedom in Husserl. For Levinas, “it was Husserl who introduced into the idea that thought can have a meaning, can intend something even though this something is absolutely undetermined.”

Husserl upholds consciousness as all encompassing as the universe. Critics generally view his philosophy as a form of idealism. Levinas’s foremost criticism of Husserl is concerning the latter’s abstraction of consciousness from history. For Levinas, Husserl’s philosophy is a general ontology. In the fifth of *Logical Investigations*, Husserl has stated that not only objectifying acts but all noetic acts are equally intentional. All noetic acts constitute noema of their own. Perception, judgment and naming are the privileged forms of intentionality. However, Husserl, according to Levinas, prefers one mode of intentionality over the other

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11 Levinas, 1998, pp.57-59
12 Levinas, 1995, p.156
13 Levinas, 1998, p.61
14 ibid, p.70
modes of intentionality. In Husserl, the object of judgment differs not qualitatively from a perceived object. However, non-objectifying acts do not contribute to the constitution of the matter of the object. In other words, 'theory and representation remain the forms of intentionality.'

Edmund Husserl and his phenomenological method should be analyzed in the light of many attempts that were made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to address the basic riddle in Kantian philosophy. Introducing a Copernican revolution in philosophy, Kant could not adequately address the subject-object dichotomy. Husserl, while attempting to sort it out, filtered out all claims on reality other than that of intentional consciousness. He disagrees with Kantian possibility of the independent existence of the external world.

Husserl aimed at a methodological innovation by introducing the notion of phenomenological reduction or epoche. Husserl’s phenomenological reduction is the bracketing of all questions about reality outside consciousness. Husserl returns to the consciousness of the subject that is always conscious of something. Phenomenology is no longer the science of phenomena; rather it is the science of pure consciousness.

In the Cartesian schema of Descartes, there is a move from the absolute existence of consciousness to the existence of God. In Descartes’s view, it is God’s veracity that guarantees the evidence of the senses. The cogito is the foundation from which every thing follows. But, in Husserl, unlike Descartes, ‘existence does not follow from a cogito, but rather existence allows a cogito.’

In Husserl, the ego constitutes its world in an act of world constitution. The other is constituted as a co-presence in the sense that other’s coming into the world is contingent to the subject’s intentionality. The other person is not extra-mental other. The world and all objects depend upon the subject’s consciousness. It is subject’s act of knowing that establishes objects as objects. Meaning is the

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15 Levinas, 1995, p.53
16 Purcell, Michael, Levinas and Theology, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p.20
result of subject’s action. No object precedes knowledge. Levinas sees in phenomenology a fundamental movement from theory of knowledge to the theory of being.

Levinas finds that Husserl reduces consciousness to knowing and, as a result, takes it away from the concrete life as it is lived. The phenomenological reduction fails to reveal concrete life and the meanings that objects have for life. Concrete life is not the solipsist’s life of a consciousness closed upon itself. The very idea of concrete being entails the idea of an intersubjective world. According to Levinas, egological reduction can be only a first step toward phenomenology. One must discover others and the intersubjective world simultaneously.

Secondly, Husserl’s phenomenology leaves unidentified the pre-conditions of the phenomenological reduction. But, Levinas’s philosophy is directed precisely at the pre-conditions for reduction. Prior to the intentional relation, Levinas unfolds another kind of meaning that Husserl neglects.

In Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology, Levinas closely analyzes how Husserl moves beyond Descartes’s absolute knowledge of the existence of the consciousness towards the absoluteness of consciousness itself. By locating being in concrete life, Husserl upholds the freedom of theory. Consciousness is a primary domain which enables us to understand such terms as subject and object. Levinas writes:

It is necessary to dig deeper, down to the very meaning of the notion of being, and to show that the origin of all being, including that of nature, is determined by the intrinsic meaning of conscious life and not the other way around.

Commenting on Husserl’s Ideen, Levinas says that the existence of material things contains in itself nothingness, a possibility of not-being. This does not mean that things do not exist. Their mode of existing contains the possible negation of itself. This negation is not simply a characteristic of knowledge. On

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17 Beavers, Anthony F., Levinas: Beyond the Horizons of Cartesianism, P. Lang, New York, 1995, p.25
18 ibid, p.26
19 Levinas, 1989, pp. 12-13
the other hand, 'the possibility of negation is a constitutive element of the very existence of things.' Contingency, in Husserl, is not a relation between the essence and the existence of an object. It exists as a determination of the existence itself. What exists is not a reality hidden behind phenomena that appear as images or signs of this reality. The world of phenomena itself makes up the being of our concrete life.

According to Husserl, it is the absoluteness of consciousness which makes possible an adequate perception. Consciousness exists in such a way that it is constantly presents to itself. Levinas says:

Consciousness presents itself as a sphere of absolute existence. This absolute existence not only expresses the indubitable character of the cogito but also, the qua positive determination of the very being of consciousness, founds the possibility of an indubitable cogito.

Husserl called his philosophy an archeology of experience. Phenomenology is the archeology of human experience. Phenomenology searches the constitutive elements of experience of the world. Things are presented to the consciousness in immediate intuition.

The central theme of phenomenology, according to Husserl, is intentionality. Husserl had taken over this from his teacher, Brentano. Brentano's position is in such a way that our sensing or our thinking is directed towards some object. But, this directedness has nothing to do with the objects being real. Here, there is a dilemma in the sense that one can have imaginary perception also. Husserl resolved this dilemma by strongly holding the view that every act is directed towards some object. It never implies that every act is directed towards some real object.

There is associated with each act a noema, in virtue of which the act is directed toward its object. When we think of centaur, our act of thinking has a

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20 ibid, p.16
21 ibid, p.22
noema, but it has no object. There is no object of which we think. But because of its noema, such an act is directed. For Husserl, ‘to be directed is to have a noema.’

Husserl upholds a pre-theoretical form of intentional consciousness. In other words, he subordinates affective relation to the logical structures of intentionality. According to Levinas, transcendence is a mode of immanence in Husserl. The intentional relation is a relation to an outside which is posited by thought. ‘I’, in this sense, is interior to thought. Husserl understands exteriority as product of the meaning-bestowing act. In other words, the distinction between interior and exterior is effaced in intentionality.

Levinas says that representational act is an act of identification in Husserl. The intentionality, as conceived by Husserl, describes the instantiation of thought. In this instantiation, ‘there is total correspondence between the thinker and what is thought.’ The identification of objects in the external world is a moment in the production of the identity of the ‘I.’ To represent, here, ‘is to reduce to a presence. Presence is the pure presence of the ‘I.’’ In Husserl, intentional consciousness constitutes the very identity of the subject. Intentional relation seems to be a relation to the outside. But it is the reduction of the exteriority to the instant of thought.

Levinas’s project can be considered as the reversal of intentional subjectivity to ethical subjectivity. Levinas’s works remain strictly phenomenological, and his debt to Husserl is substantial. Levinas believes in a distinction between intentional object and face. A phenomenon acts as a sign which constitutes the essence of the object present to consciousness. A face is something that escapes comprehension. Other is beyond the grasp of consciousness. This beyond, for Levinas, is something that cannot be thought.
within the domain of intentionality.\textsuperscript{27} Intentionality, for Husserl, entails a relation in which the subject is oriented toward the object. The essence of the object is disclosed in varying degrees. The subject can fully disclose the essence of the subject through phenomenological reduction. The essence, for Husserl, is the meaning, which is always graspable in principle.

Even though Husserl concludes that there is no meaning outside consciousness, and indicates that there is no beyond, Levinas explores Husserlian notion of sensation to reverse intentional subjectivity to ethical subjectivity.

According to Husserl, sensible content is founded on lived experience. Lived experience is that something upon which intentional subjectivity is founded. It cannot be comprehended by consciousness. Levinas gets insights from Husserl to say that sensuality of lived experience lies behind intentional act of consciousness and contribute to their meaning.\textsuperscript{28} Husserl speaks about the intentionality of retention and protension. It is through the intentionality of retention and protension that sensations are made, which are already a past or which have not yet occurred.

In Husserl, there is a temporal gap between a sensation and a consciousness of that sensation. Consciousness recalls what has already passed in the stream of lived experience. Levinas writes in \textit{Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology}:

Even if a sensualist thesis is excluded from Husserl's theory of sensation, our initial problem concerning the relation between consciousness and the world still remains. Is not the internal intentionality which forms the very characteristic of consciousness self-evident? Does intentionality, when directed toward transcendent object, constitute a new phenomenon in the realm of consciousness?\textsuperscript{29}

Husserl speaks of \textit{urimpression} also. At some point, sensuous content enters consciousness through \textit{urimpression}. It implies an overlapping of sensing and sensed. In other words, at the moment of \textit{urimpression}, there is no

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{27} MacAvoy, Leslie, 'The Other Side of Intentionality', in \textit{Addressing Levinas}, op.cit, p.110
\textsuperscript{28} ibid
\textsuperscript{29} Levinas, 1995, p.47
\end{footnotes}
consciousness of *urimpression*. There is only sensation. Consciousness of sensation follows through retention of the sensed. Husserl believes that consciousness can recuperate *urimpression* through protension of retention.\(^{30}\)

Here, Levinas has a strong disagreement with Husserl.

Levinas argues that sensibility lies at the origin of the consciousness of time. It cannot be recuperated through cognition. The origin belongs to a past which is older than consciousness itself. It cannot be recovered since it belongs to another time point. Deviating from Husserlian insights, Levinas states that 'sense of sensibility is proximity.'\(^{31}\) Proximity is non-intentional. But, at the same time, proximity remains implicated in intentionality.

Levinas seems to speak of proximity as inversion of intentionality. This inversion is made possible in terms of the passivity associated with an exposure to the other and responsibility which emerges from it.\(^ {32}\) This summarizes the transformation of intentional subjectivity to an ethical subjectivity. Here, intentionality does not reach the object at which it aims. When consciousness is called into question by face, consciousness looses its object. A face confounds the intentionality that aims at it.

Levinas hails Husserl as the philosopher who overcomes Bergson's opposition of intuition and intellect. But he feels that Husserl's work is too intellectualist. Husserl does not do justice to the non-representational historicity and temporality. For Levinas, non-representational history and temporality constitute the essence of human being.\(^ {33}\)

In *Being and Time* Heidegger linked time, human praxis, theoretical knowledge, mortality, worldliness and history. The credit goes to Bergson to explore the interpreting dimension of time. Unlike Bergson, Heidegger maintains

\(^{30}\) MacAvoy, 'The Other Side of Intentionality', op.cit, p.111
\(^{31}\) Levinas, 1991, p.19
\(^{32}\) ibid, p.49
the view that transcendental dimensions constitutive of time would derive not from the subject alone.\textsuperscript{34} Heidegger, in this way, links time and intersubjectivity.

But Levinas challenges Heidegger’s account of sensibility and time as Heidegger advocates the priority of praxis over theory. For Levinas, ‘sensibility lies deeper than the embodiment and worldliness.’\textsuperscript{35} Sensibility does not first emerge as praxis. It is not the derivative of a network of referential totality as conceived by Heidegger. Sensibility, first of all, ‘is a sheer enjoyment of sensations. The original separation, individuation and independence of subjectivity would lie more deeply embedded in this sensibility. It does not immerse in the synthesizing temporal ecstasies of praxis.’\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Heidegger and Phenomenology}

Heidegger extends Husserl’s phenomenological reduction to the constitution of human existence. He exploits Husserl’s distinction between meaning and object and makes radical intervention to oppose the representative mode of Husserlian phenomenology. According to Levinas, Heidegger used the phenomenological method to turn beyond objectively known and technically approached entities, toward a situation which would condition all others; that of the apprehension of the being of these entities—that of ontology.\textsuperscript{37}

Heidegger takes intentionality in a different line. Heidegger believes that Husserl’s intentionality is not mere a subject-object relationship. Husserl also points out that meaning is the result of engagement. Heidegger explains this engagement in terms of human existence and the epochal historical situation in which human being is embedded.\textsuperscript{38}

Heidegger opposes the objectivity of representationism by explaining the thrownness of Dasein. Dasein is thrown into the world as being in the world. For

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} Cohen, 2004, p.153
\item \textsuperscript{35} ibid, p.154
\item \textsuperscript{36} ibid
\item \textsuperscript{37} Levinas, Emmanuel, ‘Signature’, in Research in Phenomenology 8 (1978), p.180
\item \textsuperscript{38} Cohen, 2004, p.123
\end{itemize}
Heidegger, there exists a relationship between Dasein and its world prior to any correlative of knowledge. Knowing is founded on being in the world. Heidegger in every sense upholds Husserlian method for uncovering the transcendental conditions of knowledge.\(^{39}\) For Heidegger, to know an existence is to comprehend the being of existents. Levinas writes about Heidegger's method and his dialectic of Dasein:

The study of man’s existence Heidegger calls the analytic of Dasein. Under the existential form and its multiple studies on many – philosophical, religious, psychological and literary – the analytic of Dasein is initiated. Grasping these studies in an existential form is what renders them ontologically productive. And this is Heidegger's great discovery. We are thus going to perform an existential analytic of Dasein. From the purely formal structures that we have just established – that the existence of Dasein consists in understanding being – all the richness of human existence will be elaborated. The analytic of Dasein will be about rediscovering man in his entirety and showing that this understanding of being is time itself.\(^{40}\)

For Levinas, the most profound thing about *Being and Time* is Heideggerian distinction between existence and existents. In Heidegger, there is distinction, but no separation.\(^{41}\) According to Heidegger, existence is always comprehended by the existents. There is no separation mainly in the sense that existence is possessed by some one. But Levinas believes in a fundamental separation of being and particular.\(^{42}\) On the other hand, 'Heidegger sticks to an ontological finality, to which he subordinates objects in the world.'\(^{43}\)

In Heidegger, philosophy is no more a contemplative theory. It is rather the explication of the understanding of being. The relationship between Being and beings consists in understanding and comprehension. According to Plato, the comprehension happens through the mediation of a light. In Heidegger, being itself is the light by which the comprehension is made. Here, Heidegger subordinates all ontic truth to ontology.

\(^{39}\) Peperzak, 1997, p.46  
\(^{41}\) Levinas, 1969, p.133  
\(^{42}\) Thomas, 2004, p.26  
\(^{43}\) Levinas, 2001 a, p.34
Husserl locates the very essence of consciousness in intentionality. It means that all consciousness is consciousness of something. It also implies that 'the striving towards something else constitutes the entire nature of consciousness.'\textsuperscript{44} Consciousness transcends itself throughout the existence. Intentionality is the characteristic activity of consciousness. The division between object and subject can be regarded as one of the ways in which the consciousness makes the world intelligible to itself. Husserl understands world as a compilation of objects constituted by the intentional power of consciousness.

For Heidegger, phenomenology is a method of intuitive grasping of things in their being. Husserl's notion 'to the things themselves' means to the things as they are actually in their being. Heidegger posits the meaning of Being in general as a pre-requisite for understanding particular beings or entities.\textsuperscript{45}

Levinas recognizes Heidegger's contribution in opposing the dialectical philosophy which is preoccupied with the logical foundations of being.\textsuperscript{46} Heidegger's project evades the question of subject-object dichotomy. Comprehension decides not the essence, but existence of man. As the man has no essence, the essence of man is always at the same time his existence. To be human is to be in the world. To be human is to be among things. To be human is to arrange one's being as a multiplicity of temporalities. Human beings are first and foremost concerned about their existence. Prior to the introduction of subject and object, there is a relationship between Dasein and its world. Heidegger's Dasein follows a closed circuit of existence. Asserting the finite character of transcendence, Heidegger introduces temporality as co-extensive with being. The finitude of time is 'a condition for understanding the essential structures of beings and Being itself.'\textsuperscript{47}

Thanks to Heideggerian insight that man should exist as always outside of himself, Levinas speaks about transcendence. He is not speaking about the

\textsuperscript{44} Levinas, 'Martin Heidegger and Ontology,' op.cit, p.18
\textsuperscript{45} Beavers, 1995, pp.26-27
\textsuperscript{46} Levinas, 'Martin Heidegger and Ontology,' op.cit, pp.11-13
\textsuperscript{47} Peperzak, 1997, p.46
transcendence by the self out of itself. On the contrary, his transcendence must be understood as one’s being pulled out of oneself by a radical exteriority.

Levinas has been successful in placing ontology and ethics into mutual opposition. There is a surplus meaning out of the encounter with the other. This surplus interrupts the being’s experience of continuous temporality. Opposing both Hegel’s logic of intersubjectivity and Heidegger’s ontology, Levinas declares that philosophy is not the question of being. The starting point of philosophy is neither ontology nor formal categories of thought. Philosophy can only be the questions that a consciousness asks itself. The approach of other, writes Bergo, interrupts subject’s dominion and allows it to undergo self-questioning. 48

For Levinas, first philosophy is ethics. Throughout the course of the development of Levinas’s thought, from The Existence and Existents (1945) to Otherwise Being or Beyond Essence (1974), the redefinition of first philosophy remains the same. Even though Levinas placed Heidegger in the ranks of Plato and Kant, he strives to keep his phenomenology distinct from Heidegger’s. Such efforts can be traced right from the publication of ‘On Evasion.’

Levinas differs with Heidegger’s notion of truth also. Heidegger criticizes the conception of truth as correspondence between a mind and some object and between an object and an utterance. Heidegger sticks to the view that any adequation between thought and utterance and an object rests up on a certain behaviour that establishes our relationship to things. To put it more clearly, ‘truth refers to our being summoned by what is most profoundly our own.’ 49 On the contrary, for Levinas, the relationship with the otherness of the other person may take us close to another sort of truth.

According to Heidegger, phenomenology is a method of intuitive grasping of things in their being. 50 World itself is constitutive of Dasein’s Being, and Dasein finds itself in the world and is affected by it. Dasein is thrown into the

48 Bergo, 1999, p.39
49 ibid, p.42
world as being-in-the world." Prior to the introduction of categories of subject and object, there is a relationship between Dasein and its world. The entities that Dasein encounters "are not the objects for knowing the world theoretically; they are simply what gets used, what gets produced and so forth."52

Husserl limits representation within the parameters of the transcendental ego. Heidegger's contention is that the human beings dwell in the world prior to representing objects. Levinas sees in Heidegger a method entirely engaged in the world, in experience and desire. This method replaces Husserlian terms of noesis and noema.

Heidegger views that metaphysical tradition fails to do justice to the ontological difference. By ontological difference, he means difference between the entities and the being of entities. He believed that the mistake that the Greeks made is that they conceived being within the unreflected horizon of time. Ousia appears primarily in their conceptions because it is already understood in terms of presence. In modern conceptions also, 'a self-certain knowing subject is permanently present to itself.'53

Drawing upon Husserl's description of consciousness as a field of evidence, Heidegger identifies the origin of logical categories in the constitution of knowing subject.54 For him, philosophy seeks the there is (es gibt) before there is something. Heidegger holds that the phenomenology of being doesn't have an intentional structure. It is rather an opening that situates the constituting subject and constituted object in Husserlian sense. Heidegger's analytic of Dasein is 'an attempt to articulate those categories that make possible not objects but meaning.'55

51 ibid, p.79
52 ibid p.95
54 ibid, p.206
55 ibid, p.208

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Heidegger sees that the task of phenomenology as one of making explicit that which doesn’t show itself. It is only conceived by misinterpretation. The process of phenomenology is thus hermeneutic.

One important thing about Heidegger is that he remains neutral to moral questions. He says that his own task is neither to support nor to oppose this or that morality. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger feels that the era of metaphysics is over. It also implies the end of moralization of being. Here, Levinas raises some fundamental questions: does metaphysics mean philosophy of presence only? Does the end of onto-theology mean the end of metaphysics? For Levinas, critique of metaphysics is the critique of philosophy of presence. It may declare the end of onto-theological ethics. But ethics comes into its own with the collapse of onto-theology. The essence of ethics would not be ethical. Ethics occurs, ‘at the end of metaphysics, as anarchy, as disruption of being. It is otherwise than being or beyond essence.’

Phenomenology and Levinas

Levinas pursues his critique of totality by means of the resources bequeathed by Husserlian phenomenology. But, he developed his own radical version of intentional analysis. His intentional analysis is not restrained by the structure of noema and noesis. Levinas writes about the essential teaching of Husserl in Totality and Infinity:

Intentional analysis is the search for the concrete. Notions held under the direct gaze of the thought that defines them are nevertheless, unknown to the naive thought, revealed to be implanted in horizons unsuspected by the thought; these horizons endow them with a meaning. Such is the essential teaching of Husserl.

Levinas emphasizes that ethics implies a transcendent intention. The transcendent intention is not governed by theoretical opposition of noesis and noema. Locating the essential of ethics in the transcendent intention, Levinas

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56 Cohen, 2004, p.126
57 ibid, p.130
59 Levinas, 1969, p.28
introduces his ethical metaphysics. He categorically asserts that every transcedent intention doesn’t have the noesis-noema structure. While doing so, Levinas dares to trivialize the traditional opposition between theory and practice. He is of the opinion that the ‘I’ will be dissolved in metaphysical transcendence by which a relation to the absolute other is established. Hence, ethics, for him, is ‘the royal road of transcendence.’

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas suspends the distinction between practical and theoretical reason. Moreover, he distances himself from any attempt to assert the primacy of practical reason over the theoretical reason and boldly announces his difference with Heidegger’s analytic of Dasein. Having conceived ethical as royal road to transcendence, Levinasian method refers to an excess that transcends any totality.

Levinas refers to the multiplicity of being. The multiplicity in being emerges from the movement of orientation that cannot be settled in absolute alterity. It cannot be settled in totality. Levinas says that philosophical systems oriented to totality contain elements of multiplicity too. He traces the elements of multiplicity in Plato’s conception of good and Descartes’s notion of infinity.

Levinas’s early works include primarily *Time and the Other* (1945), ‘Is Ontology Fundamental?’ (1951), ‘The Ego and the Totality’ (1954), ‘Philosophy and the Idea of Infinite’ (1957) *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and ‘Transcendence and Height’ (1969). In the late sixties and seventies, Levinas intends to modify his basic terms and concepts. Deviating slightly from his early approach, Levinas conceives enjoyment as the primary way of living in the world. The solitude of the ‘I’ inhabiting in the world is splintered. The ‘I’ is not alone; there is another person whose face I encounter and experience. There is something outside or prior to my thinking.

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60 ibid, p.29
61 ibid
62 Caygill, 2002, p.100
63 Morgan, 2007, p.41
For Levinas, one of the significant achievements of Heidegger is his distinction between existence and existents in *Being and Time*. Existent comprehends existence. Heidegger fails to recognize a separation between the two. Levinas, from the very beginning, is for a separation between existence and existents. He reverses the manner in which Heidegger approaches the question of being. In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas begins his analysis by reflecting on the difference between beings and being.\(^64\)

Levinas is concerned with the departure of being. He invokes 'an excedence towards the good and introduces a different dimension beyond being.'\(^65\) Levinas conceives excedence as a departure from being. It is a departure from being and the categories that describe it.

Levinas starts with beings and moves towards existence. Obviously, the philosophical task that Levinas undertakes is difficult to accomplish. For instance, Derrida feels that being is only being of the existent. In that sense, it doesn't exist outside. It is not a neutral impersonal element. In other words, being cannot be specified. It doesn't specify anything. Being, for Levinas, is 'essentially alien and strikes against us.'\(^66\) The question about being has never been answered. There is not a particular direction in which that answer would have thought. Heidegger upholds that idea that nothing is prior to the relation to being. Heidegger further explains that subject cannot go beyond a certain limit. The rejection of a beyond is fundamental to Heidegger's assumptions. For Levinas, significance of this impossibility involves recognition of a separation. Levinas assumes that 'there is a separate mode of being which has the understanding of a being as its modes of being.'\(^67\)

*Il y a* enables Levinas to think a duality of existence and existents. He conceives the existents immersed in the world on the basis of duality he stresses. He describes a relation beyond Heidegger's opposition between authentic and

\(^{64}\) Thomas, 2004, p.28
\(^{65}\) Levinas, 2001 a, pp.15-17
\(^{66}\) ibid, p.9
\(^{67}\) Thomas, 2004, p.29
inauthentic existence. That relation is prior to the being in the world. Turning to a phenomenological analytic of existent, Levinas describes il y a and duality of hypostasis. Hypostasis describes the specific manner of an existent’s relation to il y a. Il y a is neither the essence of existent nor the condition of possibility of existent. Il y a is a presence which arises behind nothingness. It is ‘neither a being, nor consciousness functioning in a void.’ According to Levinas, writes Elisabeth L. Thomas, hypostasis refers both to the moment in which an instant occurs but also points to a certain manner in which the instant occurs. The meaning of hypostasis is neither that which is the end product of a process of coming to be, nor that processes itself, but incorporates the two from point of view of the instant. The meaning of hypostasis in not simply the coming to be, rectification, or creation of a thing, but is essentially a doubling or folding back in oneself - a repli en soi.

The event of hypostasis is the event of effectuation of a subject who masters existence. Levinas conceives body, consciousness and primordial contact in terms of scintillation and evanescence. In scintillation, ‘the body is produced as an instance of a folding back or doubling. The body is not a body object, nor a consciousness of localization but the localization of consciousness.’ Similarly, notion of evanescence conceives of the moment of the positioning of subjectivity as an effectuation of an instance.

For Levinas, the hypostasis signifies the suspension of the anonymity of il y a. The identity of the ‘I’ falls neither under the category of a thing nor an event. The ‘I’ is a relation between the two. The notion of ‘I’ as a relation stands in contrast to the notion of Dasein as that which transcends itself. With the notion of hypostasis, Levinas attempts to think the instant without presupposing time as a linear progression or as duration. Hypostasis describes the relation between il y a

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68 ibid, p.34
69 Levinas, 2001 a, p.61
70 Thomas, 2004, p.37
71 ibid, p.38
72 ibid
73 ibid
and subjectivity. It is a relation before time. According to Levinas, it comes to the time of duration out of itself.  

Through the notion of temporality, Levinas introduces a hidden exigency. It is a desire for a beyond which is already a desire for the other. For Levinas, time is not the structure of subjectivity. Similarly, it is not the exterior world. Time is 'constituted by my relationship with other.' It is the relation to other that constitutes time as both exterior to the definitive instant of hypostasis and something other than the object of contemplation.

In Hypostasis, subject keeps a distance with regard to itself. Levinas doesn’t give up either absolute subjectivity or the possibility of objectivity. However, subjective transcendence is an impossible project for him. The meaning of ontological difference, in Levinas, 'has its origin outside that difference in the realm of ontological impossibility. The realm of ontological impossibility, for Levinas, is the realm of ethical.' Contrasting enjoyment with representation, Levinas asserts that concrete conditions of identity are not reducible to the structures of intentional consciousness. Enjoyment is linked to a notion of separation of subject from itself. Subject of representation is identical to itself. But Levinas takes it as a negative relation. Enjoyment nevertheless posits identity on life. Enjoyment in Levinas, writes Elisabeth L. Thomas, 'holds onto exteriority that intentional consciousness suspends.' Enjoyment makes a separation from the anonymity of the 'to be.'

The subject of enjoyment depends on the world of elemental. The world of elemental that one lives from is a non-possessable world. The subject of enjoyment is independent in the midst of variety of dependence. With the notion of enjoyment, Levinas describes a subjectivity that does not fit into the ontological categories of Dasein’s being in the world. According to Levinas, enjoyment is an

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74 Levinas, 2001 a, pp.73-75
75 ibid, p.96
76 Thomas, 2004, p.42
77 ibid
78 ibid, p.47
79 Levinas, 1969, p.127
evasion that flees into life. He addresses the issues of dwelling and eros in his early writings. The introduction of feminine in his account of dwelling is a much debated issue in feminist reading of Levinas. Subject of dwelling ‘entails an ego in an economy without ends.’ However, Levinas concedes phenomenality to the subject of dwelling only after the arrival of the other.

In *Time and the Other*, Levinas considers feminine alterity as the other par excellence. For Levinas, difference in sexes cannot be reducible to a logical opposition. Levinas’s account of eros in *Time and the Other* stands as a critique of the Platonic conception of love. Platonic love presupposes a unifying principle of the social totality. Levinas confronts Platonic notion of feminine with his erotic notion of feminine. He stresses that the alterity of the feminine encountered in the erotic relation challenges the Platonic conception of a social whole.

For Levinas, the erotic encounter doesn’t directly figure as the site of social totality. There is a movement from dwelling and eros to face-to-face in *Totality and Infinity*. Eros is apparently replaced by face-to-face in *Totality and Infinity*. This is intended to address complex questions concerning the social totality and ethical relation. However, through the notions of fecundity and paternity, erotic encounter is engaged in the production of the social and the future.

In his essay, ‘The Ego and the Totality’, Levinas discusses the relation between subject and social totality. Even though *Totality and Infinity* started its approach by contrasting enjoyment with intentionality, Levinas proceeds to explain how the subject encounters the other and how face emerges as a site of justice. Face signifies other’s inviolability. It asserts the fundamental pluralism and the existence of the other, even before the emergence of the self.

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80 ibid, p.145
81 Thomas, 2004, p.79
82 ibid, p.82
83 ibid, p.89
84 Hand, 2009, p.43
Levinas, in the preface to *Totality and Infinity*, notes that his philosophical development owes everything to phenomenological method.\(^{85}\) Levinas defines intentional analysis of phenomenological method as the search for the concrete.\(^{86}\) For him, intentional analysis involves "notions held under the direct gaze of the thought that defines them are nevertheless, unknown to this naïve thought, revealed to be implanted in horizons unsuspected by thought: these horizons endow them with a meaning."\(^{87}\) Levinas points out that the "the traditional opposition between theory and practice will disappear before the metaphysical transcendence by which a relation with the absolute other, or truth, is established and of which ethics is the royal road."\(^{88}\)

Morgan holds the view that Levinas's method is a phenomenological method or a method very much close to it. The goal of this method is 'to explore hidden horizon of meaning that underlies our normal experience of things and our thoughts about them.'\(^{89}\) Levinas throws light on a new regime of meaning. These regimes have a significant role in the human life. But, still Levinas considers his method as a mode of development of Husserl's method.

Some interpreters understand face-to-face relation as a concrete experience that we can recognize in our lives.\(^{90}\) Some other commentators view face-to-face relation as the condition of possibility of ethics, economic life and knowledge. Bernasconi points out that the first view is the result of an empirical reading of Levinas. However, the latter one is implicated by a transcendental reading. Even Levinas himself may not be able to decide between the rival interpretations.\(^{91}\) Levinas says that the face-to-face encounter is originary and primordial. It is prior to ontology and being. It is anarchic. Levinas calls the epiphany of the face of the other 'the infinite.' The infinity of the other dominates all his reflections on

\(^{85}\) Levinas, 1969, p.28  
^{86}\) ibid  
^{87}\) ibid  
^{88}\) ibid, p.29  
^{89}\) Morgan, 2007, p.44  
^{90}\) ibid, pp.46-47  
^{91}\) Bernasconi, Robert, 'Rereading Totality and Infinity', in *Question of the Other: Essays in Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, eds. Charles Scott and Arleen Dallery, SUNY Press, Albany, 1988, p.23
subjectivity and language during 1960s and 1970s. His works revolve around his own premise that the ‘I’ is invested with responsibility for the other.

Peperzak feels that Levinas offers us an original rewriting of Heidegger’s ontology. Some experiences or facts of everyday existence cannot be placed within the horizon of any ontology. Thus, he sets up a non-ontological, non-comprehensive view of an enigmatic beyond, which is more radical, more originary than the categories, principles, or *arche* of the ontological constellation. Such a beyond, cannot however, be evoked philosophically, except by discovering it to be the constellation of another dimension. This latter dimension neither appears as essence, nor as a superworldly or supernatural above or behind of the world of ontology. Peperzak writes:

The direction of Heideggerian questioning remains caught in the play of the said and the unsaid, of uncovering and hiding. As phenomenology, this ontology is necessarily dialectic: a separation and association of the said and the unsaid. To transcend this ontology, one must question back in another way: in the direction of another time: in the direction of diachronic time of saying, thanks to which the synchrony of time exists.92

A sort of transcendental illusion constantly threatens the otherwise than being by trying to conceive it as a ‘being otherwise.’ For Levinas, understanding, in Heidegger, ultimately rests on the openness of being. Understanding of a being consists in going beyond that being and perceiving it upon the horizon of being. This compels Levinas to say that

in Heidegger, understanding rejoins the great tradition of western philosophy: to understand a particular being is already to place oneself beyond the particular. To understand is to relate ‘to the particular, which alone exists, through knowledge, which is always the knowledge of the universal.93

Levinas strongly argues that relation with the other exceeds the constraints of understanding. Knowledge of the other also demands sympathy, love or curiosity. Thus, the other is not first an object of understanding and then an interlocutor. For Levinas, ‘the two relations are merged.’94 He expresses this

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92 Peperzak, 1993, p. 218
93 Levinas, 2007, p. 4
94 ibid, p. 5
relation in terms of the *saying* and the *said*. To put it in another words, invoking the other is indissoluble from understanding the other. To speak to a person is also to understand a person. According to Levinas,

> Speech delineates an original relation. The point is to see the function of language not as subordinate to the consciousness we have of the presence of the other, or of his proximity, or of our community with him, but as a condition of that conscious realization.\(^{95}\)

Heidegger interprets the handling of everyday objects as understanding them. In handling, beings are transcended in the very moment that grasps them. But Levinas feels that relationship with other is not a relationship of consumption and possession. I understand the being in the other, beyond his particularity as a being. I call upon him while calling him being. In understanding being, 'I simultaneously tell him my understanding.'\(^{96}\) The relationship to the other is not ontology. The relation with the other is irreducible to the representation of the other.

Levinas is speaking of an understanding that is not representational, which is neither active nor willed. This sort of an understanding implies an interruption of consciousness and a sensuous understanding without comprehension.\(^{97}\) For Levinas, representation is the possibility of a language which is not merely the unintended expression of a subject. To represent, 'the ego of the enjoyment must have been called in to question by the presence of another.'\(^{98}\) Representation refers not to a primary possibility of the sharing of my world through pre-existing representations.\(^{99}\) The face of the other makes possible the notion of representation as a moment of generalization. One is responsible beyond the self-centered concern for the other. For Levinas, 'representation is a language in the sense that the other breaks the ceiling of the totality and opens possession to a universe beyond self.'\(^{100}\)

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\(^{95}\) ibid
\(^{96}\) ibid, p.6
\(^{97}\) Bergo, 1999, p.94
\(^{98}\) Levinas, 1969, p.171
\(^{99}\) Thomas, 2004, p.80
\(^{100}\) Levinas, 1969, p.171
Jewish Sources

Bible and Rabbinic commentaries are essential to understand Levinas's philosophy. Emmanuel Levinas started reading Bible in his childhood days in Lithuania. After the second word war and holocaust, he started focusing on Rabbinic teachings under Chouchani. Chouchani was a great spiritual master in the Hebraic tradition. Throughout his philosophy, Levinas refers to the verses and incidents of Bible. Verses of Bible, for him, "do not here have as their function to serve as proofs: but they do bear witness to a tradition and an experience." 101

Levinas's ethical metaphysics is basically a blend of phenomenology and Jewish thought. First of all, Levinas's philosophy addresses a split between the Greek thought and spirit of Jewish wisdom. He disagrees with the philosophers who assert that Judaism is surpassed by Christianity. Secondly, Judaism is also suspicious of philosophy. The authority of revelation, as explained in prophetic and rabbinic tradition, shows a tension over the autonomy of reason. Reason has a proclivity to dominate transcendence that breaks the logos.

In the history of philosophy, there are attempts to unite philosophy and Judaism. Philo of Alexandria looked for an allegorical interpretation of the Bible on the basis of Platonism. Maimonides, on the other hand, did the same by foregrounding his arguments on Aristotelian concepts. 102

Levinas's philosophy assumed a concrete shape in post-war period. He is a victim and witness of the great horror unleashed by National Socialists. His concern is for giving hope to the survivors of the great tragedy. He is of the opinion that a Jew, especially a diaspora Jew, should find out the meaning of life in his own tradition. His philosophy is an attempt to explain as to how Judaism can give them back the meaning that they have lost in the holocaust. 103 Levinas believes that the Holocaust and the horror unleashed by National Socialists signify

103 ibid
a context where Christianity and western culture failed to protect the meaning of life.

Freedom, as conceived by philosophical tradition, means obedience to the moral law of reason. Jewish tradition entails a different conception of freedom. It is his Jewish background that enables Levinas to critically approach philosophical notion of freedom. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas says that 'philosophical tradition fails to question the spontaneity of freedom.' He questions the priority accorded to freedom over responsibility. Foregrounding his conception on Jewish tradition with its specific emphasis on revelation, Levinas asserts that responsibility is infinite.

Revelation and election are two important aspects of Jewish wisdom. Jewish belief is premised on the chosen status of Israel as God’s own people. This election, for Levinas, does not accord a priority or superiority. Levinas extends this election to all human. Election means the priority of responsibility over freedom.

Invoking the idea of infinity and *illeity*, Levinas explains the notion of subjectivity in terms of passivity. Subjectivity, for Levinas, is substitution. Caen’s story, in Bible, is an example that clearly expresses tradition’s similarity with his philosophical conception of subjectivity as substitution. In Bible, conception of freedom is quite inseparable from heteronomy. Jews had to live without moral and political institutions for years. They observed morality without institutions. However, “freedom depends on a written text, destructible to be sure, but durable, on which freedom is conserved for man outside of man.” Levinas’s phenomenology upholds, from the outset, the *autrui* (other) that breaks the totality of one’s universe and thereby reveals one’s transcendence. The epiphany of other’s face and speech disrupts the totality of one’s universe. In Hebrew, responsibility (*ahariout*) and other (*aher*) are closely linked.

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104 Levinas, 1969, p.83
105 Levinas, 1991, p.114
Levinas’s philosophy translates ‘the theological significance of infinity into ethics of approaching.’\textsuperscript{106} Levinas employs terms such as height and nearness for this effective translation. The infinite is ‘recognizably the Jewish god.’\textsuperscript{107} The god that leaves a trace is the most high. Nearness means the irresistible pull toward the other. Herman Cohen discusses the nearness in terms of the nearness to God. Nearness, for Cohen, preserves the separation.\textsuperscript{108} Levinas also upholds this kind of a separation. For him, other is closer to me than I am to myself.

In Levinas, the other does not originate in any intentional synthesis. The other comes singularly. The coming of the other is anarchic. It is not part of social history. Levinas explicates incommensurability in the relation between the same and the other. The idea is that ‘the incommensurability of God and Israel resonates in this explication.’\textsuperscript{109} However, one can trace, in most of his writings, the reverberations of transcendental meaning of the covenant with God. Fundamentally, Jewish thought explains the meaning of all experiences in the light of ethical relations among humans. Levinas writes:

Its basic message consists in bringing the meaning of each and every experience back to the ethical relation between men, in appealing to man’s personal responsibility – in which he feels chosen and irreplaceable – in order to bring about a human society in which men are treated as men. The realization of this just society \textit{ipso facto} involves raising man up in to the same society as god. ...Ethics is the optics of the divine.\textsuperscript{110}

It is also very important to understand what the term religion meant for Levinas. He explains the concept of religion in his key essay ‘Is Ontology Fundamental?’ According to Levinas,

the relation to the other is not therefore ontology. This bond with the other which is not reducible to the representation of the other, but to his invocation, and in which invocation is not preceded by an understanding, I call religion. The essence of discourse is prayer. What distinguishes a thought directed towards a thing from

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[106] Gibbs, Robert, ‘Height and Nearness: Jewish Dimension of Radical Ethics’, in \textit{Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion}, op.cit, p.17
\item[107] ibid., p.18
\item[108] ibid., p.19
\item[109] Scott, Charles E., ‘A People’s Witness Beyond Politics’, in \textit{Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion}, op.cit, p. 27
\item[110] Levinas, 1997, p.159
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a bond with a person is that in the latter case vocative is uttered: what is named is at the same time what is uttered.\footnote{Levinas, 2007, p. 7}

Levinas speaks of religion in two senses - sacred and holy. In the first sense, religion is the construction of myth and the practice of rites.\footnote{Bergo, 1999, p.70} In the second sense, religion is a bond between humans in ethical responsibility. For Levinas, second one is authentic religion. Levinas seeks to call ‘religion’ the bond between same and other without constituting a totality.\footnote{Levinas, 1969, p.40} It is very clear that Levinas, to a great extent, relies on the meaning assigned to religion by Auguste Comte in \textit{System of Positive Polity}. Religion, for Levinas, means ‘a relationship to being as being. It does not consist in conceiving of being as a being.'\footnote{Levinas, 2007, p. 7}

Levinas dissociates himself with Hegel’s conception of religion. For Hegel, the partial representations of religious thought are raised to its fuller sense in philosophy. Hegel emphasizes the supercession of religion through philosophy. On the other hand, Levinas approaches religion as a presupposition that philosophy cannot assimilate.

Levinas defines Judaism in terms of vague sensibility made up of various ideas, memories, customs and emotions. He feels that in present day the word Judaism covers several quite distinct concepts. Above all, it designates a religion, the system of beliefs, rituals and moral prescriptions founded on the Bible, The Talmud and Rabbinic literature and often combined with the mysticism or the theosophy of the Kabbalah.\footnote{Levinas, 1989, p.250} The principal forms of this religion have not undergone significant alterations. However, it is still open to changes. Judaism signifies a culture that is either the result or the foundation of religion. Every event has its own sense of evolution.\footnote{ibid}

Levinas has not properly explained the relation between God and other in his initial writings. But, later on, Levinas gives a clarification to this problem in a series of articles such as ‘The Trace of the other’, ‘Enigma and Phenomena’, ‘God
and Philosophy'. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, he addresses this question and states that the *autrui* is the trace of the divine other. The other is ethically infinite because he bears the trace of the divine infinite. Other is not infinite in itself but because of its absolute relation to the divine other. Levinas follows the Jewish principle that every Israelite is responsible for every other. Levinas makes a slight modification to this principle. For him, every human being is responsible for every other.\textsuperscript{117}

Levinas labours to throws light on some of the hidden resources of Judaic tradition. He observes that the dominance of Greek thought and Christian theology covered these aspects. His philosophy can be considered as a mode of reinscription. Levinas upholds the alternate intelligibility of Judaic tradition over and against Greco-Christian tradition.\textsuperscript{118}

Levinas foregrounds the function of Jewish ritual life in breaking down the spontaneity of freedom. It questions the spontaneity of enjoyment and possessions on account of the approach of the other. It is obviously his religious background that compels Levinas to speak about wisdom which is not knowledge as such. According to him, wisdom is quite different from both religion and philosophy. The term wisdom implies a whole culture of knowledge of things and men. Levinas writes:

Behind reason with its universal logic, wisdom is always there listening, disquieting, and sometimes, renewing it. Behind reason with its universal logic there is the wisdom that has neither method nor fixed categories. It is not serenity. The wise man is not wise enough. Wisdom, as the freedom of reason, if not freedom from reason. This wisdom is incumbent precisely upon the uniqueness of one who thinks – as if, beyond all contingency, his identity as a monad, logically unjustifiable, indiscernible, were chosen. Wisdom as the understanding of the unique and the chosen ....\textsuperscript{119}

Levinas himself has explained the role monotheism has played in his philosophical critique of ontology. For him, "monotheism signifies the human


\textsuperscript{118} Robbins, Jill, 'Strange Fire', in *Addressing Levinas*, op.cit, p.13

kingship, this idea of human race that refers back to the approach of the other in the face, in a dimension of height, in responsibility for oneself and for the other."\textsuperscript{120} Levinas explains fraternity in terms of the singularities that are kin of some divine father. To Levinas, religion means transcendence.\textsuperscript{121} It is not the proximity of the absolute other. Fundamental to Jewish thought is the proximity to God. It is otherwise devotion to the other man. According to Levinas, 'theology begins in the face of the other since God descends in the face of the other.'\textsuperscript{122}

For Levinas, religion and theology are different. Religion, for him, implies a pre-theematic experience of the face-to-face. It is pertaining to social ethics. On the contrary, theology is the extension of metaphysics into a new linguistic domain. But theology more or less depends upon the claims of revelatory knowledge. The idea of transcendence is not in tune with the artifices of theology. Same is the case with ontology. Levinas conceives religion as the ethical force of a pre-original saying. But, he strongly resists any attempt to put the pre-original saying into language. In language, the saying and the said are the co-relatives of one another and thereby reduces the saying to its theme. Every linguistic system and ontology subordinates the saying to the said. To put it in other words, in language, which is indispensable, everything is conceived before us, and language just permits us to utter.

Levinas seeks a mode of thought and a style that can offer mutual troubling of the philosophical and religious.\textsuperscript{123} This mode of style is evident in \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}. Hegel has conceived the supercession of religion by philosophy. Hegel believed that only through philosophical consciousness that partial representations in religion are raised to universal comprehension.

Levinas insists that he is not subordinating philosophy to religion. He is not upholding an inverted Hegelian logic according to which religion comprehends the truth that philosophy is incapable of attaining. But he believes in

\textsuperscript{120} Levinas, 1969, p. 214  
\textsuperscript{121} Levinas, 2001 b, p. 242  
\textsuperscript{122} ibid, p. 243  
\textsuperscript{123} Caygill, 2002, p.145
the apprehension that philosophy is incapable of assimilating things and it needs a troubling by religion.\textsuperscript{124} In his essay ‘God and Philosophy’, Levinas explains this ineluctable nature of philosophy. However, his invention of such a style has been indebted very much to his Talmudic readings.

Unconsciously, Levinas could have been led more by his faith than by his philosophical insights. Levinas never explicitly intended to reconcile the Biblical and philosophical traditions. He feels that there are certain agreements between the two. It is because of the fact that all philosophical thought rests on pre-philosophical experiences. The readings of the Bible also belonged to these fundamental experiences.\textsuperscript{125}

Levinas’s analysis of human subjectivity clearly echoes the Jewish interpretation of the Thora as law of life. In the vocabulary of Levinas, ‘the Greek’ signifies the particular emphasis on the will to survive. But Bible, for him, ‘signifies something other than the drive to exist. That possibility may be something greater than the possibility to exist.'\textsuperscript{126} That is the possibility of responsibility. In a number of places in the Bible, we come across expressions resembling infinity. Universe is sometimes described as infinite. It is written in the Bible that the heights of the heaven and the depths of the earth are things that cannot be investigated. Similarly, sands of the ocean and the stars of the heaven symbolize things that cannot be counted. Infinity, directly or tacitly signifies the incomprehensibleness of God and his actions. Bible says: “Can one find out the deep things of God? Can one attain the purpose of almighty?” (Job11.7)\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{124} ibid
\textsuperscript{125} Peperzak, 1997, p.17
\textsuperscript{126} Katz, Claire E., Levinas, Judaism and the Feminine: The Silent Footsteps of Rebecca, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2003, p. 8
Existentialist Notions

According to Paul Ricoeur, Levinas echoes the attack of Kierkegaardian existentialism on the logocentric hubris of western tradition. Kierkegaard strongly objected to the absorption of subjectivity in to Hegelian universality.

Levinasian theoretical frame is indebted very much to that of Kierkegaard's, mainly through his critique of existential possibilities and the conception of philosophy's relation with non-philosophy. Levinas comments on the Kierkegaardian insights:

The very strong conception of existence, which was Kierkegaard's contribution to European thought, insists on two basic points. The first is that human subjectivity, together with its dimensions of interiority, needs to be maintained as an absolute, as something separate but located on the side of objective being rather than beyond it. But secondly and paradoxically, the irreducibility of the subject must be protected - on the basis of pre-philosophical experience - from the threat of idealism, even if it was idealism that first accorded philosophical status to subjectivity. 128

For Levinas, the entire debate between Kierkegaard and the speculative philosophy presupposes subjectivity in tension with itself. Hegel reduces the individual to the general. Singularity, for Hegel, is constantly regenerated at the margin of the discourse. According to Levinas, Being in Kierkegaard is not the correlative of thought. Generality could neither contain nor express the secret of the self. The individuality of the self would be dissipitated in any rule that is valid for everyone. 129 Kierkegaard conceives ethical as the realm of universal. For him, religion is the realm that regains the particularity. 130 Kierkegaard was not concerned with the distinction between faith and knowledge. Idealism regarded belief as a deficient form of knowledge. 131 For Kierkegaard, belief is not a deficient form of knowledge or a minor truth. Kierkegaard considered nothing beyond faith. However, Levinas is not in agreement with Kierkegaard's conception of the ethical. Kierkegaard transcends ethics and shifts towards

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129 Katz, 'The Responsibility of Irresponsibility: Taking (Yet) Another Look at Akedah', in Addressing Levinas, op.cit, p.22
130 ibid
131 Levinas, 'Existence and Ethics', op.cit, p.27
religion. For Levinas, it is violence. Similarly, the obedience to duty reappears in Kierkegaard. He believes that ethical may be suspended for a greater good. Levinas is strictly against the teleological suspension of the ethical. For Levinas, teleological suspension of the ethical is nothing but the annihilation of the ethical. 132

Secondly, and most importantly, one can trace most of the existentialist tenets in Levinas. He broadly shares the existentialist idea that existence precedes essence. He strongly asserts his position through the conception of il y a and his account of hypostasis. It can also be said that Levinas developed an existential phenomenology. Like Heidegger and Sartre, he addresses issues of nausea, anxiety, death, labor and enjoyment. For Levinas, the anxiety reveals the essential not-at-homeness of one being in the world. For Heidegger, anxiety is the result of the encounter with the pure nothingness of being. Commenting on Levinas's notion of pleasure, Elisabeth L. Thomas writes:

Pleasure is described as a movement that increases intensity to the point of its own annihilation. It is the feeling of being employed of one's substance – becoming light in intoxication and dispersion. In pleasure, Levinas recognizes an abandon – a loss of self and an ecstasy beyond the self. This ecstasy is equal to a promise of evasion. 133

Levinas feels that failure of pleasure is not due to its being conditioned by need, but because deception is constitutive of its internal becoming. This failure appears as shame. Shame doesn’t reveal a lack. On the other hand, it reveals ‘the inevitable return to oneself.’ 134 It is the failure of evasion. From the very beginning, ‘Levinas introduced evasion as an unsatisfiable need.’ 135 In nausea, one discovers the impossibility of what one is. For Levinas, it is the very experience of pure being. This is the experience of internal antagonism and evasion. According to Heidegger, anxiety returns Dasein to authenticity. Anxiety avoids the loss of self in the world of things. For Levinas, anxiety occurs in the face of thrownness and in a concern for one’s potentiality for being in the world.

133 Thomas, 2004, p.18
134 ibid, p.19
135 ibid, p.17
Heidegger's analysis of anxiety points to the anonymity of being that haunts authentic existence itself. In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas challenges Heideggerian notion of being-towards-death.

**Rosenzweig's Critique of Totality**

Levinas has written on the contributions of Rosenzweig in 'Between Two Worlds' (1959), 'Franz Rosenzweig: A Modern Jewish Thinker' (1965) and in 'The Philosophy of Rosenzweig.' (1982) Rosenzweig develops his notion of metaethics as an inversion of Kantian ethics. For Rosenzweig, "the law is given to man, not man to the law."\(^{136}\)

Rosenzweig insists on the separation between the epistemological and the speculative. He finds two major problems in German transcendental philosophy. First of all, German philosophy turns matters of belief into matters of facts and thereby silences the voice of the unknowable other. Secondly, it undermines the concept of revelation. For Rosenzweig, Hegel establishes an interconnection between knowledge and faith. Hegel’s conception of knowledge has its roots in Kantian thought. Hegel posits the transcendent in the immanent. According to Rosenzweig, Kantian notion of autonomy as the freedom from the empirical and contingent determinations has influenced Hegel very much. He elaborates his resentment in his *The Star of Redemption*:

> One silenced the voice, which claimed possession, in a revelation, of the source of divine knowledge. Centuries of philosophical labour were devoted to this disputation between knowledge and belief; they reach their goal at the precise moment when the knowledge of the all reaches a conclusion in itself.\(^{137}\)

Levinas is highly indebted to Rosenzweig’s staunch opposition to the idea of totality. Rosenzweig tried to overcome the totality by representing reality as consisting of three irreducible entities - God, human beings and world - that do not form a totality. Instead of the general tendency to reduce reality to any one of these, Rosenzweig maintains their plurality. God is present to every human being


\(^{137}\) ibid, p. 6
in his/her unique particularity by a revelation of love. One is called to the future of
differentia for the other in the form of redemption.\textsuperscript{138}

For Rosenzweig, revelation is the entry of eternity into the finite history. It
is intensification of time. There are a lot of parallels between metaethical man of
Rosenzweig and responsible man of Levinas. Levinas reworks Rosenzweig’s idea
of transcendence in phenomenological terms.

Rosenzweig feels that modern western philosophy fails to respect the
difference among God, world and man. He places revelation as the ground that
provides meaning to human existence. Rosenzweig believes that philosophy is
quite distinct from science. Science, for instance, finds the meaning of nature,
human beings in the knowledge of the world, the human and the divine. The
knowledge of everyday life or scientific knowledge has its own utility. At the
same time, they have their limit also. Rosenzweig looks for something outside the
philosophical terrain to account for the meaning of human existence. That enquiry
brings him near the brink of another notion: revelation. For him, ‘the real meaning
of human existence is grounded in God’s revelation to me.’\textsuperscript{139}

Rosenzweig is not only challenging the philosophical tendencies that
reduce all things to one. For Levinas, Rosenzweig replaces philosophy with life.
He wants philosophy to evade the homogenizing thought. The genuine philosophy
must describe God, things and beings just as they are being experienced. By
saying this, Rosenzweig explores philosophy’s relation to non-philosophy. He
draws philosophy close to actual human experiences. He even proposes to grasp
religion, i.e., creation, redemption and revelation as the primordial horizon of
meaning. Rosenzweig is not at all a phenomenologist. But he inaugurates another
phenomenological inquiry by invoking the primordial horizon of meaning.\textsuperscript{140}

Even though Levinas is very much indebted to the Rosenzweig’s new
ways of thinking, he is not subscribing to his method as such. Levinas critically

\textsuperscript{138} Wolff, Ernst, ‘Giving up Your Place in History: The Position of Levinas in Philosophy and

\textsuperscript{139} Morgan, 2007, p. 95

\textsuperscript{140} ibid, p. 102
views that the new thinking of Rosenzweig is 'not free from the language and the conceptual armories of classical German Idealism.' However, he considers Rosenzweig as the tallest among the modern Jewish thinkers.

According to Rosenzweig, Hegel represents the summation of the entire tradition of western philosophy right from Parmenides. From Parmenides's notion of one changeless being to Hegel's notion of natural, historical and spiritual being, philosophy is an attempt to conceptualize the totality of the real. Being and thought are fused together in any conceptual totality. Arguing for the separation of thought and being, Rosenzweig brings into focus the notion of death, which is a mystery. The crux of Rosenzweig's thought can be articulated in this way that it is a philosophy from death to life. Rosenzweig finds fault with the traditional philosophers from Parmenides to Hegel as they took it in the reverse direction. They oriented their philosophy from life to death.

Levinas's conception of the idea of infinite has some strong roots in Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig is a thinker who upholds the infinity of human being. He is of the view that the properties of man are not themselves infinity. But they are immersed in the infinite. It is a part, but simultaneously a whole. It is finite, but at the same time unbound. Rosenzweig sticks to the view that man is infinite despite his finitude. Levinas finds totalitarianism as the political articulation of the ontological view of totality. Ethics emerges from the opposite view, which ties man with the infinity.

As far as the conception of time is concerned, there are some parallels between Levinas and Rosenzweig. Levinas writes about Rosenzweig's approach in Entre Nous:

Franz Rosenzweig, for his part, and without resorting to the same terminology or referring to the same situations, also sought those privileged circumstances of the lived in which temporality are constituted. He thought the past in terms of the idea and religious consciousness of creation; the present in terms of listening to and receiving revelation; and future in terms of the hope of redemption, thus raising those Biblical references of thought to the levels of conditions of temporality itself. The Biblical references are

141 Caygill, 2002, p.99
claimed as the modes of original human consciousness, common to an immense part of humanity. Rosenzweig's philosophical audacity consists precisely of referring the past to the creation and not the creation to the past, the present to the revelation and not revelation to the present, the future to redemption and not redemption to future.\textsuperscript{142}

Rosenzweig bursts the totalizing tendency of western philosophy. But Levinas does not share the idea with Strauss and others that revelation signifies the end of philosophy. He is of the opinion that Rosenzweig's opposition to totality does not diminish the scope of philosophy.\textsuperscript{143} On the other hand, revelation inaugurates a new era in which everything is philosophy.

Keeping this in my mind, Levinas transforms Rosenzweig's divine revelation into an ethical theory.\textsuperscript{144} He calls revelation 'the good.' In \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, Levinas writes about the connection between revelation, election and the good:

Has not the good chooses the subject with an election recognizable in the responsibility of being hostage, in which the subject is destined, which he cannot evade without denying himself, and by virtue of which he is unique? A philosopher can give to this election only the signification circumscribed by responsibility to the other. This antecedence of responsibility to freedom would signify the goodness of good: the necessity that the good choose me first before I can be in a position to choose, that is, welcome its choice.\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{Buber's Dialogical Philosophy}

Martin Buber's main thought was contained in his book \textit{I and Thou} in which he addresses a clear cut distinction between I-Thou and I-It relations. I-Thou relation is a relation of reciprocity and mutuality between two subjects. On the other hand, I-It relation is the relation between subject and passive object. He

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{142} Levinas, 2007, p.202
\textsuperscript{144} ibid
\textsuperscript{145} Levinas, 1991, p.122
\end{flushleft}
conceives the notion of God as the eternal Thou. In each Thou we address the eternal Thou.  

Even though Levinas accepts Buber’s theoretical approach that upholds a complete singular relation between I and Thou, in opposition to I-It relation, Levinas shares the fear that the symmetry established between I and Thou could be another form of totality. For Levinas, meaning of the other is an ethical imperative. It calls on my unconditional and infinite responsibility. Ethical imperative breaks through my historical and ontological existence in eschatological manner.

For Buber, I-Thou relation is the necessary condition for the intentionality of the I-It relation. Levinas borrows from Buber the idea that self is not a substance, but a relation. In that sense, I-Thou relation is the *a priori* relation. Buber writes in *I and Thou*:

> If I face a human being as my Thou, and say this primary word I-Thou to him, he is not a thing among things and does not consist of things. This human being is not he or she, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world.  

Buber gives primordial status to the encounter one subject has with the other subject. Buber puts his emphasis on the structure of intersubjectivity. I-Thou relation is direct. It is mutual. Love is responsibility of an I towards a Thou.

Levinas is driven by Buber’s assertion that ‘I’ emerges through the relation to the other. Levinas, however, takes serious note of the role that language plays in the encounter. Focusing more on the asymmetry of I-Thou, he conceives basic distinction between the saying and the said. Levinas, like Rosenzweig, believes that I and Thou of the I-Thou are not exclusively or even reciprocally relational. The relation of he-it and we-it are equally in crucial relationship to it. The relation of we-it and he-it are irreducible to the I-Thou and essentially exterior to it.

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147 ibid, p.15
148 ibid
149 ibid, p.17
Levinas’s ethical philosophy was developed largely in response to Martin Buber's classic work *I and Thou*. According to Buber, man’s basic relations with the world can be understood in terms of I-Thou and I-It relations. Of these, the primary word I-Thou is prior to I-It. The former is spoken in the original relational event. The other primary word, I-It can only be posterior to I-Thou, and results from the separating out of the 'I' from the latter relation. I-Thought emerges out of natural relation. I-It emerges out of a natural separation. The world is two fold for every man. This is in accordance with his two fold nature.\(^{150}\)

Buber expresses this essential distinction as follows. I-Thou relation can degenerate into an I-It one, as when a person or an object is seen merely as a target of perception. Contrarily, every I-It relation can potentially become I-Thou one. For Buber, God is the eternal Thou, and since God is wholly the other, this is the only relation that is eternal.

Though Levinas acknowledges Buber's influence on his work, he has sought to redefine dialogicality in terms of the sociality of an ethical philosophy. Levinas, writes Manjali, 'seems to think that the ethical effort required for a more contextual I-Thou relationship is absent in Buber.'\(^{151}\) According to Franson Manjali, Levinas's critique of Buber is foregrounded in three main issues: reciprocity, formality and exclusiveness.\(^{152}\)

Levinas maintains that 'the I-Thou relation is not a reciprocal dialogue between friendly partners occurring in a pure formal space.'\(^{153}\) I am already obliged to respond to the call of the other, even before I-Thou relationship is established. There is an essential dissymmetry between the I and Thou. I am responding to the epiphany of the face of the other. I am always ready to respond to the call of the other. The otherness of the other is not something a priori. It is constituted in the face-to-face encounter with the other. Levinas further explains this point strongly:

\(^{150}\) ibid, p.30
\(^{152}\) ibid
\(^{153}\) ibid
The originality of the (I-Thou) relation lies in the fact that it is not known from the outside but only by the 'I' which realizes the relation. The position of the 'I', therefore, is not interchangeable with that of the Thou. But ... if the self becomes an I in saying Thou, as Buber asserts, my position as a self depends on that of my correlated and the relation is no longer different from other relations: it is tantamount to a spectator speaking of the I and Thou in the third person.154

Levinas does not want to reduce the other to the sameness of me within a totalized whole. Instead, he is for the radical otherness of the other on the temporal dimension, which naturally opens out to infinity. Time means that the other is forever beyond me, irreducible to the synchrony of the same. The temporality of the interhuman opens up the meaning of otherness and the otherness of meaning. Thus we have an entirely new orientation on the question of meaning and language. 'Levinasian preference is for a semiotics of the saying over that of the said.'155 Language as saying means for Levinas an ethical openness to the other.156 Saying is irreducible to the ontological definability of the said. Saying is "what makes the self-exposure to sincerity possible; it is a way of giving everything, of not keeping anything for oneself."157

**Post-Structuralist Tenets**

The theoretical tenets of post-structuralism pose significant challenges to traditional ethical thinking by problematizing the question of other. Generally, post modernity doesn't imply a change in the values of Enlightenment rationality but rather a weakening of their absolutist character.

Levinas's interruption basically calls upon philosophy to reconceive the relation between same and other. In Levinas's ethical metaphysics, to reconceive this relation is to decenter ontological discourse. To decenter ontological discourse is to prioritize the radical alterity and the ethical supremacy of the other.

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154 Levinas, 1989, p.72
155 Manjali, 1999
157 ibid, p.28
Contending the logic of western philosophy, both traditional and Hegelian, Levinas insists on the prioritization of difference over identity.\textsuperscript{158}

Levinas’s metaphysics is a movement towards a pluralism that doesn’t fuse into a unity. Announcing a break with Parmenides and the entire western tradition, Levinas, in \textit{Totality and Infinity}, conceives of metaphysics as the relation of consciousness with a prior term absolutely exterior to it. The relation with the other precedes the totality of self-same consciousness. The metaphysical relation, for Levinas, realizes a multiple existing.\textsuperscript{159}

The multiplicity is ‘rooted in the surplus of the epiphany of the other.’\textsuperscript{160} The other constitutes the ethical meaning of self’s existence. Levinas stands in the forefront of contemporary thinkers who wanted to change the course of philosophical thinking. He attributes ethical meaning in the relation with the invisible. Ethics is first philosophy. It originates in that which is otherwise than being.\textsuperscript{161}

According to Hegel, subjectivity is fully realized in its conceptual, dialectical relation with its other. Hegel’s concept of totality logically equates otherness with non-being and being with nothingness. Hegel’s objective totality remains ‘exclusionary of every other.’\textsuperscript{162} It is against this concept of totality that Levinas directs his arguments. Post-structuralism is also largely concerned with the question of subject. Post-structuralists problematize the modern conception of subject as the sovereign, totalizing subject constitutive of itself and the world, including the other. It can be argued that modernity is philosophically characterized by the emphasis on comprehension, formalism, hierarchy, identity, totality, determinism, and sameness. Hegel represents last great attempt to conceive a systematic metaphysics based on logical principle. It was the most comprehensive attempt to dissolve all otherness, all difference.

\textsuperscript{158} Schroeder, Brian, \textit{Altered Ground: Levinas, History and Violence.}, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 6
\textsuperscript{159} Levinas, 1969, p.220.
\textsuperscript{160} ibid, p.221
\textsuperscript{161} Schroeder, 1996, p.7
\textsuperscript{162} Levinas, 1969, p.221
In Hegel, there is no pluralism ultimately. He undermines a radical break between subjectivity and the knowable. Contradictions are reconciled through the logical movement of Aufhebung. Levinas is a thinker deeply concerned with preservation of the autonomy of the other subject. Inaugurating a new possibility in understanding alterity and subjectivity, Levinas declares the death of god as 'the demise of the subject.' The idea of infinity, in Levinas, implies the separation of some with respect to other, but this separation cannot rest in an opposition to the other which would be purely antithetical. Thesis and anti-thesis, in repelling one another, call for one another. They appear in opposition to a synoptic gaze that encompasses them; they already form a totality which, by integrating the metaphysical transcendence expressed by the idea of infinity, relativizes it. An absolute transcendence has to be produced as non-integratable.

For Levinas, Being is the trace of the passing of an absolutely heteronymous and unrecollectable creative past power. This is nothing but infinite. On the contrary, for Hegel, existence is the eternal becoming of the finite being. Levinas approaches the issues of origin and alterity from a Greek-Hebraic standpoint. The religious aspect of Levinas's thinking derives from his Judaic heritage and his extensive study of Talmud. Religion is not confined to cultural or theological perception. Religion is universal.

In all of his works, Levinas is not speaking about a subject resting on reason. For him, prior to the other, self is not yet a subject. It is nothing but the intervention of the other that makes self as self. His conception of hypostasis and intervention of the other converts a humanist paradigm into a post-humanist paradigm. According to Noreen O' Connor,

Levinas's account of the face to face involves the notion of the self as disjunction of identity rather than the constitution of unity. The relationship of proximity is not a matter of subjectivity presented as the mysterious play of the essence of being; rather, he says the human is accused by the hyperbole, by the des-inter-essement.

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163 Levinas, 1991, p.17
164 Schroeder, 1996, p.11
165 Levinas, 1969, p. 53
166 Fryer, 2004, p. 32
167 Connor, Noreen O', 'Personal is Political: Discursive Practices of the Face to Face, in The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the other, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David C. Wood, Routledge, London, 1988, p.64.
Levinas’s notion of meaning is also essentially postmodern. He rejects an empiricism that treats the given as without meaning. The object given to consciousness must first be placed in an illuminated horizon. The horizon is a context, language or culture. No object of consciousness is given without such a horizon.\(^{168}\) In ‘Meaning and Sense’, he says that meaning precedes the data and illuminates them.\(^{169}\) The study of meaning, for Levinas, is the study of how various cultural dimensions give rise to panoply of meanings and how they are grasped. Levinas speaks of a multivocity of meaning that is disorienting.\(^{170}\)

**Freedom**

Levinas introduces a distinction between the violence that is directed against freedom and that invoked by freedom. According to Caygill, ‘the first violence is the shattering of the same by the other. The suppression of the other by the same constitutes the second violence.’\(^{171}\) In the first case, the other is coming from a place beyond the hold of the same. Welcoming the other breaks the freedom of the autonomous subject. It crosses the barriers of immanence.\(^{172}\) It prevents any possibility of encompassing the totality by thought. Freedom is called into question by the presence of the other. The other is irreducible to my thoughts and possessions.

In the history of western philosophy, responsibility has been identified with autonomy or rational freedom. Tradition from Spinoza to Hegel would look at the advent of freedom in accordance with the principle of reason. Levinas criticizes the failure of autonomy and spontaneity in western ontology from the Greeks to Heidegger. In western philosophy, “freedom is not maintained, but reduced to the reflection of a universal order which supports itself and justifies itself all by itself like the god of ontological argument.”\(^{173}\)

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\(^{168}\) Morgan, 2007, p.116  
\(^{169}\) Levinas, 1996, pp.34-35  
\(^{170}\) ibid, p.44  
\(^{171}\) Caygill, 2002, p.108  
\(^{172}\) Levinas, 1969, p.27  
\(^{173}\) ibid, p.87
Levinas speaks about passivity beyond passivity, beyond the most passive intentionality. He emphasizes the fact of being addressed.\(^{174}\) The other’s hold over me arises on the ground of antecedent relationship of obsession. I am before the other passively. My being before the other is not the result of my initiative. Levinas’s argument is simply that ethical action cannot be based on autonomy. In other words, responsibility is not a choice. It is a radical passivity. Levinas’s conception of radical passivity and his notion of freedom are interlinked. For him, imperialism of the same is the essence of autonomy. In his conception, freedom does not precede, but derives from heteronomous responsibility.\(^{175}\)

Levinas’s criticism of autonomy cannot be considered as abandonment of freedom. His critique of totalitarianism is informed by the notion of freedom and spontaneity of the individual endangered by fascist horror. Levinas accepts Hegel’s critique of subjective freedom. But, at the same time, he distances himself from Hegel’s conception of objective freedom. Objective freedom, as conceived by Hegel, exists reflected by the public order. Objective freedom has existence in the institutional terrain. It exists in the totality of the law.\(^{176}\) But Levinas’s ethical subject is not driven by the totality of the law. He places the work of justice over the work of state. In other words, he prioritizes ‘the messianic eschatology to the political ontology of war.’\(^{177}\) Heidegger belongs to the tradition that asserts that the quest of freedom precedes the quest for justice. Levinas strongly believes in the inversion of this priority.

*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* strongly rejects the Hegelian idea of the realization of freedom in reason and the institutions of the state. Howard Caygill is of the opinion that *Otherwise than Being* could also be titled otherwise than freedom. It unravels the possibility of a subjectivity which is marked by responsibility for the other rather than by the experience of freedom.

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\(^{176}\) Levinas, 1969, p. 242

\(^{177}\) Caygill, 2002, p. 127
Responsibility for the other is antecedent to freedom. Freedom is a mode of being. But responsibility for the other is foregrounded in beyond being.

In *Existence and Existents* and Totality and Infinity, Levinas conceives freedom as the process of appropriation and enjoyment. Levinas argues that a corporeal and vitalistic enjoyment of elements and earthly goods makes it possible to establish oneself as an independent centre of this world. This is the way how freedom is possible. The other puts restrictions on one's hedonism, but it should not take away freedom. Levinas affirms that the ethical demands of transcendence do not limit my freedom.

Levinas has been influenced by the conceptions of freedom in the works of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Levinas found in phenomenology an access to new possibility of thinking. But he perceived in Husserl a lack as he failed to give any account of the metaphysical essence of man. For this reason, Levinas turned to Heidegger. Later he reverses his priorities and discovers a strong account of metaphysical essence of freedom in Husserl. Throughout his works, Levinas upholds intentionality as a solution to a Bergsonian intuition. According to Levinas, freedom is not to be found in spontaneity as in Bergson. But 'it is to be found in a movement between spontaneity and necessity.'

According to Levinas, to be responsible in goodness is to be responsible on the outside or the inside of freedom. Ethics slips into me before freedom. The antecedence of responsibility to freedom would signify the goodness of good. The good must elect me before I may choose it. Levinas speaks about finite freedom. For Levinas,

the finite freedom is neither first nor initial, for the willing that it animates wills on the ground of a passivity, on the ground of a passivity that cannot be taken charge of this freedom is finite because it is a relationship with another: it remains freedom, because this other is another person.

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178 ibid, p.131  
179 ibid, p. 22  
180 Levinas, 2000, p.178
Finite freedom consists in doing what is our vocation. The corporeal and vitalistic enjoyment of elements and earthly goods make it possible to establish oneself as an independent center of the world. However, the fact of my being caught in heteronomy puts restrictions on the extent of my hedonism. It never implies that it will diminish one’s freedom. Levinas’s idea of transcendence does not condemn the joys of life, but it prevents them from becoming absolute. But subject’s being possessed by transcendence is concrete in sensibility and affection.

According to Levinas, substitution provides a more adequate picture about finite freedom. Here, freedom is not understood as self-possession. The approach of the other becomes a persecution. The other divests of all the resources of the ego.¹⁸¹ This amounts to a responsibility that is unlimited. Levinas speaks about difficult freedom also. Rosenzweig feels that if humanity is to be free, God must also be free. Following Rosenzweig’s insights, Levinas brings up the idea of difficult freedom.¹⁸² God makes God’s own actions difficult. In order to be free one must be free to disobey God’s will.

God

Levinas rejects the theological conception of God. Theology conceives God as a theme of consciousness and reflection.¹⁸³ According to Levinas, writes Peperzak,

God is not given. There has been no experience of Him, if experience were to mean that He has presented Himself as the element of a context or as a being surrounded by a horizon. God doesn’t appear, because he belongs to no context. He is neither a being himself, nor a text or context, nor even - in the phenomenological sense - a horizon.¹⁸⁴

Levinas describes relation to God as a relation to other. God leaves his trace in the face of the other.

¹⁸¹ Froman, Wayne, ‘The Strangeness in the Ethical Discourse of Emmanuel Levinas’, in Addressing Levinas, op.cit, p.57
¹⁸² Katz, 'The Responsibility of Irresponsibility: Taking(yet) Another Look at Akedah', in Addressing Levinas, op.cit, p.22
¹⁸³ Peperzak,1997, p.21
¹⁸⁴ ibid, p.171
In the Old Testament, there are many instances where God comes down to the mankind. It is portrayed that there is no separation between God and world. Levinas concedes that the descendent of God takes place either in the form of speech or in the form of ethical order. One feels responsible in the presence of face. For him, “subjectivity is a subjectivity which is commanded at the outset.”

Nietzsche had a very convincing logic that, if God exists, the ‘I’ is impossible. If A commands B, B is no longer autonomous. Describing relation to God as a relation to another person, Levinas sticks to the view that there is a real presence of God in the face of the other. According to Levinas, we possess phenomena from which we construct the other. Phenomenology takes serious note of the human experience from which we build the world. Phenomena are the fundamental reality and we build the world from them. Language plays a key role as a medium of this construction. In relation to the other, we experience different kinds of desire. Desire for the infinite is good.

The epiphany of the other subordinates the world of phenomena and experiences to responsibility. For Levinas, the Infinite cannot be described as an object of our knowledge. But the invisible commands and constitutes the interiority of our selves. The absolute presents itself without being a phenomenon. Its presence is our awareness of a demanding obedience and humility. As obedience and humility, religion is an ethical relationship. The personal relation to God coincides with the ethical relation to other human beings. In other words, the Law is the revelation of God. It is the Law that makes Israel responsible to all human beings.

Levinas does not propose any new account of God. Talking about religious experience, he affirms the primacy of ontological outlook in it. Here, God is an object of knowledge revealed to the subject. To put it differently, God is experienced as a presence. The transcendence of God turns out to be a kind of immanence in religion. Levinas talks about God and faith as something which

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185 Levinas, 2007, pp. 94-95
186 Rosenberg, ‘From Anaximender to Levinas: Toward History of the Concept of Infinite’ in Paradigms in Jewish Philosophy, op.cit, p.83
187 Peperzak, 1997, p.14
exceeds the schematization. He is striving to speak about God in a discourse which would be neither ontology nor faith.

According to Levinas, consciousness intended on the infinite has a very specific structure of intentionality that differs from ordinary intentional act. These two types of intentionality are not the same because the consciousness which is intended on the infinite is intended on something more that it can include in itself. The otherness of infinite can never be reduced or annulled because we are not able to point out the thought that can think it in an adequate way. The infinite cannot be grasped by the idea of infinity since it is beyond the possibility of a thought. Nevertheless, the infinite transcends the subjectivity and this fact implies the presence of infinity in consciousness. The idea of infinite can only be a passivity of consciousness. The consciousness of obligation is no longer a consciousness of representation.

Heidegger thematizes the infinite and thereby reduces the transcendence. However, Levinas transforms the ontology by introducing the concept of infinite. The infinite discloses the essence of human being as totally depending on it. God is transcendence encountered at the core of subjectivity. However, it does not contradict with the idea of created subjectivity. The subjectivity cannot confirm the existence of God. In stating a concept of God, God becomes one of the universals which exclude the responsible subject.

According to Levinas, the infinite exceeds the thought that thinks it. The consciousness is a flow of intentionality. It contains a metaphysical desire. According to Levinas, the origin of this desire lies in the infinite itself. The idea of infinite inside the subject induces the desire to act. The metaphysical desire overpasses all other ordinary desires. It is a movement towards the infinite. It also implies a specific structure of intentional act that is intended on something more than it can contain. In other words, metaphysical desire has another intention. It desires beyond everything. Levinas takes the endless desire for what is beyond

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188 Levinas, 1989, p.174
189 Levinas, 1969, p. 207
190 ibid, p.34
being as desire for good. ¹⁹¹ The idea of the infinite does not rise from the structure of consciousness. It is foregrounded in face-to-face relation. ¹⁹² The concept of infinite presupposes a radical experience since it seems impossible to include infinite into the structure of intentionality. In the infinite, the consciousness encounters the radical alterity. The experience of the other is not yet an experience of God. The proximity of God is discovered in the face-to-face situation through the transcendence of the face. Metaphysical desire implies our experience of the other as infinite and helps us to approach God through our relation with the other.

The Other

One of the major contributions of Levinas is his reformulation of the concept of the other. According to Levinas, the primordial transcendence of one’s own sphere of immanence is towards the other. The other remains infinitely transcendent.¹⁹³ The self can appropriate objects but not the other. Subject can identify objects by their characteristics. However, the other can only be identified as alterity.

This notion of alterity is quite distinct from the Heideggerian notion of the other found in all cultural and practical situations. It is also distinct from the Sartrian notion of the other as an object, which constantly objectifies me. For Levinas, other is not lesser than me. Similarly, the other is ‘not an indifferent equal. The concrete other addresses me and calls me to respond and be responsible.’¹⁹⁴ For Levinas, western epistemology, in its realist or idealist versions, is nothing but an ontology that reduces other to the same. Both in idealism and realism, the object of cognition becomes an object for consciousness.¹⁹⁵

The other is capable of affecting me in a fundamental way. Other puts the idea of infinite in me. Infinity, for Levinas, designates ‘a relation with a reality

¹⁹¹ ibid, p.177
¹⁹² ibid, p.50
¹⁹³ ibid, p.194
¹⁹⁵ Critchley, 1992, p.5
infinitely distant from my own reality. Levinas borrows only the formal design of Descartes to characterize self’s relation to the other.

Levinas links the other with the notion of desire to accomplish his philosophical endeavour. For Levinas, desire is the desire for the other. The other is best experienced in language and eroticism. Speech does not only assume objects, things and events which it signifies. Above all, it presupposes the other to whom it is addressed. Language, for Levinas, indicates the presence of another signifier. For Levinas, ‘speech proceeds from absolute difference.’ What is important about language is that the other addresses me. Levinas emphasizes the fact of being said over the propositions in the discourse.

According to Levinas, this other is not experienced primarily as an alter ego. The other is not recognized, categorized or cognized, but answered, deflected, interrogated, denied, believed or rejected. To encounter another is to answer him. This means that linguistic encounter with the other is an answer. Language is not basically about the generality of concepts. Rather, it lays the foundation for a possession in common.

Levinas says that face is abstract in the sense that it presents a movement of infinition. Face is the trace of a past that has never been a present. Encounter with the face of the other is an encounter with good. According to Benda Hofmeyer, we can distinguish two moments in Levinas’s thinking regarding subjectivity. The first one is the existent’s pre-ethical economic life. The other moment is ethical subject. Up to Totality and Infinity, Levinas conceives ‘economic self-sufficiency of subject.’ Here also the subject does not coincide with itself. There is separation.

The emergence of self-consciousness takes place in an economy forged by needs, labour and possession. Economy requires the other. Desire intends things...
for its satisfaction. Metaphysical desire precedes the relation to objects.\textsuperscript{202} Metaphysical desire, as Levinas explains, 'lives from its own insatisfaction. It cannot be satisfied.'\textsuperscript{203} The relation with the objects qualitatively differ from the relation with transcendent other. The transcendent other cannot be made into a possession. Levinas asserts that self-consciousness is only possible through other. The interruption of the other inaugurates self-consciousness.

Upto \textit{Totality and Infinity}, Levinas emphasizes his conception of other as an exteriority. This entails a particular aspect of the experience of alterity. Levinas calls this the \textit{ipseity} of the self. For Levinas, 'ipseity presents a truth or a modality of experiencing which is other than the one possessed by the self.'\textsuperscript{204} The challenge reveals a difference between the self and the other, a difference which constitutes the alterity of the other. The other is not objectifiable.

This kind of a conception undergoes some radical changes in \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}. According to Derrida, the other is that which by definition must elude any attempt to grasp it. Levinas's conception partly betrays itself, because the wholly other is absolutely other only if it is human and hence partly the same.\textsuperscript{205} Derrida is convinced that his own work avoids the residual humanism that he argues is discernible in early works of Levinas. Derrida acknowledges the fact that Levinas addresses the phenomenological 'imperialism of the same'. In other words, Derrida also shares the notion that the other is always being conditioned by the horizons and contexts that the subject brings to bear upon that alterity.

Derrida's work often bears a tension between an absolute and irrecuperable alterity that is always deferred and always to come. At the same time, Derrida insists that the other is always, already within the self. These two aspects of his treatment of alterity do not necessarily contradict one another, but they do exist in some tension with one another

\textsuperscript{202} Bergo, 1999, p.56
\textsuperscript{203} Levinas, 1969, p.34
\textsuperscript{204} ibid, p.118
Thanks to the criticism of Derrida and Blanchot, Levinas, later on, develops his notion of trace. Trace is an event that disrupts the order of the self. The relation to other in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* is no longer refers to exteriority. Here comes the notion of substitution. The notion of substitution, as conceived by Levinas, implies that the other is in me.\(^{206}\) Substitution remains a relation with other, without coincidence. It remains an otherwise than being.\(^{207}\)

The relationship with the other, presupposed by representation, is identified by Levinas as the domain of ethics. This relationship does not emerge from representation of objectivities. It is attained as a response recognizing an appeal. The movement constitutes the ethical dimension of cognition. It is this dialogical process, this fundamental relationship with the other as ethical that, according to Levinas, might have compelled Plato to elevate the Good above Being. Humans do not become social by an *a priori* assumption of a moral system; rather, they become social by encountering the other in all the various forms of communication. In responding to the challenge of the other, the self becomes responsible. Levinas writes:

The relationship from me to the other is thus asymmetrical, without noematic correlation of any thematizable presence. An awakening to the other man, which is not knowledge. Precisely the approach to the other man – the first one to come along in his proximity as fellowman – irreducible to knowledge, though it may call for knowledge, faced with others in plural, a knowledge required by justice.\(^{208}\)

The other contests, interrogates and challenges my systematic subsumption of objectivities, events and things. In Levinas, 'this process of questioning, contestation, appellation, and justification is a process of infinition.'\(^{209}\) The other is present not as an object, a thing or a process but as a passing trace. It disrupts the totality toward infinition. According to Levinas, the other leaves a trace leading to infinity.\(^{210}\) The descriptions on relation of death, fecundity, eros and

\(^{206}\) Zeillinger, Peter, 'Radical Passivity as the only Basis of Effective Ethical Action', in *Radical Passivity: Rethinking Ethical Agency in Levinas*, op. cit, p. 98

\(^{207}\) Levinas, 2000, p.186

\(^{208}\) Levinas, 2007, p.145

\(^{209}\) peperzak, 1997, p.52

\(^{210}\) ibid, p.196
face change throughout Levinas’s works. These changes reflect Levinas’s methodological approach to the question of other. 211

Diachrony and Time

Levinas seeks to provide new account of the subjective temporal existence. He links face-to-face relation with our experience of time. In Time and the Other, he seeks to elucidate his notion of time in detail.

Temporality has traditionally been interpreted as centered in the subject, which possess memory, present perception, and anticipation. Time has been seen as gathered together in our subjectivity. Philosophers such as Plato and Augustine held this view of time. Bergson represents a break with this tradition. According to Levinas, Bergson’s principal contribution to philosophy is the theory of duration. The credits go to Bergson for destructing the primacy of clock time. He showed that time of Physics is derived time. The major conclusion of Bergsonian intervention was the emergence of historicism and relativism. 212

For Levinas, we experience temporality in both subjective time and objective time. According to objective time, time is a measured change. It is experienced in terms of the categories of past, present and future. In subjective view, time is the flow of experiences that are experienced in terms of ‘I’s point of view. Levinas calls the first natural time, and the second, the personal time. Levinas feels that this distinction, as conceived by Bergson, does not capture the primordial dimension of our temporal existence. 213 Our experience of time takes on meaning only in terms of the face-to-face. But, in Heidegger’s Being and Time, there is an attempt to reverse this position. Heidegger speaks about a ‘lived time’. 214

211 Thomas, 2004, p.41
212 Morgan, 2007, p.209
213 ibid, p.213
Levinas's notion of time is very much connected to his conception of subjectivity. Levinas resists all attempts to reduce time to presence. He speaks about a time that can neither be present nor represented by memory. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas raises certain eschatological questions. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, he refers to a past that cannot be recollected. For ontologists, time is synonymous with presence that swallows the past and the future. But Levinasian ethical metaphysics implies an immemorial past.\(^{215}\)

In order to become phenomenal, a being must deploy itself in time. To unfold itself within the openness of temporality is to become a phenomenon. The phenomenality of all phenomena presupposes temporality. In other words, 'time is the light without which perceptibility would be impossible.'\(^{216}\)

Levinas, in *Time and the Other*, says that the path to time leads through suffering. Suffering, for Levinas, is an engagement with one's own existence. Suffering points towards death. Death is an unknown mystery that we cannot master. We are totally passive before death.\(^{217}\) Suffering is the impossibility of nothingness, whereas death is the impossibility of possibility. Death, for Levinas, implies the limit of all idealism.\(^{218}\)

Death has relevance in Levinas's conception of time in *Time and the Other*. According to him, 'the relationship with death is a relationship with future. Death is never a present.'\(^{219}\) It is beyond our experience. Death indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely other. Death also entails the plurality of existence.\(^{220}\) It implies that in my self there is an other which remains a mystery.\(^{221}\)

It is very much relevant here to distinguish between Levinasian approach to death and Heideggerian approach to death. For Heidegger, death is an absolute

\(^{215}\) Peperzak, 1997, p.160  
\(^{216}\) Ibid, p.55  
\(^{217}\) Levinas, 1989, p.40  
\(^{218}\) Ibid  
\(^{219}\) Ibid, p.41  
\(^{220}\) Ibid, p.43  
\(^{221}\) Ibid, p.40
event of human existence that shapes the self's construction of time. Self is projecting itself towards death. Self is struggling to master time prior to that event. On the other hand, Levinas appreciates the fragmented anarchy of time.\textsuperscript{222} Death, for him, remains a mystery. Death comes from an instant upon which I can in no way exercise my power. Exploring a radical conception of death, Levinas links other and future. Unlike death, there is other that affirms our existence. For instance, in erotic relationship, 'I' meets an other that is beyond me. However, this other does not negate me. Having hesitated to speak of a time in a subject alone and of a purely personal time, Levinas asserts that the condition of time depends upon the face-to-face relation.\textsuperscript{223}

Levinas strongly rejects linear notion of time and history. Linear time and history totalize experiences. History conceives human experience as a whole. According to Levinas, Kant, Hegel and Husserl conceived time as a form of human experience. They failed to think of a meaningful content prior to form. Levinas's early concern with temporality, as expressed in \textit{Time and the Other}, is in terms of future. But it is observed that in his later works he turns to past and shows how our experience of the past is significant for the present. This is elaborated in \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, 'God and Philosophy', and 'Diachrony and Representation.'

For Husserl, our intentional time consciousness involves a present that contain a present experience of the past and present experience of future. On the contrary, Levinas calls our attention to a past and a future that are radically different. Levinas says in an interview that

there is the time that one can understand in terms of presence and the present, and in which past is only a retained present and the future a present to come. Representation would be the fundamental property of mental life. But starting from the ethical relation with the other, I glimpse a temporality in which the dimensions of the past and future have their own signification. In my responsibility for the other, the past of the other which has never been my present 'concerns me.' It is not a representational time. The past of the

\textsuperscript{223} Levinas, 1989, p.45
other and, somehow, the history of humanity in which I have never participated, in which I have never been present, are my past.\textsuperscript{224}

For Levinas, future is the time of prophecy. It is an imperative. Levinas views time as a work of face-to-face relationship. In order to substantiate his points, Levinas distinguishes between three modalities of time: synchrony, diachrony and anachrony. Synchrony entails a self that struggles to assert over time by remembering the past, perceiving the present and predicting the future. In that, there is an analogy between the subjective experience of time and the experience of totality of time. Events are synchronous when they occur at the same time.\textsuperscript{225} In other words, synchrony reduces time to space.\textsuperscript{226}

Diachrony refers etymologically to the coming apart of time. Diachrony entails the entry of other person who introduces a past and a future that the self cannot remember or predict. Levinas asserts that time is a relationship that cannot be assimilated by experience. It cannot be comprehended by consciousness. There is no analogy between subjective experience of time and the experience of totality of time.\textsuperscript{227} The present from which the self predicts or perceives and remembers is cluttered with pasts that have passed by without being present to consciousness. Historical consciousness is based on immemorable events. Two events are diachronous when there is a temporal continuity between them.\textsuperscript{228} Anachrony is the fragmented temporality of the infinite responsibility. Anachrony entails the pasts, presents and futures of all others, whether dead, absent or unborn.

Obviously, the topic of time is central to \textit{Time and the other}. However, it can also be stated that each of Levinas’s works conceives a distinctive analysis of time. Each of these analyses is progressively more radical than the ones before it. According to Richard A. Cohen, “Levinas links time to the alterity of

\textsuperscript{224} Levinas, 2001 b, p.176  
\textsuperscript{225} Morgan, 2007, p.223  
\textsuperscript{226} Critchley, 1992, p.165  
\textsuperscript{227} Hutchens, 2004, p.69  
\textsuperscript{228} Morgan, 2007, p.223
intersubjectivity; as his theory of intersubjectivity becomes progressively radicalized in his work as a whole, so does his theory of time.\textsuperscript{229}

The notion of time, for Levinas, is entrenched in the asymmetry of subject-other relationships. It means that the notion of time is both ethical and intersubjective. The ethical encounters take place in atemporal temporality. Levinas's affirmation of the priority of the other takes place in diachronic temporality. Diachrony is the time of Levinasian subjectivity. Diachrony is the real time of the \textit{saying}. Synchrony is the time of the said.\textsuperscript{230} The encounter between self and the other takes place in the time of transcendence. According to Levinas, transcendence designates a relation with a reality infinitely distant from my own reality, yet without this distance destroying this relation and without this relation destroying this distance as it would happen with relations within the same; this relation does not become an implantation in the other and a confusion with him, does not silence the apology, does not become apostasy and ecstasy.\textsuperscript{231}

In diachronic temporality, self transcends itself. It is a time that is contrary to the linear, synchronic time of being and history. Levinas insists that diachrony is to be conceived in terms of the passivity of the subject. Such a conception dominates his ideas till \textit{Totality and Infinity}. In \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, he conceives responsibility as always diachronous.\textsuperscript{232} We are not coming to be responsible. We have already been responsible. It is diachronous with respect to attitude and action of the self. The primordial responsibility is rooted in an immemorial past. Face-to-face is a past irreducible to a present that it was once.\textsuperscript{233} Privileging diachrony over synchrony, Levinas thinks that 'diachrony is the primordial time from which the inauthentic conception of time as synchrony is derived.'\textsuperscript{234} For Levinas, diachrony is the time of philosophy.\textsuperscript{235} The \textit{saying} and

\textsuperscript{230} Critchley, 1992, p.166
\textsuperscript{231} Levinas, 1969, pp. 41-42
\textsuperscript{232} Levinas, 2007, p.166
\textsuperscript{233} ibid, p.170
\textsuperscript{234} Critchley, 1992, p.166
\textsuperscript{235} Levinas, 1991, p.167
the *said* do not belong to the same temporal order. The correlation of the *omnia* and the *said* is diachronic. It cannot be brought together in to synchronic tin