CHAPTER 2

SUBJECTIVITY
Introduction

Western thought, from seventeenth century onwards, celebrates the triumph of autonomous, rational self. The primacy of humanism became entrenched throughout nineteenth and early twentieth century. The tradition of viewing subjectivity as a starting point of everything starts from Descartes. For Descartes, the being that doubts is the same being that understands, affirms and denies. These acts of thinking constitute what Descartes calls rational subjectivity.

Rational subjectivity constitutes an ideal world. It is a world constituted through the act of a thinking subject. Descartes, however, argues that a sensible world exists independent of a thinking subject. He proceeds to argue that the idea of an infinite substance entails the existence of God, which must exist formally to cause an idea of infinite substance.¹ For Descartes, the idea of God has to be prior in subject than his idea of himself. But Levinas comes up with a more radical conclusion than Descartes. According to him, Descartes's idea of infinite remains a theoretical data. It is either contemplation or knowledge. But Levinas sticks to the view that the relation to the infinite is not knowledge, but a desire.² In rationalist tradition, the theory of knowledge is founded on the idea of a correspondence between subject and object. In Kant, the problem of the relation of the subject and object tends to be internalized. Representation means the synthesis of that which is presented. Levinas goes beyond the subjectivity of representation through his conception of both desire and time.

Leibniz's project was to interpret subjectivity as a monad. Heidegger sees the contribution of Leibniz to philosophy as his emphasis on subjectivity as activity. Kant elaborated by redefining the same as the activity of synthesis. For Leibniz, the real is only the possible. Having opined that monads differ in their perspective, Leibniz stick to the view that there are as many representations of the world as there are monads. There are many perspectives of the world as there are subjectivities.

¹ Beavers, 1995, p.11
² Levinas, 1969, p.50
Kant recognizes that the real is phenomenal. It is a turning point in the philosophy of subject. For Kant, the world that is known is the world of objects as they appear in experience. Kant introduces the concepts of categories which systematize objects within experience. Categories of understanding constitute objects in their relation-with one another. Kant conceived a relationship between sensibility and understanding and began Copernican Revolution in philosophy. He calls the aspects of knowledge that derives from experience, *a posteriori*, and the aspect of knowledge that are independent of experience *a priori*. Mind is not only a passive recipient of sense impressions. It supplies to sense impressions its own *a priori* structures. Kant's subject-object distinction separates human subjectivity from whatever exterior to it.

Kant's notion of rift between subject and object has been challenged by German philosophers like Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Husserl. From the very beginning, Husserl distanced himself from Kant's preoccupation with the independent existence of the external world. Husserl filtered out all claims on reality other than that of intentional consciousness. Thought never exists without an object. Consciousness always intends something other than itself. Intentionality, for Husserl, is a genuine act of transcendence. Existence doesn't follow from a *cogito*. But existence allows a *cogito*. The ego creates its world in an act of world constitution. In this act, Husserl reduces the entire world to subjectivity.

Husserl, by positing the subject's intentional consciousness as that which defines the other, makes other dependent on the subject. The other's coming into the world is contingent upon the subject's intentionality. The other person is not extra-mental other. It is consciousness that makes present the other person there.

Heidegger tried to offer a hermeneutic solution to this problem. For him, phenomenology is a method of intuitive grasping of things in their being. Prior to

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4 Levinas, 1995, p.40
the introduction of categories of subject and object, there is a relationship between Dasein and its world. The world itself is constitutive of Dasein’s being. Dasein finds itself in the world and is affected by it. Dasein is primarily a being that acts. Secondly, it may be a being that knows.6

According to Simon Critchley, Levinas’s understanding of subjectivity is not to be seen as a response to dominant tradition. His account of subjectivity is a response to the post-structuralist and anti-humanist critique of subjectivity.7 Thinkers like Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Bourdieu and Althusser view human subject as incapable of self-knowledge and autonomy. Instead of asserting this line, Levinas is bringing in an alternative humanism.8 He does it in a period when the primacy of humanism was challenged by political, religious and philosophical questions.

Phenomenology and Cartesian Subject

Regarding subjectivity, Husserl speaks against Descartes in Cartesian Meditations. According to Husserl, neither the world nor any worldly object is a piece of my ego.9 Here, Husserl is not deviating fundamentally from Descartes’ position. But, he sticks to the view that transcendental ego is not subject to personal pronouns. Transcendental ego is absolute and unique. For attributing uniqueness to the subject, Husserl strips the subject of his/her historical and social situations.

Husserl saw the very essence of consciousness in intentionality. The striving towards something constitutes the entire nature of consciousness. By striving towards something, consciousness transcends itself throughout its existence. Transcendence is an event of existence.

Cartesian subject is enclosed in itself. But the phenomenological subject intends a world. Subject’s transcendental field of experience is neither strictly

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6 Heidegger, 1988, p.95
7 Morgan, 2007, p.146
8 ibid, p.148
9 Husserl, 1999, p.26
transcendent to the subject nor strictly immanent to the subject. According to Husserl, it is both transcendent and immanent. Here, he brings into light the *noetic-noematic* structures that are constituted by experience. The phenomenological subject does not coincide with being as in the *cogito sum* of Descartes. The subject is intentionally directed towards a world of which it is the lived experience. The phenomena and *noemata* are given in direct intuition. They are the things themselves as experienced. The phenomenon is the world as experienced from a certain point of view.

In the idealistic interpretation of Husserl, the phenomenal world is interpreted as the field of pure transcendental subjectivity. But, on the basis of transcendental reduction, Husserl upholds a pure, anonymous, impersonal consciousness beneath the empirical and historical level of individual experience. This is the realm of transcendental subjectivity which contains within itself the laws of intentional constitution.

In this point of view, consciousness doesn’t create the world since it is the experience of the world. It is subject that experiences the world. The world has no any meaning. Meaning always involves consciousness. Consciousness is constitutive of the world in the sense that it objectifies the world and constitutes the objects in the world. Consciousness experiences itself as a subject in and through its essential objectifying activity.

Husserl shares Gilbert Ryle’s criticism of Descartes. According to Ryle, Descartes made a category mistake in conceiving ego as a substance. But, unlike Ryle, Husserl considers Descartes philosophy as a means to access the actual self. In his theoretical scheme, Husserl is for the distinction between transcendental ego and psychic ego. He deviates himself from Descartes’ *cogito* which implies not only ego but also the actions of ego. The *cogitato*, which are intentional objects, are not really objects, but the way in which objects appear to the thinking ego. Husserl calls the intentional objects the *noemata*, the meaning given in intentional

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10 Edie, op.cit, p.55
11 ibid, p.57
activity. *Noesis* is the act of giving meaning to the ego.\textsuperscript{12} The ego-subject is directed toward an objective something through the ego. Unlike Hume, who locates self in a bundle of impressions, Husserl is not willing to reduce self to the acts of ego.\textsuperscript{13}

The ego that doubts is not same as the ego that loves, desires, wills etc. The ego that desires is the psychic ego. It is empirical ego. Husserl is of the opinion that through the phenomenological reduction, the empirical/psychic ego transforms into absolute ego.\textsuperscript{13} In other words, phenomenological reduction transforms natural self into transcendental self. Here, Husserl is not suggesting a clear-cut demarcation of natural self and transcendental self. What he really intends to argue is that the transcendental self is the appearing of the empirical self as it really is.\textsuperscript{14}

According to Husserl, ego endures in that it is present. Through the continuity of internal time consciousness, self is related to the past also. Some past actually belongs to this particular present. In his work *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, Husserl has elucidated the difference between the past of primary memory and the past of secondary memory. Husserl uses the term retention to denote the past of primary memory. Similarly, he uses the term remembrance to denote the past of secondary memory. But, Husserl places a clear emphasis on ego as present. Self is apodictic. It must be present in one aspect or the other.\textsuperscript{15} The apodicticity of the correlation between the present ‘I’ and a past ‘I’ is what affirms the continuity of the self.

**Heidegger’s Dasein**

According to Heidegger, the decisive event that inaugurates modern philosophy is the emergence of the concept of subject. The central theme of modern philosophy has not deviated much from that of ancient traditions. The

\textsuperscript{13} ibid, p.19
\textsuperscript{14} ibid, p.16
\textsuperscript{15} ibid, p.21
modern philosophical debates go around the notion of being. Traditional ontology treats human being as a sort of being among other beings. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces the notion of Dasein in order to replace all previous conceptions of human existence. According to Heidegger, Dasein is an entity looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing access to it. All these ways of behaving are constitutive of our inquiry, and therefore are modes of being of a particular entity, of the entity which we, the inquirers are ourselves. Thus to work out the question of being adequately, we must make an entity — the inquirer — transparent in his own being. The very asking of this question is an entity’s mode of being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about — namely, Being. This entity, which each of us is himself and which includes Being’s possibility of enquiry, we shall denote by the term ‘Dasein.’

In Descartes, ‘I’ becomes the privileged subject. The other things are determined in relation to the privileged subject. Objects get their meaning from their relation to the subject. In the Cartesian scheme, ‘things become essentially what stand as an other in relation to the subject.’ They are other than the subject and stand over and against the subject. In the Cartesian scheme, the fundamental otherness to the subject is never lost. The task of modern philosophy, according to Heidegger, is to overcome otherness and reduce it to the same.

For Heidegger, ontology is prior to epistemology. In every representation, the ‘I’ is also represented. Human consciousness is essentially self-consciousness. To represent some thing is ‘to represent it to oneself. The person who represents also represents himself in each act of representation. Thus ‘I’ becomes the subject of all representations. Simultaneously, it is an ever-present object. It too exists only in so far as it is present to a subject.

In this way, Heidegger restores to the ego the personal pronoun that Husserl had denied it. He is of the view that ego cannot be described without reference to its social and historic relations. Heidegger writes about this in *Being and Time*:

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17 Heidegger, 1988, pp.26-27
18 Carr, 1999, p.18
19 ibid, p.19
"Because Dasein has in each case mine ness, one must always use a personal pronoun when one address it, 'I am', 'you are.'"\textsuperscript{20}

The ego, for Heidegger, is fundamentally relational.\textsuperscript{21} In Heidegger, subjectivity is defined by a mode of existence that is inferior. It is inferior as it is involved with becoming. According to him, "spirit does not fall into time, but effective existence, in its fall, is thrown out of originary and authentic time."\textsuperscript{22} For Heidegger, to exist is to be temporalized. Time is not a characteristic of reality. It is the expression of the fact of being. Rather, it is the fact of being itself. It is the very dimension in which the existence of being comes out.\textsuperscript{23}

In Heidegger, finitude becomes very principle of subject's subjectivity.\textsuperscript{24} Heidegger's account of transcendence is intrinsically connected with his notion of finitude. The transcendence of Dasein, by relation to itself, will be based on the finitude of Dasein's existence. Heidegger opposes the opinion that representation of what is handled precedes the handling itself. Tools are the objects that Dasein reveals by a given mode of existence - handling. Handling determines not what tools are but the manner in which they encounter Dasein. The tool is not a specific entity. The structure of handlability is constituted by referral. A tool exists in relation with other tools. Its mode of being entails the totality of function in relation to which the tool exists. This is the crux of Heideggerian turn against representation. Levinas writes about Heidegger's principled move against representation:

The function itself is instrumental; the shoe exists in order to be worn; the watch in order to tell the time. The productive function makes use of something in view of something. What is handlable will refer back to materials. We thus discover nature, forests, metals etc. Nature discovered in this way is entirely relative to handling: these are the raw materials. We don't have a forest but wood. Finally function is not only in view of something, but also for some one.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{20} Heidegger, 1988, p.68
\textsuperscript{21} Batnitzky, Leora, 'Encountering the Modern Subject in Levinas,' French Yale studies, no.104, 2004, p.6
\textsuperscript{22} Heidegger, 1988, p.436
\textsuperscript{23} Levinas, 'Martin Heidegger and Ontology,' op.cit, p.13
\textsuperscript{24} ibid, p.18
\textsuperscript{25} ibid p.22
In brief, the tool's being is constituted by the totality of referrals. Handlability is the mode of being of the tool. It is not its property.

On the basis of his conception of Dasein, Heidegger dethrones the traditional conceptions of will. Moreover, he attacks the conception that concepts and propositions are the only way to structure an encounter with the world. Conceptual tools are secondary to Heidegger. They are not basic means for making things meaningful. He speaks about a more basic realm of meaning prior to propositions. The realm is Dasein's involvement in the world. Heidegger locates signification in affectivity and involvement.

**Subjectivity in Levinas**

For Levinas, identity is not wholly relational, but rather separable. The notion of self as a separable, independent self constitutes the thematic focus of *Totality and Infinity*. In contrast to Heidegger, Levinas is not ready to reduce self to a web of relations. Levinas has been influenced by Husserl's idea of a truly separable self. But, unlike Husserl's transcendental ego, Levinas's self is not a thinking self. The self is not one who represents itself to itself through thought. Rather, Levinas's self senses itself as itself by way of sensible experience. It is a self that senses itself as uniquely separated from being.

In *Existence and Existents*, Levinas states that existent has a relation to being across a separation. Similarly, its relation to world also involves 'an originary movement of separation.' According to Levinas, we are able to withdraw from the world in our relationship with it. A duality of biological life and metaphysical life indicates the structure of subjectivity. In *Totality and Infinity*, the idea of infinity implies the separation. Face-to-face explains the maintenance of a separated 'I.'

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26 Kolb, 1987, p.132  
27 Batnitzky, 2004, p.13  
28 Thomas, 2004, p.43  
29 Levinas, 2001 a, p.45  
30 Levinas, 1969, p.53  
31 ibid, p.68
Levinas says that world is an ensemble of nourishments, prior to being a system of tools. Levinas links enjoyment to a notion of separation of the subject from itself which occurs in everyday existence. In enjoyment, subject is emancipated from the anonymity of *il y a*.32 But subject remains engrossed to itself through its identity as an existent.

In *Existence and Existent* and *Time and the Other*, Levinas uses a notion of being in the world which entails a distance with respect to *il y a*. Hunger, thirst and essential possibility of their satisfaction interrupts *il y a*. In hypostasis, subject is irremissibly tied to itself.33 This is a relationship with everything that is necessary for being. In his early works, Levinas links enjoyment not only to being but also to light and knowledge. Light is the medium in which something is encountered across a distance. Intentionality is grounded in a subject, which finds everything necessary for its existence in the world. However, ‘I’ in the world has an inside and outside.34

Levinas argues that sensation is prior to objectivity. Sensibility gives access to a reality that reason cannot attain.35 He uses the term ‘surplus’ to denote this sense of the self. On the basis of the idea of ‘surplus’, Levinas analyzes the ways in which the ‘I’ separates from the world. For him, ‘I’ is a separate subject, which cannot be subsumed in to being or the objects of the world. Expanding Husserl’s notion of intentionality, Levinas defends the idea of a self that cannot be reduced to its thought about itself or to the relation that constitutes it. He agrees with Descartes in his conception that self as self is constituted by the world before it can constitute the world. There are more to the self than its representational capacity.36 The ‘I’ tends towards things. It withdraws from things simultaneously. According to Levinas, “one possesses existence, but is also possessed by it.”37

Levinas holds the view that self is responsible before anything else. Levinas speaks about a self which is passive before it is active. It is heteronomous.

32 Thomas, 2004, p.45
33 Levinas, 2001 a, pp.82-83
34 ibid, p.39
35 Levinas, 1969, pp.128-129
36 Batnitzky, 2004, p.15
37 Levinas, 2001 a, p.39
before it is autonomous. Levinas’s thinking about subjectivity goes back to 1940s and 1950s. Levinas discusses in detail the emergence of the self, and its situation in the world in his article *Time and the Other*. His account of responsibility and substitution in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* represents its culmination. Problematizing the modern philosophical tradition that asserts the primacy of subjectivity as the foundation of everything, Levinas conceives self as a constructed one. Levinasian self, writes Morgan, is not given as a matter of fact.\(^{38}\) Levinas’s conception of subjectivity is not primarily a response to modern philosophical tradition. In letter and spirit, it is a response to the post-structuralist and anti-humanist critiques of subjectivity.

For Levinas, the ‘I’ of the *cogito* is the self of Descartes. He finds a problem in Descartes’s conception of self. The self of Descartes is primarily a theoretical subject. Spinoza’s intervention further endowed the theoretical subject with emotional states and desires. Hume is also speaking about an enclosed self and an external separated world. Husserl’s intentionality ties consciousness to objects in a variety of ways. Heidegger’s project is also an attempt to comprehend the modes of embeddedness of the self in the world. Unlike Wittgenstein and Heidegger, Levinas is not speaking about a self, which is simply embedded in the world. Instead, he conceives a subject encountered by another person. Subjects exist in the world prior to face-to-face. Subject is in the world prior to its encounter with other.

Even though Levinasian self exists in the world and enjoys its resources prior to face-to-face encounter, he seems to endorse that there is no self in the true sense before face-to-face encounter. Levinas calls this *ipseity* of the self.\(^{39}\) According to Levinas, *ipseity* of the ‘I’ consists in remaining outside the distinction between the individual and the general.\(^{40}\) Levinas considers only subject as an existence. The ‘I’ frees itself from anonymous being and yet becomes bound to itself. It cares about itself. Self starts out in freedom; it then finds itself in need and with the task of satisfying those needs. Self finds

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\(^{38}\) Morgan, 2007, p.144  
\(^{39}\) Levinas, 1969, p.118  
\(^{40}\) ibid
sustenance for the body in the world. Prior to being a system of tools, the world is an ensemble of nourishment. Life is 'affectivity and sentiment.' To live is to be nourished by a variety of involvements and fulfillments. Levinas uses the term 'enjoyment' to refer to these involvements and fulfillments.

Levinas depicts self as being free, needful and enjoying the world. These are the three features of the self engaging with world. These features make human existence distinct from other existence. The 'I' emerges from pre-conceptual and pre-cognitive domain. However, 'I' composes itself to the everyday life of rules, regulations, culture and so on. In this context, Levinas discusses the notion of death, which he considers as a mystery. Death presents itself as an event in relation to which subject is no longer a subject. In death, 'we are in relation with something that is absolutely other.' Death is something that transcends the totality of everyday life. It is something that transcends the totality of natural life.

A being enters into relation with other persons by allowing its very self to be crushed by the other. Explaining the passivity of the subject before the face of the other persons, Levinas fixes his subject as free, needful and immersed joyfully in the world. However, he clarifies that self's encounter with the other is an asymmetrical relationship.

*Totality and Infinity* presents subjectivity as welcoming the other. Subjectivity is defined by the hospitality extended towards the other. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Being*, Levinas focuses on subjectivity with a new set of terms such as responsibility, substitution, hostage, obsession, proximity etc. Self is animated by responsibility. I am committed to the other person. He/She provokes the responsibility against my will. Self is hostage of the other. It substitutes for the other persons. Responsible self of Levinas replaces both the transcendental ego of Husserl and Kantian unity of apperception.

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41 ibid, p.115  
42 Morgan, 2007, p.152  
43 Levinas, 1989, p.40  
44 ibid, p.43  
45 Levinas, 1969, pp.215-16  
46 Levinas, 1991, p.11  
47 Morgan, 2007, p.159
In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas asserts that subjectivity is being affected by the proximity of the other. Proximity is the immediacy of the other. For Levinas, human subject is an inspired body. Commenting on Levinas's conception of subjectivity and transcendence, Peperzak writes:

Transcendence is no longer the ascent to a heaven of the ideal or the sublime but the humble endurance of everyday life, touched, affected, burdened, wounded, obsessed and exhausted. A human subject is an inspired body. It is moved by a breath that comes from an immemorial past. As respiration between this inspiration and the expiration of tiredness, old age, and death, a human life is breathing for others, the repetition of obedience to the Good's command. The Good itself can be neither chosen nor contemplated but can be loved only by accepting the responsibility for goodness in the world.48

The question of subjectivity plays a considerable role in the thematic development of his second magnum opus *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Here he upholds substitution as the subjectivity of the subject. Derrida is of the opinion that it is impossible to encounter an alter ego. The identification of the other as an intentional modification of constituting consciousness denies to the other its absolute alterity. Arguing in this way, Derrida addresses the basic project of Levinas. Derrida problematizes Levinasian subversion of ontology in the name of ethical.

Responding to Derridean critique, Levinas clearly demarcates the *saying* from the *said* in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. The *saying* is identified as the proximity of one to the other.49 One's responsibility for the other is not one's free choice. One is rather a hostage of the other before any choice could be made. The call to responsibility for the other substitutes one for the other. Proximity is an assignation of me by another. Levinas writes:

Responsibility for the other is not an accident that happens to a subject, but precedes essence in it, has not awaited freedom, in which a commitment to another would have been made. I have not

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48 Peperzak, 'Transcendence', in *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, op.cit, p.191
49 Chalier, 'The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and Hebraic Tradition', in *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, op.cit, p.5
done anything and I have always been under accusation – persecuted. The ipseity, in the passivity without arche characteristic of identity is hostage. The word I means here I am, answering for everything and for everyone.  

Derrida, following Husserl, argues that it is unavoidable that I am the other of the other provided the other is like me. Answering this contention, Levinas defines transcendence as 'a passing over to the other of being.' Substitution, as transcendence, points to the otherwise than being. Levinas writes: "In this most passive passivity, the self liberates ethically from every other and from itself. Its responsibility for the other signifies an opening in which being's essence is surpassed in inspiration."  

Explaining the dynamics of substitution, Levinas says that the restlessness of the self amounts to an other within the self. For Levinas, through substitution for others, the one self escapes relations. At the limit of passivity, the one self escapes passivity in the inevitable limitation that the terms within relation undergo. In the incomparable relationship of responsibility, the other no longer limits the same; it is supported by what it limits. Here, the overdetermination of the ontological categories is visible, which transform them into ethical terms. In this most passive passivity, the self liberates itself ethically from every other and from itself.  

Levinas speaks about sensibility, which does not constitute an experience at all and is not available for intentional analysis. Sensibility emerges from proximity, not from an intentional relationship. He defines sensibility as exposedness to the other. In his article 'Subjectivity as Anarchy', Levinas stresses on anarchy. For him, there is some thing before the beginning. For Levinas, "I am not my origin unto myself. I do not have my origin in myself." Here, he tries to contrasts ethics with intentionality and freedom. Subjectivity is irreducible to the transcendental consciousness that thematizes being. In that very sense, the other person is incommensurable. It never implies that the other person is beyond measure.

51 ibid, p.3  
52 ibid, p.119  
53 ibid, p.115  
54 Levinas, 2000, p.172
Levinas is of the view that signification does not necessarily imply thematization. Instead, signification is assignation of me by another. This assignation is extremely important. It is prior to every engagement and every beginning. This is a kind of obsession. Here, Levinas takes a position opposite to that of Fichte, who held that all that is in consciousness is posited there by consciousness. According to Levinas, all that is in consciousness is not posited by consciousness. One for the other signifies a heteronomy. In short, Levinasian anachronism entails disequilibrium of passivity and persecution.

Levinas recognizes the extent to which the subject is fundamental to the signification of the 'other than being.' As will become apparent, the understanding of this fundamental status remains rigorously opposed to that suggested by the insistence on subjectivity's transcendentality. 'Phenomenon and Enigma' is only an initial articulation of Levinas's reworking of these themes.

With 'substitution,' Levinas articulates a notion of subjectivity which exceeds the apparently transcendental character in the direction of the ethical. Levinas continued his rethinking of subjectivity in its relation to the transcendental features insisted upon by Derrida in 'Violence and Metaphysics.' The notion of substitution is, on the one hand, could be the result of Levinas's response to Derrida. Secondly, it implies his continued attention to the question of subjectivity. In substitution, Levinas remains faithful to the anarchy of passivity and idea of separation that his initial works uphold.

Levinas begins Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence on familiar territory, insisting on his own peculiar understanding of transcendence as a passing over to the other of being. In Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, the saying is identified with the approach of the other. For Levinas, "it is the proximity of one to the other, the commitment."

55 ibid, p.173
56 ibid, p.174
57 Levinas, 1991, pp.113-115
58 ibid, p.5
According to Levinas, the possibility and the necessity of signification are not located most originally at the level of the subject, at the level of the ego, but prior to it, with the approach of the other. Levinas locates the possibility of this uniqueness in the call to responsibility of the other. *Saying* is “a denuding, of the unqualifiable one, the pure *someone*, unique and chosen.” 59 The other calls me, in my singularity, taking me hostage and demanding my response. I am hostage because my responsibility for the other arises not from my free choice, but rather comes before any choice.

The notion of subjectivity as hostage is a reversal of the notion of autonomous subject. 60 The *saying* is a surrendering to the command of the other. It is primordial responsibility. Substitution signifies suffering for another in the form of expiation. In substitution, autonomous subject, is thus, deposited. 61 Self, from the start, is defeated by the other.

Subjectivity is not manifest in the freedom of my willing. It is located prior to freedom. It is located in the ineluctability of the other’s call. Levinas says that the infinite does not signal itself to subjectivity. In substitution, subject undoes essence by substituting itself for another. This assignation which is irreducible to consciousness is identified by Levinas, as obsession. 62 For Levinas, obsession signals the extent to which proximity breaks with the synchronic economy of pure relatedness.

Levinas says that the subject as a hostage has no beginning. Moreover, ‘it is not possible to synchronize the subjectivity.’ 63 Subject as a hostage refers to a past that was never present. This is an immemorial past of its pre-original affection by another. Subject of heteronomy cannot be assimilated to transcendental subjectivity. Levinas argues that ‘the *saying* strips subject right

59 ibid, p.50
60 Levinas, 2000, p.181
61 ibid
63 Levinas, 2000, p.162

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down to his passivity as a hostage. The saying signifies the relationship of responsibility with another.

Levinas connects the discussion of recurrence to the passivity and suffering of subject. The passivity is not to be understood in opposition to activity. He is invoking absolute passivity. For Levinas, "the most passive, unassumable, passivity, the subjectivity or the very subjection of the subject, is due to my being obsessed with responsibility for the oppressed who is other than myself." Thus, this absolute passivity is prior not only to the activity of consciousness, but also to the passivity and inertia of objects.

Levinas acknowledges the tradition of post-Husserlian phenomenology, with its insistence on the irreducibility of our embodiment. He maintains a difference between himself and this tradition. For Levinas, the body is not primarily the site of the dispersion. Levinas points to a notion of subjectivity which recognizes it as an effect of the irreversible relatedness of the other. He talks about the passivity of obsession. It is the assignation of responsibility.

Recurrence signifies a passion that the self undergoes on the hither side of freedom and possibility. This is a passion before consciousness and any of its claims. This undergoing is the self's substitution for the other. Levinas insists on the asymmetry of substitution. Here, Levinas seems to have articulated a notion of subjectivity which resists Derrida's insistence on subjectivity's transcendentality. For Levinas, subjectivity of the subject is a recurrence. Levinas further explains recurrence in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Recurrence, for Levinas, is not self-coinciding, rest, sleep or materiality. It is a recurrence on the side of oneself; prior to indifference to itself. It is the substitution for the other. In the interval, it is the one without attributes, and not even the unity of the one doubles it up as an essential attribute.

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64 ibid, p.161
65 Levinas, 1991, p.55
66 ibid, p.112
67 ibid, p.146
Levinas deviates from the tradition of rational subjectivity that began with Descartes. But Levinas is not entirely free from the horizon of Cartesianism. He still keeps the view that knowing takes place always within the context of intersubjective relation. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas shows the way in which I' separates itself from the world in the surplus produced by sensibility. Following Descartes, Levinas asserts that 'I' is a separable subject that cannot be subsumed into being.

Levinas seeks to extent Husserl’s notion of intentionality to explain the dynamics of a self that cannot be reduced to its thought about itself. Levinas, in his attempt, applies certain correction on Husserl’s view on Descartes. For Levinas, Husserl was wrong in criticizing Descartes for conceiving ego as carrying with it a residual of the world. He identifies with Descartes’s conception of a self which is constituted as self by the world before it constitutes the world.

Sensibility, for Levinas, is the receptive capacity of the self to bear the world. Drawing inspiration from Cartesian insights, Levinas recognizes the limit of Husserlian intentionality. Levinas says that self senses itself as a separate, isolated self in a non-cognitive way. Levinas upholds that Descartes’s notion of sensibility and its relation to infinity show the way to understand a true transcendence. While describing substitution and ethical relation in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas argues for other’s authority over me and for my separable self.

**Intersubjectivity**

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas places 'face-to-face' as the phenomenological site of his challenge to traditional concepts of intersubjectivity. Heidegger too recognized Dasein’s pre-theoretical involvement in the world. Heidegger’s response to Husserl’s Cartesianism simply implies that self is never

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68 Batnitzky, 2006, p.38
69 ibid
70 ibid, p.40
71 ibid, p.41
Dasens's being is being-in-the-world. To be a self is to be in a relationship with other. Intersubjective world is prior to the subject. The face-to-face, in Levinas, is a relation between self and other which is, at the same time, an absolute separation. The other by its very nature cannot be comprehended. The other remains infinitely foreign. It presents itself only as revelation. The other considered as epiphany or revelation does not compromise its alterity.

Bettina Bergo observes that there are two approaches to the study of intersubjectivity in Levinas. These approaches are the approach of a transcendental constitution and the approach of a dialogical one. These two approaches are intertwined in Levinas's conception of intersubjectivity.

Levinas interprets Buber's philosophy of dialogue and develops his notion of intersubjectivity on the basis of transcendental approach. The I-Thou, unlike the I-It, is the establishment of a relation, not the internalization of otherness. However, Buber's dialogicalism is ontology of I-Thou. In I-Thou relation, the 'I' is not ontologically prior to the intersubjective relation. The central concept in I and Thou is therefore not a single transcendental subject. It focuses rather on the terrain of meeting of I and Thou. What is primary in I-Thou relation is the reciprocal relation between subjects. For Levinas, this reciprocal relation is formal.

Levinas further analyzes I-Thou reciprocity. The 'I' comes into contact with himself only through the Thou. The reciprocal relation of I-Thou does not allow for an 'I' or an other beyond the determining confines of the reciprocal relation. For Buber, the 'I' cannot be discussed in separation from the Thou or the It. Levinas dissociates himself from Buber's over-emphasis on relation that does not allow any separation of I and Thou.

According to Levinas, face is the site of the subject's encounter with the infinite. Totality and Infinity tries to establish the immediacy of the other independent of

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72 Levinas, 1969, p.68
74 Levinas, 1969, p.194
75 Bergo, 1999, p.83
76 Levinas, 1969, p.68
dialogue. Levinas avoids the symmetry and the intentionality of Buber's I-Thou relation in establishing the infinity of the other.\textsuperscript{77} He maintains this absolute separation of 'I' and other. The face-to-face maintains the other's immediacy and its separation simultaneously.

According to Levinas, the 'I' is always prior to any relation to other. It can go out of itself and engage with the other. Before there can be an acknowledgment of the other, it engages with the other as a separate entity. Fichte is considered as the pinnacle of the philosophy of the same. Fichte is advocating a philosophy that reduces the other to something merely posited by consciousness.

On the contrary, phenomenological analysis of face-to-face relation attempts to escape from dichotomy. Self and other cannot be contained in the fashion of a transcendental conception of subjecthood. For Levinas, "the way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face."\textsuperscript{78} Language can only deal with the face as mediated immediacy. The face, however, is primary, "a coinciding of the expressed with him who expresses."\textsuperscript{79} Language always reflects the as structure of comprehension. According Levinas, language can only be disclosure, not revelation.\textsuperscript{80} But, the immediate is the face-to-face.\textsuperscript{81} He employs the word proximity in \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence} to refer to the immediacy of the face.

The essentially mediated nature of language is very important as far as the notion of intersubjectivity is concerned. The other construed as face will always exceed its expression. The actual ethical counter-point to ontology proceeds phenomenologically through the lived experience of the face-to-face. Throughout \textit{Totality and Infinity}, Levinas appeals to experience as evidence for his conception of the face as revelation. The immediacy of the other exceeds mere conceptual contextualization.

\textsuperscript{77} ibid, p.40
\textsuperscript{78} ibid, p.50
\textsuperscript{79} ibid, p.66
\textsuperscript{80} ibid
\textsuperscript{81} ibid, p.52
Similarly, the intersubjective relation is a sort of non-relation in practice, but a relation nevertheless in the *saying*. The face-to-face encounter is unable to be subsumed as a single relation. According to Levinas, the face-to-face announces a society. At the same time, it entails a separated ‘I’.\textsuperscript{82} The self-other relation must be considered as a plurality of infinite subjects, not a ‘We’. Before there is a ‘We’, there is a plurality. It is important to note that these subjects so conceived are not complete and self-identical. For Levinas, ‘I’ relates to the other who is not simply a part of a whole, nor a singular instance of a concept.\textsuperscript{83}

*Otherwise than Being* deals with the notion of responsibility in its various guises, such as vulnerability and sensibility. It also demonstrates the insufficiency of the self-identical ego.\textsuperscript{84} The openness to the other is the very core of Levinasian conception of intersubjectivity. Susceptibility to the other is the primary structure of subjectivity. Self-identity is dislocated from the centre of meaning determination that it had achieved in the transcendental tradition. The relation to the other, rather than being intentional or reciprocally intersubjective, is asymmetric. Thus, Levinasian intersubjectivity distances itself from both the dialogical tradition and the transcendental tradition.

In brief, Levinas doesn’t believe in the synthesis of same and the other. There cannot be a determined synthesis of ‘I’ and other.\textsuperscript{85} There is rather a multiplicity of absolutely separate and infinitely constituted subjects. The intersubjective relation is irreducible to the distance of the synthetic activity of the understanding.

According to Levinas, the relation with transcendency situates all intersubjectivity in a discursive relationship. Human language arises because of the ethical relation with the other. *Totality and Infinity* treats language as a primordial expression of intersubjectivity. On the other hand, Buber’s I-Thou relationship is framed upon speechless intimacy. Hence, I-Thou relationship is

\textsuperscript{82} ibid, p.68  
\textsuperscript{83} ibid  
\textsuperscript{84} Levinas, 1991, p.106  
\textsuperscript{85} Levinas, 1969, p.39
insufficiently intersubjective. Levinas seems ‘to locate the root of intersubjectivity not in love but in the dialogue arising from the ‘I’s apology.’

Along with the discussion of intersubjectivity, Levinas addresses the question of Eros also. Love entails transcendence. But the transcendence of love differs from the transcendence of ethical election. There is an ambiguity in his account of Eros. The ethical relationship is a relationship of dialogue. Language in Eros is ethical and sub-ethical. It is not a dialogue. But it entails an opening that renders a dialogue. A relationship without-speech is in the process of becoming ethical. Saying, in erotic relationship, is also the moment of caress. The distinction between the saying and the said is entirely removed from its context in the erotic relationship. The two moments of the saying and the said are extended to the ethical relationship. In erotic relationship, transcendence is experienced within immanence.

Similarly, Levinas describes the transubstantiation of the subject. Levinas compares the birth of a son with the approach of the other. Paternity allows us a non-erotic relation with the other. In the case of a son, biological converges with ethical. Paternity offers a moment that renders a relation with absolute future. It is a triumph over death.

**Notion of il y a**

*Il y a* (literally, ‘there is’) is the anonymous and impersonal existence without an existent. It is the existing or being, prior to the emergence of unique existents. *Il y a* is significant aspect of Levinasian notion of a separated ‘I’ and other. According to Levinas, *il y a* is not that which remains resistant to the system. Instead, *Il y a* is the anonymity of the system. *Il y a* resists the subjective attempt to sink into the essence it thematizes. Through the notion of *Il y a*, Levinas addresses a major disturbance to the sense of an ego that is already conceiving itself in the said as a being among beings.

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86 Bergo, 1999, p.111
87 ibid, p.118
88 ibid, p.122
89 Morgan, 2007, p.152
While going beyond the ontological tradition, Levinas speaks about the overflowing of sense by the non-sense. *Il y a* is the non-sense in which essence turns.\(^\text{90}\) *Il y a* implies a chaotic conditionality prior to conscious being that will not be subsumed by the attempt of the subject to sink into the essence it thematizes. The subject finds its absolute separation from any sense conferred upon it. Through the conception *il y a*, Levinas maintains the separation of subject and being. According to Levinas,

*there is* transcends inwardness as well as exteriority; it does not even make it possible to distinguish these. The anonymous current of being invades, submerges every subject, person or thing.\(^\text{91}\)

*Il y a* points to the dimension of a completely contourless and precarious proto-world.\(^\text{92}\) It receives a meaning from our involvement in the elemental. Our involvement transforms the chaos into a meaningful world. Levinas holds the view that all the meaning-giving acts are embedded in a world that infinitely exceeds those attempts. In other words, the moment of passivity overflows the subject’s attempt to fix it in the *said*. This leaves a possibility to save the subject from being absorbed in to the totality of history, institutions and judgments.

*Il y a* represents the phenomenon of absolutely impersonal being. *‘There is’* posits the simple fact of being without objects. A subject, from out of the neuter, will affirm and posit himself. Subject emerges out of the all-encompassing presence of anonymity. The eruption of the being starts with the recognition of things. There is also a stage of enjoyment of life. But human will fail to suffice unto itself at this stage. In the next stage, desire is transformed into an attitude of openness to exteriority.

Levinas considers being as a horizon of a continuous, indefinable being out of which the subject emerges. Ontology addresses the relation between beings and the human beings. *Il y a* is not a mediation. It is pure and indeterminate positivity. For Levinas, *‘Il y a is above contradiction. It embraces and dominates*

\(^{90}\) Levinas, 1991, p.163
\(^{91}\) Levinas, 2001 a, p.52
\(^{92}\) Peperzak, 1997, p.196
its contradiction.\footnote{Levinas, 1989, p.35} To be conscious is to be torn away from \textit{il y a}. The existence of a consciousness implies the constitution of subjectivity.\footnote{ibid, p.32}

The notion of \textit{il y a} leads us to the absence of subjectivity, absence of God, and to the absence of any being.\footnote{ibid, p.40} For Levinas, \textit{il y a}, existing without existent, is anonymous. It is impersonal existing before the constitution of the human subject. At this stage, there is no consciousness to experience this paradoxical stage of existence. Consciousness should be understood as hypostasis. Hypostasis is an event by which something as yet unidentifiable acquires separate existence. In this account, consciousness, along with subjectivity and identity, is secondary, emerging from \textit{il y a} rather than pre-existing it. In other words, existence, in Levinas, is not synonymous with the relationship with the world.\footnote{ibid, p.40} On the other hand, ‘traditional ontology approaches existence through world.’\footnote{ibid, p.40}

For Levinas, \textit{il y a} admits no ‘I’. It is impersonal. It is without subjectivity. In horror, a subject is stripped of its subjectivity. The power to have a private existence is annihilated to the core. The subject is depersonalized. Existentialist thinkers, especially Sartre, speak about nausea. But nausea is not depersonalization. The pure nothingness revealed by anxiety in Heidegger’s analysis does not constitute a condition like \textit{il y a}. Horror only turns the subjectivity of the subject inside out.\footnote{Levinas, 2001a, p.55} According to John Llewelyn,

Levinas insists that there is no scope of evading the there-is. This does not mean that the there-is is all there is, that there is nothing for which one may hope, or nothing, non-being, to fear. Being is the the first and last motivation of fear, and this is fear of, rather than, as for Heidegger, fear-for.\footnote{Llewelyn, 1995, p.23}

Bettina Bergo says that there is no real transcendence in the experience of the \textit{il y a}.\footnote{Bergo, 1999, p.63} Contingency of \textit{il y a} intersects being and our experience of being. Irruption of \textit{il y a} as a pure difference is analogous to the passivity of the self.
when it is confronted by other. Structurally, the transcendence towards the human other is similar to the transcendence towards participation in il y a. But Levinas speaks of true transcendence only in regard to the relation with the other.

Hypostasis

Levinas introduces the notion of hypostasis in order to defend his position on subjectivity. Hypostasis was the thematic focus of his first book *Existents and Existence*.

According to Levinas, human beings are not shaped by history. History itself is made by what it cannot contain. Obviously human beings are part of history. They may willingly or unwillingly contribute to history.

According to Levinas, his predecessors like Spinoza, Hegel and Heidegger consider subject as the function of some essence. There is a general tendency in all of them to reduce subjectivity to some essence. In contrast to this general tendency, Levinas's theoretical endeavour is foregrounded in a separation between subject and being. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, he rearticulates this separation by introducing a distinction between the *saying* and the *said*. He doesn’t consider ontology as invalid. But he speaks about non-ontological categories such as sensibility, saying, vulnerability etc in order to explain his radical position. His conception of hypostasis anticipates the core of his philosophical project.

Hypostasis is ‘the means by which the self assumes this self-reflective and self-determining form.’ Self is anonymous and indeterminate. It is striving to become conscious and present to itself. The term *il y a* refers to the anonymous and impersonal state of existence. It encompasses things and consciousness. The process of hypostasis involves becoming something from mere existence. In other words, hypostasis is the event whereby an indeterminate being in

101 ibid
102 Hutchens, 2004, p.42
103 ibid, p.43
104 Levinas, 2001 a, p.61
anonymous existence becomes a unique and present self. By hypostasis anonymous being loses its there is character.\textsuperscript{105}

Levinas links his notions of il y a and time to explain the phenomenon of 'I'. Il y a is a stage of existing prior to the sense of self. This stage of existing is prior to any kind of time. Hypostasis is the taking up of existence by the existents. In the event of hypostasis, existing becomes an attribute.\textsuperscript{106} With existence as an existent, the existent sets to form a sense of self. Hypostasis is an event in which everything is immediately present to the existent.\textsuperscript{107}

Levinas finds a fault in philosophers as they tend to recognize 'I' as a substance. But, for Levinas, 'I' is only a means of locating ever present now of hypostasis. David R. Fryer observes that "the 'I' still has no time, and thus no subjectivity. Simply calling the existent 'I' is not to give it substance; the 'I' that is speaking its word, rather, does not in actuality exist. If 'I' is an attribute, then we are again confronted with another question, an attribute of what (or whom?)"\textsuperscript{108}

Addressing this question, Levinas upholds that the process of hypostasis involves being as an existent from existence. The self's solitude consists in the unity of existent and its work of existing. Hypostasis is the emergence of the uniqueness of the self. It comes to protrude from anonymity as an existent It strives to escape the anonymity of there is (il y a).\textsuperscript{109} Self acquires consciousness, which is specific and localized. It evolves itself through the subjective experiences of the consciousness.

Levinas further explains that the self divides into subject of thinking and a psyche upon which it reflects consciously. Hypostasis really doubles up the self. It always reflects upon itself in an unchanging way.\textsuperscript{110} On the other hand, what it is conscious of undergoes changes. In brief, self is in a flux, but never loses itself in

\textsuperscript{105} ibid, p.83
\textsuperscript{106} Fryer, 2004, p.34
\textsuperscript{107} ibid
\textsuperscript{108} ibid, p.35
\textsuperscript{109} Hutchens, 2004, p.44
\textsuperscript{110} Levinas, 1991, p.164
flux. Summarizing the hypostatic process in six stages, Benjamin C. Hutchens writes:

In conclusion, it might be helpful to summarize the entire process in six stages. First, the anonymously existing self recoils in horror from its own anonymity in which it neither reflects up on itself nor posits itself as any object. Second, in taking itself as a determinate object, as a self, it hypostasizes into a determined object upon which it reflects in order to identify itself. Third, in its attempt to detach itself from this objectivity, to free itself from merely existing, it is incessantly backed up against its own anonymity, where in it is invariably alone and vulnerable. Fourth, in its isolation with itself, in the vulnerability which haunts the action of reflection upon itself in its precarious hold on the determination of itself, it is betrayed by its own physical and psychical nature. Fifth, upon the entry of the other person into its insular self-sufficiency, what little reflective security attained disintegrates. Sixth, the movement to hypostasize as a reflective, active and powerful agent is uninterrupted or suspended by the entry of the other person and the formation of a face to face relationship. 111

Hypostasis shifts the subject of anonymity to the subject of responsibility. According to Levinas, existence is a burden to overcome. It is not a fate to be resolutely carried out as Heidegger conceived it. An ethical subject evades the anonymous rumbling of being. By responding to the other, subjectivity is torn away from the anonymity of there is. It is through the saying that subject is brought into being. 112

Subject that arises in the hypostasis is not a simple noun or substantive. It obviously becomes noun or substantive through the syntax. In Existence and Existents, Levinas explains this position. Hypostasis signifies the suspension of the anonymous there is. 113 According to Levinas, “consciousness, position, the present, the I are not initially – although they are finally – existents. They are the events by which the unnamable verb to be turns in to a substantive.” 114

Hypostasis is not simply the intentional act of subject. On the other hand, subjectivity is the result of the face-to-face encounter with the other person.

111 Hutchens, 2004, p.45
113 Levinas, 2001 a, p.83
114 ibid.
Levinas describes the origin of the subject not directly as an ecstasy towards the world and as ontological concern, but first and foremost as hypostasis.

**Eschatology and History**

Levinas introduces the notion of eschatology in the preface of *Totality and Infinity*. The ideas expressed on eschatology in *Totality and Infinity* can be seen as the development of the philosophical theme already present in *Time and the Other*. According to Levinas, the structure of the relation between history and eschatology is like that of the relation between subject and absolute other. They are bound to each other, despite their relation being paradoxical.

Levinas asserts that philosophy is virtually synonymous with idealism. Idealism assimilates every other to the same. It suppresses multiplicity. According to Levinas, idealism brings in an order from which no one can keep his distance. It embraces the realm of totality. Surpassing the claims of totality, Levinas discusses his notion of diachronic time. It is foregrounded in his eschatological claims. According to Levinas, ‘mortal existence flows in a dimension of its own. Interiority institutes an order that is different from historical time.’ Memories will operate as eschatology. Memory, as the inversion of historical time, is the essence of interiority.

Works and social facts constitute the realm of universal history. The time of anteriority, which is inverted, entails the possibility of a continuous break with the time of social facts and works. The time of history is continuous. Levinas finds a problem with the time of works and social facts. The works escape the intention and meaning of their authors. Levinas inverts the historical time by invoking the question of interiority. Interiority implies the continuous acts of possible break.

For Levinas, eschatology is a relationship with a surplus always exterior to the totality. It does not entail telos. Hegelian philosophy of history conceives

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115 Levinas, 1969, p.21
116 ibid, p.55
117 ibid, p.56
totality in terms of past, present and future. On the other hand, Levinas speaks about the transcendence of eschatology.\textsuperscript{118} He wants to lay emphasis on the fact that beings have an identity before the fullness of time. They have an identity before the accomplishment of history.\textsuperscript{119} In the eschatological point of view, each moment is in absolute relation to eternity. No moment is mediated by the history. Beings are not mere manifestations of the essence. Levinas introduces the concept of infinity to express the transcendence with respect to totality.

Beings do not receive meaning from totality of which they are manifestations. Eschatological draws beings out of the jurisdiction of history.\textsuperscript{120} The beings exist by themselves. They exist on the basis of their actions. For Levinas, eschatological relation doesn’t break the relation to the totality altogether. But, on the other hand, eschatological relation is capable of making an excessive relation to being. In Totality and Infinity, he writes that the eschatological transcendence makes possible existents that can speak rather than lending their lips to an anonymous essence utterance of history. It does not envisage the end of history within being understood as a totality, but institutes a relation with being which exceeds totality.\textsuperscript{121}

Levinas is of the opinion that any view of history that presupposes progress is foregrounded in misperception of time. Philosophers like Kant and Hegel upheld the progressive view of history. For them, autonomous self’s consciousness of time is primary. Husserl is also following a line similar to that of Kant and Hegel. On the contrary, Levinas views time as a work of face-to-face relationship. For Rosenzweig, revelation is the divine command. Revelation anticipates a political project to redeem the world through love.\textsuperscript{122} Face-to-face, in Levinas, implies a similar sense of obligation for others. Our experience of time takes on meaning only in the face-to-face relation. According to Rosenzweig, God says that each life is valuable. This is revelation. Levinas links revelation with election. The location of this election is the face of the other person.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} Caygill, 2002, p.106
\item \textsuperscript{119} Levinas, 1969, p.23
\item \textsuperscript{120} ibid
\item \textsuperscript{121} ibid
\item \textsuperscript{122} Morgan, 2007, p.214
\end{itemize}
Eschatological invokes being to their full responsibility. Eschatology involves a life lived in compassion and concern for other. Levinas, like Rosenzweig, rejects a linear notion of time. For him, ‘teleology conceives human experiences and history as a whole.’ For Levinas, judgment of God gives human experience, time and history a meaning. Each is elected. Each person is under the judgment. This is call of justice. It transforms ordinary subjects into ethical subjects. Thus Levinasian eschatological vision brings in an alternate conception of the political.

Time is always being ruptured by the consciousness of events we cannot predict or remember. We remain conscious of duration of time across this rupture. Levinas strongly places his argument that there is no synchronous principle by which the self can master time. Self experiences many divergent facets of time. According to Levinas, “to represent is not to reduce a past fact to an actual image but to reduce to the instantaneousness of thought everything that seems independent of it; it is in this that representation is constitutive.”

In brief, Levinas wants to assert that ‘I’ is not engulfed in universal history. The separated being maintains itself in existence all by itself. Thus memory, at least a certain memory, will operate as eschatology. It bestows to each instant its full significance in that very instant. Memories of servitude and estrangement are inseparable from radical separation and interiority. They do not function to constitute the moments of universal history. It estranges the subject from that history which engulfs it. It is in this sense that memory is the inversion of historical time. Memory is older than what can be captured by universal history or ontology. Thus, for Levinas, ‘eschatological is the beyond of history.’ The absolutely separate and singular interiority entails a relation across an absolute distance. Levinas takes up the challenge to develop a relation of subjectivity to history, both theoretical and practical. At the same time, he retains

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123 Levinas, 1969, p.23
124 Morgan, 2007, p.217
125 Levinas, 1969, p.127
126 ibid, p.58
127 ibid, p.23
an absolute separation of the subject. Levinas elaborates distinction between ethics and ontology in terms of the contrast between the synchronizable time and the time of diachrony. Synchronizable time is assumed by the historical memory. Historical memory belongs to the ontological realm. The diachrony of the ethical relation is realm of responsibility.