CHAPTER 3

THE SAYING AND THE SAID: A PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
Philosophy of Language: An Introduction

The notion of meaning was central to the tradition of Anglo-American analytic philosophy. It was central to both neo-Kantianism and phenomenology. There is a long tradition from Plato to Husserl and Frege according to which the phonetic language is the phenomenal exteriorization of a language of thought. There is a correlation between the act of intending and the object intended. Husserl explains this on the basis of the noetic-noematic separation. Husserl maintains that the foundation of meaning is intending. For Levinas, the correlation of the saying and the said is an instance of the correlation of mental intending and the object intended.¹

Philosophers have laboured for centuries to explain what language in general could be. Often they took the common characteristics true for all languages. It is normally assumed that words i.e. verbal expressions materialize thought. Wittgenstein’s ‘picture theory’ of meaning could be the best instance of the actualization of this assumption. Verbal expression represents reality. Hence, the speech acts remained central to the analysis for a long time, from antiquity to contemporary time. Joseph J. Kocklemans, in his work On Heidegger and Language, quotes Aristotle:

Spoken words are the signs of soul’s experiences, and written words are the signs of the spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds; but the soul’s experiences, which they immediately signify, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images.²

19th century philosophers were keenly interested in explaining the evolution of language. Analytic tradition flourished in a post-Hegelian scenario. Wittgenstein’s ‘language games’ represent the culmination of a movement that made philosophy linguistic. Saussure, taking another turn, separated the diachronic from the synchronic. Distinguishing between langue and parole, Saussure showed how the units of a linguistic system signify on the basis of the

combinatorial differences between them. The units of a linguistic system do not stand independently for the objects signified. According to Saussure, a sign comprises two separable components; a phonetic or graphic signifier and a signified concept.\(^3\)

In Levinas, signification is without horizon. In contrast to the method of structural semiotics in which the components owe their meaning to their internal relations, Levinas takes the word ‘signifier’ and applies it to the speaker. *Saying* itself is the signification. Signification normally transcends the limits of culture and language. The *saying* is prior to all historical language.\(^4\)

Later Wittgenstein takes language as an activity. Life is interwoven into it. Language cannot be reduced to the means of communication. For him, language is constitutive of all human experience. Reality is not merely a linguistic construction. But, essence, for Wittgenstein, is expressed by and through grammar.\(^5\) He also shares the idea that language is essentially social. He denies the possibility of a private language.

Unlike Rousseau, Humboldt and Herder, Levinas does not see language as a survival mechanism. Similarly, language is not a terrain of conflict also. It is rather oriented in a need to move from particular to the universal. It is a move from pre-conceptual face-to-face to sociality. For Levinas, language and thought are social. He means it in a very deeper sense. Face-to-face is the hidden line of day to day life. The language of everyday is different from the language of face-to-face.

Levinas looks at thinkers such as Lacan, Althusser, Levi-Strauss and Foucault as anti-modernists.\(^6\) But they more or less identify humanism with the idea that human being is first and foremost the author of his acts. Kant is the

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\(^{3}\) Llewelyn, 'Levinas and Language', op.cit, p.119
\(^{4}\) ibid p.120
\(^{5}\) Werhane, P.H, 'Levinas's Ethics: A Normative Perspective without Metaethical Constraints', in *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, op.cit, p.61
\(^{6}\) Levinas, 1991, p.127
pioneer of such an idea. Sartre too upholds the humanism of the first person singular. Levinas, like Sartre, is of the view that existentialism is also humanism.\footnote{Llewelyn, 'Levinas and Language', op.cit, p.121}

For Heidegger, 'Dasein’s being in the world is its being in language and discourse.'\footnote{ibid, p.122} Language is not a competence possessed by the human beings. On the other hand, Dasein, in its essence, is the place where language speaks. For Levinas, my possession by the human beings who speaks to me is prior to my being possessed by language.\footnote{ibid, p.123} Disagreeing with Heidegger, Levinas upholds the view that human other breaks into the house of being.

For Lacan, on the other hand, linguistic order is an end in itself. It is a site of conformity and resistance. Lacan’s subject refuses to be a unified subject. The linguistic is primarily a symbolic order for Lacan. It is the order of meaning and significance. According to Levinas, linguistic has a special relation to the ontological. It is the special relationship to Being. Levinas conceives the resistance of the subject to the linguistic as a resistance of the singular in the face of the universal.\footnote{Fryer, 2004, p.116} It is a resistance of the one for the other. Levinas replaces earlier conception of one and the other as parts of the whole.

In Levinas, speech itself is split into the saying and the said. This occurs on account of the diachrony of speaking. The diachrony of saying goes beyond the synchrony of the things being said.\footnote{Waldenfels, Bernhard, ‘Levinas on the Saying and the Said’, in Addressing Levinas, op.cit, p. 86} In Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, Levinas speaks of the correlation of the saying and the said. He says that the saying is reduced to a said within the linguistic system and within ontology. For him, the saying precedes the verbal signs that connect it.

In speech acts, the process of saying takes place neither inside nor outside language.\footnote{ibid, p.87} The act as such is not included in the propositional content. However, it is part of what is said. In a similar fashion, Emile Benveniste states that
instances of discourse transform language into discourse. Similarly, Karl Buhler argues that the field of symbols is anchored in a field of pointing.\textsuperscript{13}

Oswald Ducrot in his book \textit{The Saying and the Said} conveys the distinction between the two in almost similar terms. For him, the distinction between the saying and the said is an occurrence that doesn’t simply lie outside the field of linguistics.\textsuperscript{14} Speaking does not only depend on linguistic order. It is also embedded in certain traditions, idioms and institutional texts. Being born into a world means being already spoken.

The goal of deconstruction is to locate a point of otherness within logocentric and philosophical conceptuality.\textsuperscript{15} It seeks to explore a moment of alterity within a text. It is openness towards the other. Deconstruction, like ethical \textit{saying}, keeps open a dimension of alterity which can be reduced. Deconstruction is particularly ‘the deconstruction of a text as it writes of a margin that cannot be represented by philosophy.’\textsuperscript{16}

Deconstruction employs a \textit{closural} reading. \textit{Closural} reading disrupts the text’s claim to comprehensive unity. Levinas upholds deconstruction since it involves the ethical \textit{saying} of a text that supersedes its ontological said.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Phenomenology and Language}

Phenomenology sought to find a meaning in what is not cognitive. A sentiment, an act, or a decision also has a meaning. Husserlian phenomenology expressed this in stating that these psychological states are also intentions.\textsuperscript{18} Every sentiment is already a sentiment of something sensed. Intentionality thus signified an outside, but one that always preserved cognitive character.

\textsuperscript{13} ibid
\textsuperscript{14} ibid, p. 91
\textsuperscript{15} Critchley, 1992, p.29
\textsuperscript{16} ibid
\textsuperscript{17} ibid, p.30
\textsuperscript{18} Levinas, 2000, p.186
The greater part of Husserl's philosophy of language can be traced in *Logical Investigations*. He had earlier mentioned language in *Philosophy of Arithmetic* and *On the Logic of Signs*, which is also an early manuscript.

First of all, Husserl distinguishes between indicative sign and expressions. For Husserl, expression is as meaningful as a geometrical figure. Indication refers to (indicative) signs which could never be objective.¹⁹ Both are fundamentally differentiated on the basis of their authentic and contingent states of affairs in relation to meaning. With regard to meaning, expressions belong to authentic states of affairs. Indicative signs belong to contingent states of affairs.

Expressions are objects employed to carry a meaning. All expressions are signs, but not all signs are expressions. Husserl prefers to call the referents of expressions objectivities rather than objects.²⁰ This is further explained in terms of *noetic-noematic* separation. Every expression has a meaning. It refers to certain objects. However, the objects never coincide with meanings. For instance, expressions with different meaning can refer to the same object.²¹ According to Husserl, all declarative sentences do have referents. They refer to states of affairs. But different propositions may refer to the same state of affairs. Every expression intimates something. It means or rather designates something.

A physical sign, spoken or written, occurs in conjunction with certain mental acts of the utterer. In Husserl, the link between meaning and mental is very intimate. It is not that meanings are mental. Rather, meanings are the abstract kinds or species of something mental: Husserl wants to categorically place the idea that the relation between meaning and the mental is not the external one of grasping. Here, Husserl differs from Frege and Bolzano.²² He takes his theory of meaning 'into the broad arena of the theory of the intentionality of the mental.'²³

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¹⁹ Critchley, 1992, pp.171-72
²¹ ibid, p.111
²² ibid, p.113
²³ ibid, p.114
Similarly, Husserl conceives language as subservient to scientific thought. He invents its model in the highest degree of scientific objectivity. It is premised on logical prediction. Husserl argues that it is the expressive relation to an object that alone makes meaningful language. Language needs to have its own rules and objectives. Expression cannot be detached from the immediacy of a self-present consciousness. Only a self-present consciousness indicates the presence of the present.

Husserlian ‘kerygma’ entails an act of identification as a primary movement of meaning. This identification is presupposed in any predicative act.24 Husserl recognizes the importance of affectivity. But he subordinates it to intentional consciousness. Husserl subordinates everything to meaning-giving act.25 In *Lectures on the Theory of Meaning*, Husserl pitches his arguments on the distinction between *noema* and *noesis*.

**Language in Heidegger**

Heidegger’s approach transforms Husserl’s basic insights about meaning and intentionality. Heidegger strives to restore the lived and experiential dimension of meaning. In Heidegger, there is a phenomenological reduction from beings to Being and to meaning.26

In his article ‘On the Way to Language’, Heidegger conceives the world as a domain of meaning. Human beings take cognizance of the meaning there. Heidegger rejects the possibility of meaning-giving act. Meaning is already there. Man merely represents the pre-given meaning in speech. Hence, man’s consciousness is the exclusive source of meaning.

His conception is foregrounded in the premise that ‘consciousness projects meaning outside itself in things in an active way.’27 Merleau Ponty slightly

24 Thomas, 2004, p.134
25 ibid, p.137
27 Kockelmans, 1972, p.10
deviates from Heidegger’s stand. He is of the opinion that it is not consciousness, but man’s existence itself is the source of all meaning. For him, man’s existence, not only in his reflexive conscious activities, but primarily in his non-reflexively conscious and preconscious activities, is the source of all meaning.

According to Heidegger, man is essentially related to a determinate and concrete being or to a determinate group of things. A certain whole is given in the primordial praxis. Each concrete thing is meaningful in the primordial praxis. The world is the whole of relationships. Things mutually refer to one another and manifest themselves as meaningful.28

Dasein’s being is being-in-the-world. Man is a being thrown. But one’s engagement with things presupposes a primordial praxis or primordial understanding of the world. One’s mood is in every way linked to the primordial praxis. In other words, his mood depends upon the modalities of participation which he always has with things in the world as being in the world.

Heidegger is of the opinion that our primordial understanding structures each thing as this or that. Meaning is therefore the intentional correlate of disclosedness. Heidegger considers enunciation as a derivative of primary understanding. But, according to him, meaning cannot be defined as that which is found in the enunciation along with the enunciating act. Enunciation, in Heidegger’s conceptual repertoire, means showing.30 That which is articulated in this explanation and thus was pre-delineated in the original thinking as something articulable is what we call meaning.

Enunciation also means attributing. Subject is determined by a predicate. In other words, a predicate is attributed to a subject. That which is enunciated is not a predicate but the things itself. Finally, for Heidegger, enunciating means communicating. In man’s existence, his being is disclosed to him. He himself discloses ‘the there’ of his being-there. Heidegger speaks of time as the horizon of

28 ibid, p.12
29 ibid, p.13
30 ibid, p.18
the understanding of being. Heidegger's stand on language is invariably linked to his notion of temporality.  

Heidegger conceives language as one manifestation of the existential called logos. Reflecting upon Dasein's relation with language, Jan Aler writes:

In the world his own Being-in-the world is at stake for him. The tools are therein at his service and constitute the realm of his possibilities. He discovers these possibilities in bringing them to the fore. His meaning-giving behaviour, his project of his own being in the world co-constitutes the world of his labour: with this project the things present themselves in their meaning. Interpretative explanation develops these possibilities projected by man’s understanding. It unfolds these meanings. Explanation grasps the meaning that understanding has established. This totality of references, this whole that has been articulated before all explanation, the multifarious unity of meanings, is disclosed primarily in understanding.

According to Heidegger, understanding is prelinguistic. Language in every respect is constitutive of our existence. It is a consequence of man’s thrownness. Language constitutes an offshoot of understanding. To put it in other words, understanding constitutes the existential-ontological foundation for language. Clearly demarcating between logos and language, Heidegger states that those logos is not language, and there is no language in the logos. Language appears as an expressedness of logos when we express our understanding in mutual understanding.

In 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger calls language the house of being. Dasein's being in the world is its being in language or discourse. Possession by others is a way of living with others. Being-in-the-world is being in dialogue. Heidegger stresses the responsibility towards being. However, Levinas upholds the responsibility towards other human being.

31 Aler, Jan, 'Heidegger's Conception of Language in Being and Time', in On Heidegger and Language, op. cit., p.34
32 ibid, p.48
33 ibid, p.55
35 Llewelyn, 'Levinas and Language', op.cit, p.122
Language remains excessive with respect to our uses of it. Language withholds itself. We communicate by means of language. But language remains uncommunicative. Language is an event in which the world manifests itself, but this event is anterior to the world’s history. It is an anarchic moment which doesn’t simply recede into an aboriginal past. It accompanies the world and exposes its history to the future. Heidegger identifies speaking with listening. He anticipates Levinasian conception that speaking doesn’t originate with subjectivity, and speaking is first of all a mode of responsibility. Speaking is not a substantive activity. It is an event, but not a process.

Unlike Levinas, Heidegger refuses to think face-to-face as an exclusive relation between human beings. For him, the face-to-face involves not only human beings but also things in the world. An experience with language means an interruption of subjectivity in which we find ourselves face-to-face with whatever is otherwise. It is here that Levinas breaks with Heidegger’s view of language. He maintains the view that it is only man who could be absolutely foreign to me. Language is the already foreign in which the other interrupts me.

Levinas: The Saying and the Said

According to Levinas, face-to-face has meaning prior to all meaning-constitution. Rejecting the empiricist notion of meaning, Levinas argues that the primordial responsibility towards the other presupposes meaning. In other words, face and responsibility makes meaning possible.

Face-to-face confrontation is linguistic and irreducible. World, for Levinas, is an integrated horizon of meaning. The other is present in a cultural whole. He is a text in the context of the cultural whole. In ‘Language and Proximity’, Levinas says that consciousness, language, signification and universality go hand in hand. For him, ‘thought reaches the individual through the

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36 Bruns, Gerald L., Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy, JHU Press, New Jersey, 2005, p.102
37 ibid, p.104
38 Morgan,, 2007, p.121
detour of the universal.39 Speech and communication presuppose a relation between the speaker and an interlocutor. Proximity, by itself, is signification. It refers to the ethical relation prior to thought. Face is conceived as 'a point at which the intentional turns into the ethical.'40 Levinas approaches proximity as the absolute singularity between two persons. Language presupposes this absolute singularity. In other words, language is an activity.

Levinas goes onto call proximity an original language. It is an original language without propositions. It is an interpersonal encounter of one with another. It is obsession. It is responsibility without choice. It is 'communication without words and propositions.'41 This face-to-face relation occurs before my consciousness of that relation. This relation is always a past. The other’s face has already revealed itself before I think about it. In responsibility, presence is already a past.42 Levinas explains this with the notion of diachrony. Levinas calls this communication prior to words and phrases the saying. He says that the saying is present in every said. The idea is that every act of speaking has an ethical dimension at its ground.

Language, for Levinas, involves concepts and universality; universality requires singularity. Singularity occurs as the proximity of one to the other. Singularity presupposes face-to-face relation. Similarly, Levinas conceives being as exteriority.43 Communication implies two exteriorities that cannot be thematized. According to Levinas, "language is perhaps to be defined as the very power to break the continuity of being or of history."44 Prior to my being possessed by language is my possession by human beings who speak to me. I am responsible before the other, for the other.45

Levinas further explains that an experience with language is an interruption. Our relation with language is no longer a relation of cognition and

39 Levinas, 1987, p.113
40 Morgan, 2007, p.126
41 Levinas, 1987, p.120
42 ibid
43 Levinas, 1969, p.290
44 ibid, p.195
45 Lingis, ‘Introduction’, in Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, op.cit, p. xiv
command. It is a relation of proximity. Proximity means being face-to-face with other human beings. The transcendence of words, for Levinas, means that words do not originate here. They are always outside. A language is the medium of simultaneity. It is a field where every thing past or to come can be presented into a system. According to Lingis, "space, the sphere of simultaneous, is itself a work of temporalization, constituted and fixed, maintained logos itself is sustained by the saying that is a relationship with alterity."^46

For Levinas, it is language that introduces the asymmetry between the other and myself. Language presupposes a plurality. This plurality and asymmetry is based on the revelation of the other.^47 Levinas situates the other, not the speaking subject, at the originary site of language. He, however, retains the idea that discourse is essentially interpellation. Levinas writes:

The relationship of language implies the transcendence, radical separation, the strangeness of interlocutors, the revelation of other to me. In other words, language is spoken where community between the terms of the relationship is wanting, where the common plane is wanting or is yet to be constituted. It takes place in this transcendence. Discourse is thus the experience of something absolutely foreign; a pure knowledge or experience, a traumatism of astonishment.^48

The asymmetry between self and the other involves an immemorial past. Saying is an approach which continuously disrupts the unidirectional temporality of the play of the said. The saying is necessarily conveyed in the said. But the saying is an affectivity that which lies beyond the intentional structures of signification. For Levinas, 'signification signifies beyond synchrony.'^49 It happens through the passivity of the self which is diachronous. The saying, for Levinas, is the condition of all significations. With the notion of the saying beyond the said, Levinas is stressing on a discontinuity and excess which is effaced in the said. By stressing on a discontinuity and excess, Levinas upholds an irreducible duality of the the saying and the said. The irreducible duality of the saying and the said implies two distinctive moments in the production of meaning: ethical and

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46 ibid, p. xxix
47 Levinas, 1969, p.73
48 ibid
49 Levinas, 1991, p.7
ontological. Ontological implies the time of synchrony. Ethical implies the time of diachrony.

For Levinas, saying itself is a signifying. In other words, saying divested of any said is signifying. More precisely, saying doesn’t even require any said to signify. Saying doesn’t draw out or draw up any prior articulation into a said. In Levinas, there is a clear distinction between the saying and the said that results from it. Levinas locates the basic trajectory of phenomenological reduction in the divesting of the said from the saying.50

Saying is prior to any said since relationship between the saying and the said is not synchronic, but diachronic. Levinas inserts the subject’s address to the other into a communication. Saying is beyond the possibility of thematic exposition in the said. Levinas says that saying must be accompanied by an unsaid. It is not to say that saying requires an immediate negation. But it signifies that saying turns into an unsaid. In meaning-giving, the saying becomes teleologically turned toward the said.51

Levinas upholds the necessity of assemblage of the saying into the said. For him, it requires a ‘diachronic expression in which the saying is both an affirmation and a retraction of the said.’52 Diachronic expression is a double movement between affirmation and retraction of the said. Levinas links diachronic expression to a notion of immemorial past. He links it to interiority and eschatology.

In Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, Levinas identifies the saying with substitution.53 According to Wayn Froman, substitution, associated with the unlimited responsibility for the other, takes place with the signifying of the saying.54 Saying is an exposure to the other without limit. Saying entails one’s irremediable vulnerability. It is saying that expiates for the persecution by the

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50 Froman, op.cit, p.56
51 Thomas, 2004, p.143
52 Levinas, 1991, p. 44
53 ibid, pp.5-6
54 Froman, op.cit, p.56
other. The point here is that the *saying*, as expiation, will not be assimilated totally by the *said*.\(^\text{55}\)

Levinas develops the distinction between the *saying* and the *said* as a response to the criticism by Derrida in ‘Violence and Metaphysics’. Derrida accused that Levinas is still haunted by the categories of ontology. His language is not free from conceptual framework of ontology. Derrida pointed out that even when Levinas is trying to overcome ontology, he contradicts himself as he employs Heideggerian categories to exceed those categories. In his second magnum opus, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas tried to sort out the problem of ontological language. Since then, he clearly demarcates the *saying* from the *said*. For him, the *saying* is the realm of the ethical and the *said* is the realm of the ontological.

The *saying* is the ethical relation, which is prior to the thematization in the *said*. The *said* is the realm of ontology and phenomenology. In other words, ‘it is the realm where themes are stated and disclosed.’\(^\text{56}\) But Levinas conceives the interruption of the ethical *saying* within the ontological *said*. The *said* is the thematization of the *saying*. The *saying*, in the said, maintains its alterity and diachrony. The *saying* signifies the otherwise than Being.\(^\text{57}\) The *saying* cannot be contained in the *said* as it exceeds the said. The relation of the *saying* and the *said* is not one dimensional. The relation of the *saying* teleologically turned toward the *said* corresponds to the amphibology of beings. It corresponds to ontological difference.\(^\text{58}\)

Levinas links the responsibility with the *saying* of all *said*. According to him,

*saying* makes signs to the other, but in this sign signifies the very giving of signs. *Saying* opens me to the other before *saying* what is *said*, before the *said* uttered in this sincerity forms a screen

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\(^{55}\) ibid

\(^{56}\) Critchley, ‘Introductory Note’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, op.cit., p.18

\(^{57}\) Levinas, 1991, p.7

\(^{58}\) Thomas, 2004, p.137
between me and the other. The saying without said is like a silence.\textsuperscript{59}

Totality and Infinity began its approach to the meaning of sensibility by contrasting enjoyment with intentionality. In Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence the question of affectivity is introduced into Levinas's critique of Heidegger. While questioning the limits of Husserlian lived body, Levinas originally relied on Heidegger's ontology of affective life, but later Levinas questioned the formalism of it.

Levinas is of the opinion that Heidegger reduces the sensible to a correlate of the said. By introducing the notion of the ethical saying, Levinas presents the final form of his project: the saying corresponds to a realm of affectivity beyond the said. The saying is not a communication of something said. Saying has meaning only through said. The saying is covered over and absorbed by the said. The saying without a said is a signification. It declares itself. The saying is that declaration. Sincerity annuls the absorption of the saying in the said wherein, beneath the cover of words, information is exchanged, wishes are uttered, and responsibility recedes. In the said, there is presence and being. For Levinas, 'no said is beyond presence and representation.'\textsuperscript{60}

In 'Language and Proximity', Levinas conceives language as a manner in which the world is present to intentional consciousness. This is not simply to reduce language to a system of signs which represents or reconstitutes the objects of an external world. The phenomenological conception of language challenges the realist conception of the relation between the subject and the object. According to the realist conception, the objective world is present to consciousness through the sensible perception. But, according to idealist conception, the manifold of intuition is presented to a synthesizing consciousness. The synthesizing consciousness identifies this or that.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{59} Levinas, 1989, p.183
\textsuperscript{60} Levinas, 2000, p.192
\textsuperscript{61} Levinas, 1987, pp.109-126
For Heidegger, interpretation means the understanding of something as something. This Heideggerian notion has something in common with Levinasian identification of this as that. For Heidegger, to understand something as something is an articulation of this as that before our making any thematic assertion about it.\(^\text{62}\) Borrowing Heideggerian insights to explain the phenomenological notion of meaning, Levinas points out that meaning is not something added to pre-existing unities. Meaning is not about how the unities are given.\(^\text{63}\) In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas says that 'the *said* is not simply a sign or an expression of a meaning; it proclaims and establishes this as that.'\(^\text{64}\)

The identification of something as something does not take place due to pure sensations. But it happens in a world where things are already meant. This is not to mean that world has been represented as this or that from the very beginning. Rather, it means that already said signifies our experience.\(^\text{65}\) It orders experience. The said refers to a spontaneous activity that accompanies the givenness of object.\(^\text{66}\) This is prior to any predication. In other words, the *said* is the another word for the *a priori* spontaneity of consciousness.

According to Levinas, there must be a foreword preceding actual speech or writing. The constitution of phenomena is impossible if the constituting act was not preceded by that foreword. It can be an affirmation or affirmative gesture, which normally expresses itself in linguistic discourses. The affirmative character of identification, for Levinas, is kerygmatic. This is to identify a being by pronouncing a kerygma or proclamation. Here, it is consciousness that proclaims this phenomenon to be this and such. Intentionality is a specific union of consciousness and being, made possible by a thematic way of *saying*. In this way, every phenomenon is a *said*.\(^\text{67}\) The very idea of phenomenality presupposes and conditions a particular mode of language. Levinas speaks about the pre-phenomenal chaos or anarchy. The overcoming of this chaos is conditioned by the logos of a *saying* or writing. This is the emergence of an order from the

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\(^{62}\) Heidegger, 1988, p.190  
\(^{63}\) Levinas, 1987, p.110  
\(^{64}\) Levinas, 1991, p.35  
\(^{65}\) ibid, p.36  
\(^{66}\) Thomas, 2004, p.135  
\(^{67}\) Peperzak, 1997, p.58

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anonymous grumbling of being. This is again conditioned by the emergence of
givens from the persistent flow of time. By denomination, one takes a being from
the anonymous ‘there is’ (il y a) of chaotic sensation. The designation of a being
by a noun identifies it as a characteristic unit emerging from the constant flow of
time. This designation is fixed and, to a certain extent, immobilized. In other
words, designation by nouns presupposes a preceding epos or fables. The speaker
must have heard a foreword. He is already following a pre-given meaning when
he tries to name the being that happens to him. Saying makes being something
inseparable from its spoken meaning.

For Levinas, the said is not limited to nouns alone. In a verb, being is
meant and heard as time. Temporality is the verbality of being. A noun does not
suffice to say what happens. In a verb, one can hear the vibration of sensibility,
the modes of essence, the way in which events and things pass. Peperzak explains
Levinasian separation of the saying and the said:

Perception and language has been described so far as belonging to
the realm of said. By this expression, Levinas doesn’t want to
suggest an opposition between spoken and written language –on
the contrary written texts are the clearest examples of the said. As
opposed to the saying, the said encompasses all discourses or
narratives in which beings are identified and essence verbalized.
The opposition between the saying and the said is neither a
difference of two species belonging to one genus nor a dialectical
contradiction like that between being and Non-being. It is
simultaneously a separation and an intimate relation between two
dimensions that cannot be synthesized or integrated in to a
totality. 69

For Levinas, language is not only a system of signs that serve a thought
that is already there. Language also involves a dimension of invocation. The
distinction between the saying and the said is an attempt to bring into attention the
two dimensions of language. Levinas addresses this problem in his essay ‘Is
Ontology Fundamental?’ Levinas believes that moment of invocation is
irreducible to the moment of representation. Every representation of the other is at
the same time an invoking of the other. Levinas explains the same problem in his
essay ‘The I and Totality’. He writes:

68 ibid
69 ibid, p.60
The relation of language is not reducible to the relation that obtains between thought and an object that is given to it. Language cannot encompass the other: the other, the concept of whom we are invoking at this very moment, is not invoked as a concept, but as a person. In speech we do not just think of the interlocutor, we speak to them.\textsuperscript{70}

David R. Fryer comments on the separation between the \textit{saying} and the \textit{said}. According to him,

we are concerned with Levinas’s specific evaluation of language as it relates to philosophy and to the ethical, and it relates to Being and to beings, as it relates to totality and to infinity. In the fascinating juxtaposition between saying and the said, we again further shift away from the metaphysical language of the earlier works. And in so doing, we see the Levinasian subject emerges in more detail, now not simply as a subject who emerges as ethical before it is ontological, but also as a subject immersed in a linguistic system, and as such a linguistic subject struggling to put forth her responsibility before and behind the system of language /Being that structures her; she is a subject who, through language, is at one and same time part of rebelling against the system that does and doesn’t contain her.\textsuperscript{71}

According to Levinas, philosophy itself is a discourse always addressed to another. For Levinas, writes Kent Still,

what is important about language is not its designative function, nor its communicative function, but rather that it is through language, through discourse, that the other addresses me. Or, to formulate it in terms of this distinction between the saying and the said, Levinas emphasizes the fact of being addressed (the saying) much more than the propositions stated in the discourse (the said). This not to say that said is not important; indeed he insists on the necessity of paying attention to the said. What matters, however, is that there is an excess, a much more that is here attributed to the saying: the fact of being addressed exceeds or overflows the stated propositions.\textsuperscript{72}

\textbf{Derrida’s Responses}

Derrida anchors his responses on a fundamental disagreement with Levinas. Their difference lies in the nature of the experience of the other.

\textsuperscript{70} Levinas, 2007, p.28
\textsuperscript{71} Fryer, 2004, p.117
\textsuperscript{72} Still, ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Addressing Levinas}, op.cit, p. xix
For Derrida, Husserl maintains the other as part of ego's phenomenal sphere. Levinas is of the opinion that the intentional scheme of meaning, as conceived by Husserl, neutralizes alterity. The other could not be other if it could be possessed. In order to save Husserl from the charge of violence, Derrida observes that one could neither speak nor could have any sense of the totally other, if there was not a phenomenon of the totally other. He notes that Levinas's metaphysics of desire is metaphysics of infinite separation.\textsuperscript{73} In order to be meaningful, other must takes place in the form of phenomena as part of my meaning-giving sphere. Derrida charges that Levinas deprives himself of the foundation and possibility of his own language by refusing to recognize an intentional modification of the ego.\textsuperscript{74} The essence of Derrida'a argument is that Levinas cannot speak meaningfully of the other unless he accepts other's phenomenality.

On the other hand, Levinas pitches his arguments on the irreducibility of the \textit{saying} and the \textit{said} strictly. According to him, Derridean critique seems to suffer from the logic of logocentrism. For Levinas, speech itself is split into the \textit{saying} and the \textit{said} on account of the diachrony of speaking that overcomes the ontological reduction.

First of all, it is very interesting to re-read Husserl in the light of Derridean approach. Derrida's philosophy of language establishes a critical supremacy over the Husserlian formulation of the distinction between 'expression' and 'indication'. For Husserl, expression is a possible sign which can be demonstrated objectively. Indication refers to signs which could never be objective. Both are fundamentally differentiated on the basis of their authentic and contingent state of affairs in relation to meaning. Expression, for Husserl, is a logically and necessarily related demonstrative proof of an expressive relation. However, indication is contingent and formed in proportion to the association of ideas or an associative demonstration of indicative relations.\textsuperscript{75} However, Husserl admits that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[73] Derrida, 2002, p.115
\item[74] ibid, p.156
\item[75] Critchley, 1992, p.172
\end{footnotes}
there is an irreducible interlacing of the two in living discourses and in communications, expressions and functions as indications.\textsuperscript{76}

Derrida attempts to elucidate that the Husserlian phenomenology is pointing precisely towards the idea that the expressive sign/meaning is always already enmeshed with indication. Therefore, a clear separation between the two is unnecessary. The meaning is therefore irreducible to the scheme of expression alone devoid of the signs of indication and its contingency and worldliness. According to Derrida, indication is always added to expression in the logic of 'supplementarity.'\textsuperscript{77} He indicates that, as Levinas does, the ideality of meaning always bears the trace of an irreducible exteriority.

However, Levinas conceives indicative relation as ethical relation to the other. It is the way in which the 'same' is affected by the 'absolute other' where difference is maintained at its purest. It indicates that the moment of an ethical sociality could transcend the ontological presence or the locus of being. In Levinas, relation of the same to the other could never be reduced to self-consciousness since representation does not constitute the primordial relation with being.\textsuperscript{78}

Having defined Husserl's phenomenology in terms of its dependence on the epistemological and metaphysical value of presence, Derrida goes on to argue that, for Husserl, the sense of being has always been interpreted as presence. Accordingly, Husserl upholds the presentability of something which is capable of presenting itself to a subject. On the other hand, he says that 'a subject is only a subject insofar as it is self-present, present to itself in the immediacy of a conscious act.'\textsuperscript{79}

Husserl argues that it is the expressive relation alone makes meaningful language which needs to have its own rules and objectives. Expression cannot be

\textsuperscript{76} ibid
\textsuperscript{77} ibid, p.173
\textsuperscript{78} Levinas, 1969, p.48
detached from the immediacy of a self-present consciousness which indicates the presence of the present. However, indicative sign which stands for something else which can only be anticipated. However, in actual communication, this primary sphere of expression is always been abandoned and necessarily linked to indication and, as Husserl argues, take place only at the cost of meaning.

Derrida challenges the aspect of ideality of meaning in Husserl and argues the ideal meaning is a 're-presentation' of consciousness only. The signifier is inseparably linked to a definite linguistic origin and therefore repeats a pre-existent convention. In addition to that, Derrida negates the idea of the neutrality of imagination and argues that it is always a modification of prior experience. Language, hence, has a structure of repetition and representation. Derrida thus announces that there is no ideal self-presence since the ideality has already been presented before and therefore only its representation is possible.

Having negated the distinction between expression and indication, he categorically states that 'what presents itself in language is the representation of non-presence or the otherness/difference. Derrida, thus, quite apparently declines the aspect of 'now-time' in the constitution of meaning. He elucidates that 'the presence of the present is conditioned by what is absent.'

Derrida thus liberates meaning from constrains of temporality and establishes the possibility of arbitrary configuration of difference between signs. He therefore suggests that, meaning is never distracted from the play of differences and the conventions existing within language. On that basis, absolute objectivity or ideality of meaning is impossible since language is always subjected to ever-changing usage. Derrida thus challenges Husserlian phenomenology, arguing that neither linguistic meaning nor the content of consciousness is completely present, abstracted from its linguistic, semiotic or historical context which surpasses the present or the 'now-time'. Hence, Derrida maintains that, we

80 ibid, p.116
81 ibid, p.111
82 ibid.
83 ibid.
84 ibid, p.118
can only assemble and recall the traces of what went before because we are embedded within a system of language, not outside it.\textsuperscript{85}

Derrida problematizes this embeddedness when he challenges Heidegger’s thesis that the task of thinking is the overcoming of metaphysics. Reflecting on this aspect, Derrida argues that any attempt to pass beyond metaphysics seems to have failed in overcoming the terrain of metaphysics. The attempts to go beyond metaphysics are merely metaphysical since such attempts reinscribe classical metaphysical notions of unity and teleology, as well as the binary opposition between inside and outside.\textsuperscript{86} Derrida’s deconstructive reading proposes a \textit{closural reading} to find within the so called metaphysical texts a rupture that transcends metaphysics. It also aims to find within texts that claims to surpass metaphysics, but eventually not free from it.\textsuperscript{87} Derrida points his fingers at Levinas’s accomplished work \textit{Totality and Infinity} too. He states that the moment that we make a general claim, we lose the very thing we wished to preserve. Derrida goes on to argue that there was never an over-arching metaphysical unity of being. In contrast to Heidegger, Derrida upholds plurality.

Derrida retains the frames of the Saussurian problematic. He sees that language is constituted by a weave of differences.\textsuperscript{88} For him, \textit{differance} makes the signification possible. \textit{Differance} refers to both temporal and spacial difference. The sign, for Derrida, is not only a deffered presence. It is rather a trace. Derrida borrows the term trace from Levinas. Trace refers to a past that has never been present. Each present element in a linguistic system is not present by itself. Each present element signifies in so far as it differentially refers to another element in the system.\textsuperscript{89} In other words, the present is constituted by a differential network of traces.

Derrida addresses the relation between closure of metaphysics and the end of philosophy. Derrida observes that Husserl had an aversion to the idea that

\textsuperscript{85} ibid, pp.118-120.
\textsuperscript{86} Bernasconi, Robert, ‘Encounter with Other Philosophers: Heidegger’, in \textit{Understanding Derrida}, p.121
\textsuperscript{87} ibid, pp.123-124.
\textsuperscript{88} Critchley, 1992, p.37
\textsuperscript{89} ibid
philosophy can bring itself to a conclusion. He believes that idea of philosophy is an infinite idea. According to Derrida, “philosophy can only open itself to question, within it and by it.” Therefore, he objected to the conception of pure truth. The notion of a closure is no more relevant to philosophy where as closure characterizes sciences like mathematics and geometry. Here, Derrida stumbles upon a tension inherent in Husserl. Husserlian texts belong to both the metaphysical tradition and an attempt to overcome it. The same tension is there in Descartes’s texts. The problem, according to Derrida, haunts Levinas too. Levinas depends upon the resources of the tradition to overcome that tradition. For Derrida, the notion of trace entails the possibility of an exit beyond the closure of metaphysics. In Levinas, there is a break on the one hand and a continuation on the other hand. The distinction between ethical saying and the ontological said itself represents this ambiguity. But eventually it points towards transcendence. After the death of God in philosophy, writes Simon Critchley, “the ethical subject is able to discover the sense of transcendence that was lost.” Subject as substitution discovers a trace in the other’s face.

Derrida feels that Levinasian language oscillates between the saying and the said. It is true that Levinas is not addressing the radical overcoming of ontological language. For him, “the interruption of essence occurs in the reduction of the ontological said to the ethical saying.”

The saying is the opening of self to the other and it is an ‘event of being’ in relation with the other. In other words, saying is my debt or my inability to refuse the other’s approach. Hence, “the saying is the possibility of an ethical form of language which cannot be reduced to the ontological language of the said, the locus of being.” The ethical saying could never be reduced to language. But, on the contrary, it must proceed through an absence of language. Conversely, the

90 Derrida, 2002, p.160
91 Critchley, 1992, p.67
92 ibid, p.70
93 ibid, p.114
94 Levinas, 1991, p.20
95 ibid, p.7
96 ibid, p.183
said is a statement, assertion or proposition.\textsuperscript{97} For Levinas, the interruption of the essence of being occurs in the reduction of the ontological said to the ethical saying. He attempts to reduce the said to the saying in order to show how my ethical exposure to the other underlies any ontological exposition. The reduction is 'the exposure of the saying by way of a continual contestation of the said.'\textsuperscript{98} The 'same', in philosophical tradition, keeps a relation with otherness, but it is a relation in which the ego reduces the distance between the same and the other. The opposition between same and the other ceases to exist in comprehension.

In Levinas, the same is called into question by the other. The alterity cannot be reduced to the same. It cannot be achieved by the knowing subject.\textsuperscript{99} The ethical is, therefore, the locus of a divine moment of alterity. It is linked with revelation. Levinas calls the exterior being the 'face,' the way in which the other presents himself. Contrary to the said, the saying is the moment of irreducible alterity and every said must have a saying that makes it possible, just as every self is brought forth by the singularity of the other that calls it.\textsuperscript{100}

Derrida argues that language communicates anything at all. It relies upon the ability of any given statement to mean something other than what it means in any particular context. In other words, alterity, otherness, is at the heart of language. Derrida's claim is that the self is nothing without an other to which it has a fundamental relationship.\textsuperscript{101} The metaphysical nature of philosophy, he argues, excludes or reduces the otherness of the other. For Levinas, the cornerstone of philosophy in the west since the Greeks has been an identity that grounds thinking by excluding everything that can be brought under the heading of alterity.\textsuperscript{102} He accuses that the whole history of thought insists on the primacy of being over and above the concern with alterity or in other words, ontology over ethics. Levinas' philosophy maintains that, before there is any identity of any kind, there is an other who calls me forth, who constitutes me as that being who is responsible for the other.

\textsuperscript{97} Critchley, 1992, p.7
\textsuperscript{98} ibid, p.175
\textsuperscript{99} ibid, pp.4-5.
\textsuperscript{100} Roffe, Jonathan, 'Deconstruction as Ethics', in Understanding Derrida, op.cit, p.40
\textsuperscript{101} ibid, p.38
\textsuperscript{102} ibid, p.39
Derrida argues with Levinas that the western philosophy is predicated on a fundamental necessary exclusion of alterity in order to create order, truth and subjectivity. Derrida overcomes the primacy of speech over writing by referring to alterity. He moves onto an ethical sphere in tandem with Levinas. For both philosophers, an ethical relation is based on avoiding all forms of totalization, and responding to the call of the other without thereby reducing that otherness to the sameness.\footnote{103} Levinas argues that other precedes the self and makes it possible, retaining a kind of primordial purity. For Derrida, this is not the case. There is no priority or purity of the other. In addition to that Derrida argues that there is nothing outside the text. It means that the saying is always mutually complicit with the instances of the said that expresses them.\footnote{104} Derrida feels that Levinas seeks to embrace the unthinkable. Derrida takes Levinas to be held to the tradition he seeks to escape. Levinas is bound to totality. For Derrida, trace is not of the other, of the face or of illeity. Rather, trace is, the trace of the text.

On the other hand, Levinas conceives trace as the singularity of the face.\footnote{105} Trace is an ethical structure that exceeds all structures of immanence. It is not equivalent to the internal movement of signs as conceived by Derrida. According to Levinas, language becomes meaningful not because in it signs interact in a variety of combination. Language is meaningful because interlocutors rise to responsibilities. However, in Derrida, trace remains the central concept of deconstruction. Diachrony is the central semantic structure of language.\footnote{106} For him, difference entails diachrony. Cohen comments that this impersonal locality of trace in language neutralizes its moral force.\footnote{107} According to Levinas, Derridean deconstruction remains located within the ontological tradition. At the same time, it opens new possibilities of ethical dimension. Levinas considers deconstruction as a continuation and completion of Kantian critique of

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{103}{ibid, p.41}
\item \footnote{104}{ibid, p.42.}
\item \footnote{105}{Cohen, 2004 , p.159}
\item \footnote{106}{ibid}
\item \footnote{107}{ibid}
\end{itemize}
However, there is an ethical *saying* which is irreducible to the *said* of Derrida's texts.  

**Blanchot’s Philosophy of Language**

The friendship between Blanchot and Levinas began at Strasbourg University in the 1920s. *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other* can be considered as Levinas's early phenomenological reflections. They left their marks on Blanchot's early works of fiction such as *Thomas the Obscure* and *The Most High*. Both of them have a common conception of *Il y a*. They also share a common concern regarding the question of language. Levinas introduced phenomenology and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger to Blanchot. The credit goes to Levinas for keeping the question of ethics open for Blanchot.

In *The Writing of the Disaster*, Blanchot explores the significance of the phenomenology of enjoyment and the *il y a*. Blanchot describes the 'there is' as the absence in which the things of everyday world dissolve. Levinas also incorporates Blanchot's works into his own thought. Blanchot's philosophy of language parallels Levinasian phenomenology but for one crucial difference. Blanchot does not accord the relation to the other an absolute status.

According to Blanchot, the experience of writing and the demand of ethics are inseparable. Blanchot believes that literature has its own truth outside justice. Levinas says that other would demand a response from me. It is the call of justice. Blanchot has a similar conception of justice. But he asserts the primary role of the literature in matters pertaining to justice. Literature, for Blanchot, is 'an exposure of the self to an undue demand that calls into question the dominance of subject.'

Blanchot upholds language of dialogue over language of comprehension. Blanchot asserts that in authentic language is not only representational, but also

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108 Critchley, 1992, p.145  
109 ibid, p.146  
111 ibid, p.71
destructive. It annihilates the object it represents. The language of comprehension extenuates this violence, instead of mitigating it. In comprehension, the distinction between subject and object is annulled by the power of comprehension. But, in dialogue, the distance between other and me is sustained. The other interrupts me. But I do not annihilate the distance between other and me. Blanchot brings in a conception very similar to Levinasian separation between being and beings where language, as invocation, plays a crucial role.

Blanchot explores the proximity between literature and ethics. For him, both displace subject through language. Blanchot writes: “My responsibility for the other presupposes an overturning such that it can only be marked by a change in the status of me, a change in time, and perhaps in language.”

The major divergence between Blanchot and Levinas lies in the way how they interpret the relation between writing and speech. It is in the involvement between speech and writing that Blanchot begins to diverge from Levinas. Levinas could not see the relation between the demand of literature and ethics in Blanchot’s early writings. He sees writings as profoundly ethical, and opposed to the relation to speech. But Blanchot feels that Levinas could not see their connection because Levinas shares a traditional understanding of writing.

Blanchot recognizes two sorts of speech in Levinas. In one line of conception, speech implies transmission of information between speakers. What matters here is not who speaks, but what is said. Levinas accords this kind of a status to writing. In the second line of conception of speech, Levinas gives priority to the speakers, than to what is said. Blanchot points out that Levinas sees in writing what is said only. He fails to see presence of interlocutors in writing.

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112 ibid, p.74
114 Haase and Large, 2001, p.78
115 ibid
116 ibid, p.79
According to Blanchot, language is to be understood as a negation. The word is the negation of the physical thing. It then becomes something that can be communicated. This ideality links language to unity and totality of thought. It is thought that reduces language to universal meaning. Literature only experiences language in the singular. Literature struggles to reinvent language of singularity over and against the totality.

The singular experience is the experience of the anonymity of language that seems to be spoken by no one. Blanchot calls the experience of the anonymity of language 'the neuter.' He argues with Levinas by distinguishing between neutrality of language and objectivity of thought. Neutrality of language that emerges in literature is the narrative voice. For Blanchot, writing is no longer a tool for externalization and preservation of thought. It is the exposure of thought to language that transgresses its own unity and totality. Language is not something at the disposal of thought. It is something that confronts the thought with an outside. Similarly, language is no longer the expression of a potent subjectivity. It ensures its reversal in the exposure to the exteriority of language.

The literature that appears to be touched by the exteriority of language expresses a language that escapes both the writer and the reader. It is the language pushed to the limit of communication. This is why Blanchot says that 'every work of literature, to the extent that expresses itself to the demand of writing, expresses language in its own singular way.'

In Levinas, the *saying* is the response of the 'I' to the other. Language has been conceived as openness towards the other. The 'I' does not meet the other as an intact subject facing another subject. The space between the 'I' and the other precedes the division of subject and object, of self and non-self. The *saying* is not addressed to something that solicits a response, that is, to another, fully present subject. The *saying* withholds itself from the order of the *said*. The encounter with

117 ibid, p.80
118 ibid, p.81
119 ibid, p.80
120 ibid
121 ibid, p.81
the other does not belong to the order of the language. It resists the synthesis that would incorporate other into the identity of the 'I.'

According to Levinas, the immediacy of the other is the immediacy of proximity. The experience in question is not an encounter with an object like other objects. For Levinas, "the immediacy on the surface of the skin characteristic of sensibility, its vulnerability, is found as it were anaesthetized in the process of knowing. But also, no doubt, repressed or suspended." Blanchot responds to the Levinasian conception of the immediacy and separation in a slightly different way:

Immediacy is the infinite, neither close nor distant, and no longer the desired or demanded, but violent abduction – the ravishment of mystical fusion. Immediacy not only rules out all mediation; it is the infiniteness of a presence such that it can no longer be spoken of, for the relation itself, be it ethical or ontological, has burned up all at once in a night bereft of darkness. In this night there are no longer any terms, there is no longer a relation, no longer a beyond in this night God himself has annulled himself. Or, one must manage somehow to understand the immediate in the past tense. This renders the paradox practically unbearable. Only in accordance with such a paradox can we speak of disaster.

Levinas's appeal to immediacy is rooted in the concrete heteronymous experience of the other. Saying attests to a past that has never occurred as an object of experience. It implies an event that escapes any retrospective synthesis. According to Blanchot, "we can no more think of the immediate than we can think of an absolutely passive past." And yet, at the same time, it is necessary to remember this past, to bear the unbearable.

Language confers ideality on the given. It gathers the phenomena. The noun identifies beings and proclaims a given as this or that. It fixes and immobilizes it, stabilizing it as an experience. The verb, by contrast, might be said to bear witness to the fluency of things, relations and events, to their temporality. Levinas argues that verbs are in turn adverbalized by being. Verbs attest to a way

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122 Levinas, 1991, p.84
123 ibid, p.64
125 ibid, p.25
of being, but this does not mean that things escape nominalization and hence dissimulation. The saying bestows the possibility of experience. The saying precedes the verbality that would reveal the sonority of things.

Levinas explains that enjoyment is the basic, spontaneous mode of our attitude to the things around us. The il y a is the disruption of the time of need. It is as if the world that apparently gives itself to be enjoyed suddenly affirmed its resistance to fulfilling the needs of its occupants. The subject who has time, who is separate from the world, working in order to tame the elements, meets a force greater than its own.

Blanchot reminds Levinas of another outside outside the exteriority of the other. It is an anarchic outside from which the speech or the face of the other cannot entirely emancipate us. When the other addresses me, the interruption of being starts. The interruption brings in a particular relation. This relation or interval is neither of being nor of non-being. It is an interval born by the difference of speech. It is a difference that precedes everything that is different and everything unique. Blanchot calls this anarchic difference the relation of the third kind.126

Another point of difference between Levinas and Blanchot is that Levinas cannot abandon philosophy. He cannot give up the discourse of concepts and definitions. The saying, for Levinas, is implicated in the said. According to Levinas, as soon as saying becomes a dictation, it expires or abdicates in fables and in writing. The responsibility for the other is precisely a saying prior to anything said. The saying cannot be thematized. Philosophy makes saying intelligible. Blanchot, on the other hand, argues that writing cannot be made intelligible as dictation or fixing of saying.127

For Blanchot, the task of poetry is to respond to the strangeness that separates me from the other.128 It is not to conceptualize the strangeness. It is

126 Bruns, 2005, p.111
127 ibid, p.114
128 ibid, p.116
rather to stop thinking in terms of unity, but to make relation of words on dissymmetrical field governed by discontinuity.

**Messianic Consciousness, Time and Language in Walter Benjamin**

Both Levinas and Benjamin analyze the relationship between history and eschatology. They consider time as a condition of existence. In Levinas, it is rather a relationship with other. The immemorial past implies the irremovability of a past that cannot be erased. Levinasian eschatology entails a powerful conception of a time other than the time of universal history. This theme is articulated in *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas links interiority inalienably to memory. Mortal existence disqualifies the time of universal history. Mortal existence flows in a dimension of its own. Interiority establishes an order different from historical time.

Levinas rejects the synchronizable time upon which the universal history depends. He speaks about the memory of mortality and of separation. Thus memory, at least a certain memory, will operate as eschatology. Above all, eschatological draws beings out of history. They alienate the subject from that history which engulfs it. Eschatology implies an order where everything is awaiting.

The time of universal history is the time of ontology. I have elaborated these aspects in the second chapter. Particular existence is separated from universal history. Universal history belongs to the functional relatedness of works. It speaks about social facts. However, the inverted historical time of interiority breaks with the historical totality. And, in a sense, the whole philosophical work of Levinas is an effort to invert historical time. According to Levinas, memory assumes the passivity of the past.

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129 Horowitz, Asher, ‘How Levinas taught me to read Benjamin’, *PhaenEx* 1, No.1 (Spring/Summer 2006), pp.140-174
130 Levinas, 1969, p.55
131 ibid
132 ibid
133 ibid, p.56
Levinas conceives a relation of subjectivity to history and retains an absolute separation of the subject distinct from the always synthesizable internal contradictions of totality. 134 A de-totalization of history as historical memory is figured substantially in Benjamin's Theses on the Concept of History. Levinas contrasts between the synchronizable time and time of diachrony. In a similar fashion, Benjamin also speaks about the empty homogeneous time. Empty homogeneous time bears a striking resemblance to Kant's conception of time in the Critique of Pure Reason. Kant has conceived time as the aesthetic form for the intuition of an object. 135

According to Benjamin, empty homogeneous time is not truly the transcendental condition of subjective experience. There is precisely an 'inversion' of the empty homogeneous time of universal history in the time of the now. The time of the now doesn't belong to a transcendental subject. Like Levinas, Benjamin is against the telos of time. Empty homogeneous time interrupts seriality also. 136 Each work both preserves the lifework and at the same time cancels it. Due to this, the course of history gets cancelled.

According to Benjamin, 'the redemptive-messianic act is not the entrance into history of a force alien to it. It is the removal of the works of the others from the series that can be strung from beginning-point to end-point through empty homogeneous time.' 137 History assumes the shape of one single disaster in which each work can be read as its figurative expression.

For Benjamin, messianicity does not lie in any power to command the course of universal history. The time of the now experienced in remembrance is similar to inversion of historical time. According to Levinas, 'inversion of historical time is the essence of interiority.' 138 Interiority or radical separation is the condition for the removal of the subject from his place in the totality. Levinas

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134 ibid, p.22
135 Kant, 2003, pp. 21-22
136 Horowitz, 2006
137 ibid
138 Levinas, 1969, p. 56
sees this as an essential condition of the ethical relation. He is of the opinion that ‘fate does not precede history; it follows it. Fate is the history of the historiographers.’ Eschatology functions as another name for the ethical relation. Similarly, in Benjamin’s view, the empty homogeneous time dissolves into the time of the now. But Benjamin goes a step ahead. The relationship between history and eschatology has a different structure for him.

Benjamin is for the historical de-totalization of universal history. Levinas holds that the eschatological level is maintained within history while remaining eschatological. For Benjamin, the messianic is both at an absolute distance from the real society and operative within it. Benjamin begins by separating historical action from the Messiah himself. Nothing historical can relate itself on its own account to anything Messianic. Therefore, the Kingdom of God is not the telos of the historical dynamic.

The radical separation of the two orders, the Messianic and the profane, contains a genuine problem and a genuine relation. The Messiah strives to redeem. The Messianic is beyond history. It is atemporal. According to Benjamin, it entails a problem. The search of free humanity for happiness runs counter to the Messianic direction. For Levinas, history and eschatology are neither analytically nor dialectically related. Levinas goes on, with respect to the representation of the past, to say that “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.”

Benjamin’s philosophy of language is structurally similar to his philosophy of history. Benjamin views language as an explicable and mystical reality. This is a reality that cannot be described in and for itself. The essence of language has no addressee, no object, and no means. In language, the spiritual essence of man addresses itself to God. It diffuses and divides its indeterminate referent God.

139 ibid, p.55
140 Horowitz, op.cit
141 Levinas, 1969, p.127
Human language, for Benjamin, is nominative. The spiritual essence that communicates itself in the act of naming is language. There is no speech outside or prior to language. However, Benjamin dissociates himself from the mystical theory of language according to which the word is identical with the essence of thing. Originally the thing has neither word nor name.

On Language as such and on the Language of Man marks an important stage in the development of Benjamin’s thought on language. It is also observed that Benjamin’s thought is a linguistic metacritique of Kant. For Benjamin, there is a sphere of speechlessness within language, and it is not the ineffable outside of language. Language is a complex totality which conveys at once meaning and the limits of meaning. Language conveys the sayable and the unsayable. The unsayable remains in complex ways within language, even though it cannot be spoken.

Benjamin’s philosophy of language depends upon his explorations into the character of an immanent absolute. He sustains the idea of immanent absolute. It was necessary for him to imagine a totality capable of containing elements which exceed it. Language communicates content distinct from itself.

Benjamin makes a separation between the judgments of designation and the judgments of signification. The latter requires categories which are ascribed to the representation of a subject. By contrast, the subject of a judgment of designation simply designates its predicate. It says nothing about its predicate and ascribes no meaning to it. He also points to the dangers of judgments of designation being mistaken for those of signification.

143 De Vries, Hent, Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida, JHU Press, New Jersey, 2001, p.267
144 Caygill, 1998, p.13
145 ibid, p.14
146 ibid
147 ibid, p.16
According to Benjamin, we think in intention/designation, but by means of concepts. Designation as intention becomes extra categorical condition for the signifying judgments of the categories. Linguistic and graphic units are derived from an original linguistic intention which is designative. The capacity of linguistic intention to produce names by designation is both immanent to and exceeds a given linguistic universe.\textsuperscript{148} The latter may contain infinite number of possible statements.

Benjamin proposes a definition of language as a communication which extends not only to human language, but also to animate and inanimate nature. He is of the opinion that even the spiritual content of language does not exist apart from their communication in language. The infinity of human language always remains limited and analytic in nature in comparison to the absolutely limited and creative infinity of the divine word. Here, Benjamin points to the Biblical myth of fall.\textsuperscript{149} Benjamin outlines three major consequence of this turn. First is the emergence of distinction between speaker and language. Here, everything in language becomes a means of communication. The second is the instability introduced into the human language by the possibility of deception and dissemblance. The third is the origin of abstraction involved in the invention of abstract terms such as good and evil.\textsuperscript{150}

Benjamin invokes the equivocality and the problem of infinity of language. According to Benjamin, ‘human language is equivocal. It cannot reduce all other linguistic surfaces to its own level.’\textsuperscript{151} Each language is identified by a particular infinity. No individual language can be the source of all other linguistic surfaces. Each language is identified by its own infinity. But identity and infinity is not fixed, but undergoes continuous translation. Translation is ‘the removal from one language into another through continuous transformations.’\textsuperscript{152} Thus, according to Benjamin, the infinity of all human languages remains limited.

\textsuperscript{148} ibid, p.15
\textsuperscript{149} ibid, p.19
\textsuperscript{150} ibid, p.21
\textsuperscript{151} ibid
\textsuperscript{152} ibid, p.20

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