

## RICOEUR BETWEEN LEVINAS AND HEIDEGGER: ANOTHER'S FURTHER ALTERITY

The possibility of extending philosophy at the heart of today's postmodern conversation involves seemingly disparate conversationalists. On the one hand, Levinas, whose later works have been central to many postmodern deconstructive discussions, especially those focused on ethics, proposes a radical alterity of the Other, death, and time. This alterity, however, cannot be voided of the ethical relation, as most deconstructive approaches attempt, without great loss in the conversation. On the other hand, Heidegger's work, often used today as a whipping post, and coming from the other direction, offers an account of coexistence, death, and time which Levinas radically opposes. We must confront this opposition to Heidegger in order to see to what extent Heidegger's thinking is reducible, as Levinas contends, to the same and to totality. In the context of this opposition, I consider Ricoeur's thinking to be in a position between Levinas and Heidegger, not merely as an eclectic one, but rather, one that follows his usual fruitful fashion of going the distance with each thinker, exposing his limits, and then appropriating each adjusted position in an interarticulation that becomes his own unique and ingeniously inclusive position, one which often gets too little attention among those who consider themselves today's *avant garde*.

My thesis in this study is complex: first, that focusing on the respective critiques of Heidegger by both Levinas and Ricoeur allows us explicitly to see their differences; that seeing these, we can move to relate them more clearly; and finally that we can come to understand, in the light of pursuing these differences, a final position which consists in somewhat adjusting Ricoeur's position enlightened by a rereading of Levinas. Before this final position emerges, however, I will test the contention of Kemp,<sup>1</sup> that Ricoeur is somewhat between Heidegger and

---

<sup>1</sup> See: Peter Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas: Original Affirmation Between Ontological Attestation and Ethical Injunction," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 21, 1995.

Levinas, taking into account Ricoeur's perhaps too severe critique of Levinas.

Although Levinas continually affirmed the extreme importance of Heidegger's place in the philosophical tradition of the twentieth century, his critique of Heidegger's work became more and more explicit. Yet he openly admitted that Heidegger was one of the chief influences on his thought, and, at once, one of his main antagonists. This ongoing critique touches every main point of Levinas' developing position. Perhaps his most far-reaching critique is doubly aimed at the heart of the Heidegger's writings. Levinas considers Heidegger to have failed to consider the transcendent Other; and to have failed to reach the unique and singular solitude of the existent. In fact, in spite of Heidegger's initial focus in *Being and Time* on the essence (*Wesen*) of Dasein as existence, he fails to consider the existent, thus missing his/her singularity and solitude. Rather, with his explication of coexistence as the *mit* or the *miteinander* or the *mitsein*, Heidegger has focused laterally within the Same. And in the other direction he has failed to reach toward the transcendence of the Other in a personal face to face relation, giving only a constitutive transcendence to the world as ultimate. Levinas essentially focused on this precise point, for he contends that transcendence to the Other is the ultimate constitution for the existent in its solitude. And it is within this general double critique that his manifold critiques of Heidegger can be seen. We must focus more on this overall double critique, investigating first the solitude of the singular existent, which itself comes to light in the context of exteriority and alterity.

For Levinas alterity, rather than some Heideggerian shared attribute such as coexistence as *mitsein* or *miteinander*, is the constitutive key to social life. He obviously wants to separate himself from Heidegger, but interestingly he does not want to make a clean break. I am inclined to interpret even his extreme remarks in this context to mean that he wants to extend beyond the coexistence or *mitsein* to exteriority as the ultimate constitution of the Other, which itself presupposes this coexistence, as indicated in the morality of nourishment, as will be seen. For Levinas, we must do full justice to the Other as alter ego. The Other, from a limited point of view, is indeed alter ego as another myself or a coexistence or *mitsein*, but the Other is still *not me*, and thus is Other. What Levinas wants to do is to uproot the communion with the other as such as ultimately constitutive,

showing that it is precisely only as transcendent that the Other is Other and not me; just as I am solitary and not the other: "the other is in no way another myself, participating with me in a common existence."<sup>2</sup> Yet, in any consideration of Levinas in the context of Ricoeur's critique, it is necessary to explicitly point out that Levinas finds a place for sympathy and pairing even though he rejects them as ultimately constitutive of the intersubjective relationship,<sup>3</sup> a point that Ricoeur seems to miss. Levinas says: "The other is known through sympathy, as another (my)self, as the alter ego....But already, in the very heart of the relationship with the other that characterizes our social life, alterity appears as a nonreciprocal relationship – that is, as contrasting strongly with contemporaneity. The Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other's character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other's very alterity."<sup>4</sup> We see Levinas here developing the extreme separation between the exteriority of the Other and the solitude of the existent, which later becomes the focus throughout the whole of *Totality and Infinity*.<sup>5</sup> At this point we have seen explicitly the two sides of the double critique of Heidegger, that of the solitude of the existent and that of the Alterity of the separate Other. We have seen a twofold separation emerge in Levinas' treatment of totality and infinity: a separation of the personal Other from the intentional horizon of human existence; and the separation of the existent in his/her singular solitude from existence. In addition to what has been seen above, Levinas' critique of Heidegger's early basic ontological difference is also at the heart of the above double critique.

The fundamental critique of the ontological difference comes to light when Levinas indicates that for Heidegger the distinction between Being [*Sein*] and a being [*Seiende* or *Seiendes*] is a distinction while for him it is a separation. For Heidegger, the two are always together, with existing always grasped in the existent and that existing is "always possessed by someone. I do not think Heidegger can admit

---

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, translated by Richard A. Cohen, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Cohen, footnote 63, p. 83 of Levinas, *Time and the Other*.

<sup>4</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

an existing without existents, which to him would seem absurd."<sup>6</sup> And closely tied with this difference regarding the interpretation of the ontological difference is Levinas' attitude toward Heidegger's sense of the disclosure constitutive of Dasein. For Levinas, it is precisely a breaking out of the context of Heideggerian disclosure that the exteriority of the Other and the separation of existents from their existence requires. The ultimate significance of the event of the face to face and of the work of justice does not lie in disclosure as Heidegger contends, but rather lies beyond any intentional structure and are constituted outside of representation and knowledge. "No prior disclosure illuminates the production of these essentially nocturnal events. The welcoming of the face and the work of justice – which condition the birth of truth itself – are not interpretable in terms of disclosure....The relation between the same and the other is not always reducible to knowledge of the other by the same, nor even to the *revelation* of the other to the same, which is already fundamentally different from disclosure."<sup>7</sup> And an extension of this critical stance toward Heidegger is constituted by Levinas' basic ethics as one involving ethical relation. For it is here that he accuses Heidegger of a downfall that is unforgivable.

Heidegger has missed completely the sense of ethics, especially in his very response to Jean Beaufret regarding an originary ethics rooted in the truth of being. For it is here that his ethics emerges as impersonal and as an "ontology without morals," an "ontology of the Neutral."<sup>8</sup> As indicated above in Levinas' critique of Heidegger, Dasein is closed in on itself in the sense that it is not related to infinity or the Other. Its deficiency or inauthenticity must consist in some relation to itself, resulting in the diminished and defective ethics mentioned above. This is not a personal ethics, nor one that reaches the Other, but rather a dimension of Dasein's relation to Being in the emergence of the truth of Being for Dasein - at most an originary ethics within that relation. And Peperzak so eloquently and precisely expresses this: "The idea of a debt or guilt toward others than the self is excluded from this thought. By the absence of a true alterity that could question and accuse *Dasein's* freedom, that is, by the absence of an

---

<sup>6</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 27-28.

<sup>8</sup> Stated by Philippe Nemo in Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, translated by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 90.

ethical 'principle,' the Heideggerian perspective belongs to a tradition the barbarous depths of which were shown by Nazism. When Heidegger criticizes the essence of technology, he forgets that the source of modern evil, such as it was manifested in Nazism, is found at a depth that lies deeper than the realm of technology. Alluding to certain expressions found in Heidegger's later works, Levinas sketches the portrait of a pagan existence rooted in mother earth and prone to exploitation – very different from the sober existence of availability for the needs of others. The individual are immersed in the *physis* that encompasses them like elements of its unfolding."<sup>9</sup>

Related to the above critique regarding the failure to get out of subjectivity is Levinas' critique of Heidegger's view of time in relation to ekstasis, which does not break out of the subjectivity of Dasein. Perhaps, I might add, the closest the later Heidegger comes to such a breakout is the time of Being which is somewhat independent of Dasein and is emitted in events. But this still misses essentially what Levinas is indicating, even though it could be claimed that the time of the other person appears somewhat on the horizon of worldly time, ecstatic temporality.<sup>10</sup> It is here that one can see Levinas' critique of the Heideggerian Being toward death, for Levinas considers death to be an alterity related to time. For Heidegger, death is the possibility of no longer having possibilities, or the impossibility of possibility.<sup>11</sup> What strikes Levinas about Heidegger's account of death is that it shatters "inauthentic possibilities"<sup>12</sup> rather than existence itself. For Levinas, rather, "Death in Heidegger is an event of freedom, whereas for me the subject seems to reach the limit of the possible in suffering. It finds itself enchained, overwhelmed, and in some way passive."<sup>13</sup> For Levinas, Heidegger does not go far enough regarding time. Levinas considers time as radical alterity connected to the alterity of the Other. But this alterity of time of the Other is not simultaneous with the time

---

<sup>9</sup> Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University, 1993), p. 54.-55. For a very fine treatment of this element of Heidegger, where he in his later work is seen to shuck off any trace of the Judeo-Christian tradition in favor of the pagan Greek and German traditions, as Peperzak states here so well, see John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing of Heidegger*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Richard A. Cohen, Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, Introduction to *Time and the Other*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, pp. 70-71.

of the subject, which is the time of knowledge and representation, so that the other and the subject do not meet at the same time. As Cohen puts it so well, the "time of the Other disrupts or interrupts my temporality. It is this upset, this insertion of the Other's time into mine, that establishes the alterity of veritable time, which is neither the Other's time nor mine."<sup>14</sup> It must be remembered that for Levinas death is never a present,<sup>15</sup> for if death is, then the subject is not, and if it is not, then the subject is. In this way the tie among death, time, and the other, all as alterity, is traced. We see again in these themes Levinas' critique of Heidegger carried further. For rather than death serving to make a Dasein authentic or individuated or open to Being, Levinas sees the other, death and time<sup>16</sup> as radical alterity. Likewise with the fundamental modes of being in relation to Dasein, especially the ready-to-hand, as we shall now see.

One of Levinas' constant themes leading to the heart of his ethical relation is the reconsideration of our relation to an object, which should not be reduced to Heidegger's ready-to-hand [*zuhandenheit*]. It can be seen that enjoyment is a mode that cuts beneath the ready-to-hand and that Heidegger overlooks this phenomenon entirely. Levinas has stated: "This relationship with an object can be characterized by enjoyment [*jouissance*]. All enjoyment is a way of being, but also a sensation – that is, light and knowledge. It is absorption of the object, but also distance with regard to it." Levinas goes on a few sentences later to add an important insight presupposed by and prior in some sense to the ethical relation. This point will have a significant role in

---

<sup>14</sup>Cohen, Introduction to *Time and the Other*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding the "present" here, Cohen makes a good point in indicating that in both French and English "the present" can mean both a gift or the present time.

<sup>16</sup> There is another essential aspect of Levinas' thought here, but not necessary for the full development of my own thesis. That is the role of the will, which as desire that is not the satisfaction of a need, and one which is not to be satisfied, carries to transcendence. Cohen focuses on Levinas' passivity of will which emerges here. In the face to face, in the seeing the offense of the offended, the good will is "elected to its moral status," so that the other counts more than myself. "The irreducible alterity of the Other, the time of the Other, impinges on the subject's temporal syntheses from the outside, disrupting its unity with another time, the time of the Other or ethics, the command which comes from on high. And in the same extraordinary moment, the Other's command calls forth a subjectivity for-the-Other, that is to say, a subjectivity which fears murder more than death,' which recognizes itself as murderous and the Other as vulnerable or destitute, the object of the subject's actual or potential violence, the object of irresponsibility and injustice." This quote of Cohen is in: *Time and the Other*, p. 17: see pages 16 -17 for the sentence before this.

Ricoeur's critique of Levinas' lack of reciprocity for the ethical relation. He states that: "The morality of 'earthly nourishments' is the first morality, the first abnegation. It is not the last, but one must pass through it."<sup>17</sup> And it is this notion of nourishment which is at the heart of this critique of Heidegger regarding enjoyment, for Levinas contends that "prior to being a system of tools, the world is an ensemble of nourishments. Human life in the world does not go beyond the objects that fulfill it....These are the nourishments characteristic of our existence in the world. It is an ecstatic existence – being outside oneself – but limited by the object."<sup>18</sup> And it is precisely this relation with an object that Levinas wants to characterize as enjoyment [*jouissance*] as a way of being prior to the ready-to-hand. I will now turn to Ricoeur's critiques of Heidegger's thought, which is not as extreme as that of Levinas, in order to integrate the two critiques into a viable position emerging from the fundamental insight of both Ricoeur and Levinas.

It can be seen that Ricoeur's fundamental critique of Heidegger in *Oneself as Another* prerequires the earlier critiques made years ago.<sup>19</sup> Although Ricoeur has been critical of Heidegger from the beginning of his work decades ago, even before it was fashionable to criticize him, he employs far more of Heidegger's analyses than Levinas.<sup>20</sup> The points of his critiques which interest me for our present discussion are those complex and central remarks in the essay "Existence and Hermeneutics" and remarks in *Fallible Man*<sup>21</sup> and *Time*

---

<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel, *Time and the Other*, pp. 63-64. Cohen tells us in a footnote to this text of Levinas also develops the notion of enjoyment in *Existence and Existents*, pp. 37-45; *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 127- 139, 143-151; and *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 72-74. See also R. Cohen, "emmanuel Levinas: Happiness is Sensational Time," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 25, no. 3 (fall 1981), pp. 196-203.

<sup>18</sup> Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *Conflict of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Edited by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

<sup>20</sup> I do not mean here to imply that Levinas has less respect for Heidegger than Ricoeur, for his famous statements about Heidegger being one of the five great philosophers throughout the ages cannot be forgotten, nor his contention that one must encounter in depth Heidegger's thought in order to surpass it. Levinas' entire effort is tied to this surpassing of Heidegger's initial ontology and later thought of Being, not that Heidegger is the only thinker with this profound an influence on Levinas in his attempt to account for the transcendence to the Infinite Other. One need only to remember his critiques of Husserl, as well as his espousal of Rosencranz.

<sup>21</sup> *Paul Ricoeur, Fallible Man*, translated by Charles A. Kelbley (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1965), especially p. 67.

*and Narrative*.<sup>22</sup> It is against the backdrop of these critiques that *Oneself as Another* must be read to avoid interpreting Ricoeur's critique of Heidegger as not going far enough.<sup>23</sup> For it is there that we see his critique center on Heidegger "short way" to ontology in contrast to Ricoeur's own "long way;" and at the heart of this critique is the other regarding Heidegger's premature projection of an ontological unity of Dasein, which unity of the human Ricoeur insists is a limit concept, something toward which we as human aim, and which cannot be affirmed as given to existence. And also equally relevant to this double critique in the radical difference in their appropriations of Kant's role of Reason. For Heidegger, Kant is approached as laying the foundation of metaphysics, looked at from his own hermeneutical situatedness of posing the Being question. In this endeavor, human Being is interpreted as essentially finite, so that human reason is brought down to earth and sensibitized, with the imagination as the central place of origin, following the interpretation of the romantics in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Ricoeur ardently opposes this rendition of reason, one which Cassirer calls an "iron-wood" or a contradiction in terms.<sup>24</sup> And in addition, we should look briefly at Ricoeur's critique of Heidegger's treatment of time in order to find a further place of affinity with Levinas. Before turning to Ricoeur's treatment of Heidegger in *Oneself as Another* leading to his appropriation of Levinas' basic insight, it will prove fruitful to cast this later against the backdrop of a further understanding of these earlier stances against Heidegger.

In his pivotal essay "Existence and Hermeneutics," Ricoeur contrasts his own "longer way" for reaching ontology, taking hermeneutic phenomenology as the proper vehicle, with Heidegger's "shorter way" of re-asking the question of Being by assuming the

---

<sup>22</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Vol. III.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Kemp contends that while Ricoeur's critique of Levinas is too severe, which is at least in part true, his critique of Heidegger is not severe enough. Kemp wants to tie this accusation to a reading of Heidegger's notion of authenticity. As will be seen later, this is not so simply true. See: Peter Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas: Original Affirmation Between Ontological Attestation and Ethical Injunction," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 21, 195.

<sup>24</sup> Ernst Cassirer, "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics," in *Kant: Disputed Questions*, edited with an introduction and new translations by Moltke S. Gram (Chicago: Quadrangle Books 1967), pp. 131-158.



intimacy between the inquirer and the Being of the inquirer. Ricoeur does not want to jeopardize the advantage of his longer way, that it dwells on the ontic level in order to resolve the conflicts and to solve problems often overlooked in attempting to trace the most direct route to the question of Being. Ricoeur's basic objections to Heidegger's short way, as mentioned above, is that it too quickly reaches a unity of Dasein which Ricoeur does not consider to be forthcoming, and which remains for him problematical in that the unity of man is a regulative idea and not one that an ontology of Dasein can reveal.<sup>25</sup>

Ricoeur emphasizes the conflict of interpretations as revealing differing aspects of existence which ontically found various hermeneutic methods.<sup>26</sup> Further, on this ontic level and in an extended ethics, he has focused pointedly upon the problem of the place of evil in freedom within human existence and upon the ontic relation of human existence to the Sacred which is central to his whole philosophy. Thus, for Ricoeur, pausing to dwell on the ontic has fostered an integration or a dialectizing of the symbols which support a phenomenology of spirit and a psychoanalysis of desire, with their respective orientations to teleology and to archeology, both of which prepare for the relation to the Sacred within a phenomenology of religion and its eschatology. These advantages of the long way for Ricoeur militate against Heidegger's short way.

The fundamental justification of the long way over the short way to ontology is the underlying difference in the fore-comprehension of human existence. For Ricoeur, as mentioned, the unity of man as a regulative idea can not be achieved in existence and is not easily accessible to an ontology worked out too quickly. He says: "moreover, it is only in a conflict of rival hermeneutics that we perceive something

---

<sup>25</sup> It can be admitted at this point that perhaps Ricoeur stresses too much the broken aspect of human being and the truncated dimension of human existence. His account, especially the later ones, do ring true. Further Heidegger shows the advantage of passing to the originary level in an ontology which provides a more comprehensive and foundational unity below the broken existence which supports the conflict of hermeneutics of existence which has preoccupied Ricoeur for so long. Heidegger, however, as will be seen, has had to lop off the entire Kantian reason and the infinite, as well as the function of understanding in relation to such a reason driven to totality, completeness and the unconditioned. Thus, although Heidegger is useful in helping to get Ricoeur from fixating on his earlier interpretation of the existential role of evil, Ricoeur, even in his later somewhat mitigated appropriation of Kant's view of the tendency to the good and the proclivity to evil, can not ever go the distance with Heidegger's diminished role of Kantian reason.

<sup>26</sup> Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," pp. 6-11.

of the being to be interpreted: a unified ontology is as inaccessible to our method as a separate ontology. Rather, in every instance each hermeneutics discovers the aspect of existence which finds it as method."<sup>27</sup> Thus, at the very outset, Ricoeur has challenged Heidegger's view of care in a fundamental ontology emerging from an existential analysis of Dasein properly grasped in the fore-comprehension. In addition, his view of the fallenness of human existence, in avoiding the ontologization of fault by placing evil in the disproportionate synthesis between the infinite and the finite, militates against the quick move from the concrete existence of man to conditions of possibility of that everyday existence.

Thus a great impasse is evinced in the differing passages from existence to ontology by Ricoeur and by Heidegger. Heidegger does not share Ricoeur's view of a broken existence as fallen, nor does he dwell on the founding in ontic existence of the conflict of interpretations and questions of method which arises from that conflict. Although Ricoeur's position could be somewhat mitigated by softening the effect of the existential place of evil, the difference can be breached only by a radical adjustment in hermeneutics of existence, one closer to the general context of Levinas than to that of Heidegger. In our present context, this becomes another advantage of Ricoeur's approach, that it allows somewhat of a rapport with Levinas' insistence on the singularity and solitude of the existent, as will become more clear later.

Ricoeur's philosophy recasts the Kantian view of the demand on the part of reason for totality as well as reason's placing on knowledge a limit to experience in terms of his own development of a view of the quasi transcending of this limit through indirect expressions such as symbols, metaphors and narrative. In addition, for Ricoeur, such a demand for totality in a philosophy of limits requires that ethics be extended beyond the Kantian formal ethic of law and freedom to an ethics of the actualization of freedom in the act of existing. Such an extended ethics reorients the place of radical evil in existence and freedom, to the synthesis between the infinite and the finite as the existential structural place for the possibility of evil, allowing for a natural tendency to good but a mere proclivity toward evil. From that view of evil in freedom and existence emerges the view of hope and thus the necessity for speculative philosophy and its condition of possibility from the innovation of meaning engendered by the

---

<sup>27</sup> Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," p. 19.

productive imagination in affording schemata for the rules of understanding, and the extension of this function.

This broadened ethics, later to be seen as not incompatible with Levinas' ethics, is understood as a philosophy that leads from alienation to freedom and beatitude, attempting to grasp the "effort to exist in its desire to be,"<sup>28</sup> and opposing any reduction of reflection to a simple critique or to a mere "justification of science and duty as a reappropriation of our effort to exist; epistemology is only a part of this broader task: we have to recover the act of existing, the positing of the self, in all the density of its works."<sup>29</sup> Hence, it can be seen that Ricoeur has corrected Kant's view of the place of evil in freedom. He has, however, considered the locus of evil to stem from the disproportion in the synthesis between finitude and infinitude on the theoretical, practical, and especially affective levels which come to expression in the fullness of symbolic language. It is from the symbols of evil that thought reaches the notion of the servile will or the will in bondage. We have seen, then, that the advantages of the "long way" militate against the Heideggerian "short way. For, although his work on hermeneutics of existence and on the conflict of interpretations seems to flounder in dwelling on the ontic level before reaching the promised land of ontology, the resolution of the conflict indicates the importance of considering the ontic level further than Heidegger does.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, at the very outset, Ricoeur has challenged Heidegger's view of the explicitly temporal unification of Dasein's Being as care. Here, with the consideration of the conflicts in interpreting existence, Ricoeur's two objections to Heidegger's short way converge. For differing methods of interpretation are rooted in the different and polemically synthesized dimensions of human existence which they respectively reveal. Now, it can be seen that this earlier twofold critique of Heidegger must be integrated with Ricoeur's own later critiques regarding the comprehension of Being and with Levinas' critique regarding the need for the injunction of the face to face and

---

<sup>28</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, translated by Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup> Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretation*, p. 19. He says: "Moreover, it is only in a conflict of rival hermeneutics that we perceive something of the being to be interpreted: a unified ontology is as inaccessible to our method as a separate ontology. Rather, in every instance each hermeneutics discovers the aspect of existence which finds it as a method."

Levinas' critiques of Heidegger seen above. With this in view, I will now turn to Ricoeur's recent critique of Heidegger's view of time, temporality and history.

Heidegger wants to ground every understanding of real historical time on the comprehension of historicity in such a way that the written history of historical sciences is derived from the understanding of history. Ricoeur claims that Heidegger does not give us any "way to show in what sense the real historical understanding, properly speaking, is derived from this original understanding,"<sup>31</sup> explicitly bringing into play here the critiques analyzed above. In that Heidegger fails to show how historical sciences are dissociated from natural sciences and how one can arbitrate conflicts between competing interpretations, often inside even the same science. It is in this context that Ricoeur accuses Heidegger of not resolving, but rather dissolving problems of the conflicts of interpretation. Ricoeur, however, in his later criticism, focuses again on a central point in Heidegger's whole philosophy, that of temporality, time and history. And, indeed, it is Heidegger's failure to address the ontic sufficiently and the sciences that prevents him from adequately dealing with the alterity of time or the alterity of the Other, something to which Ricoeur can be seen to be open without too much adjustment in his own position. For, in both "Existence and Hermeneutics" and in *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur shows the need to pass through, on this level from which Heidegger's reflection begins but too quickly escapes, indirect language of narrative, earlier focusing on symbols and metaphors, now on narrative history and fiction. Reflection becomes an interpretation of language to decipher the meaning of my existence, even of myself, accessible in depth only in such indirect approaches. This view of Ricoeur culminates in the studies in *Oneself as Another*. And it is in this later focus that narrative, or more precisely, the story, can constitute or determine time in a way not envisioned by Kant or allowed for by Heidegger or Levinas. This move represents Ricoeur's continual expansion or completion of the work of Kant and Heidegger, here with regard to the constitution of time, the productive imagination, and the reflective judgment, all expanded into a coherent picture of a philosophy of action and ethical regeneration. In this context we can

---

<sup>31</sup> Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretation*, p. 10. See: Peter Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas:" p. 47.

see that historical or human time, with its three connectors, the calendar, the sequence of generations, and the trace, all constitute historical time "through which we join not only our predecessors, contemporaries and successors, but also the universe and cosmological time."<sup>32</sup> Thus, Ricoeur's criticism, which begins by reproaching Heidegger for wanting to derive an understanding of history from an understanding of Dasein's existence, ends in reproaching Heidegger for an incapacity to think historical time itself. We must turn to Ricoeur's fuller critique of Heidegger's category of temporality.

Ricoeur's strongest articulation of the critique of the phenomenology of time comes to grips with the primordial time of Heidegger. This critique of Heidegger's limitations regarding time is a serious one which cannot be ignored, in spite of the fact that Ricoeur extols the achievements of *Being and Time*, that is, that the principle of temporalization is sought out within the structure of care which allows for distinguishing time on different levels. Nevertheless, even with its levels of temporalization, Heidegger's treatment of time reveals most completely an inability to incorporate a certain sense of time. For, it is from Kant that we learned that time as such is invisible, that it could not appear in any living experience, that it is always presupposed as the condition of experience, and from this fact could only appear indirectly on objects apprehended in space and according to the schemata and the categories of objectivity. According to Ricoeur, it is this constraint which shows why even the internal time-consciousness borrows its structure from this objective time that the reduction holds in suspense. And even Heidegger's inclusion of the levels of temporalization fall before this objection: "But this very effort comes up against *the other* of phenomenological time: the 'popular' concept of time, made up of an infinite series of indifferent nows. Even the most decentered level of temporality - within-time-ness - where the 'in' of being in time is highlighted, never rejoins the 'ordinary' time which is simply removed from the phenomenological field by the allegation of an enigmatic leveling of the 'in' of 'within-time-ness'."<sup>33</sup> Ricoeur considers Heidegger's attempt to include the history of time from Aristotle to Hegel in this ordinary time to be in vain. For Ricoeur, there is a

---

<sup>32</sup> Peter Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas:" p. 47.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 29, No. 4/4, (Winter, 1985), p. 262. For Ricoeur's lengthy treatment and critique of Heidegger on Temporality, see: *Time and Narrative*, Vol. III, pp. 60-96.

disproportion between time that we unfold in living and time which envelops us everywhere.

Heidegger's account does not take into consideration the "heterogeneous temporal orders" to which the trace, as an original phenomenon, belongs. Ricoeur asks the critical question of Heidegger's attempt to deal with this in terms of having been and within-time-ness: "For how does *Dasein* interpret its having-been-there if not by relying on the autonomy of marks left by the passage of former humans? Heidegger's failure to understand the phenomenon of trace reflects the failure of *Sein and Zeit* to give an account of the time of the world which has no care for our care."<sup>34</sup> Ricoeur goes on to show how the trace, as an element with history, crosses the gap between internal time and cosmic time.

This critique parallels the broader critique of Heidegger's hermeneutic considered above. Although Ricoeur is exemplarily respectful of Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology and primordial time which it reveals, he must supply a hermeneutic which does more than that of Heidegger. In allowing the text a certain distancing from its situation of origin, and focusing on it in a quasi independence of the reader, Ricoeur has pointed out in hermeneutics something similar to what he is pointing out here regarding time, i.e., the need adequately to deal with that which is not reducible to the having been of *Dasein* in the temporal ecstases. For, no matter how much effort is exerted to consider the mode of being of *Dasein*, and the past as derivative from the temporality or historicity of *Dasein*, the fact remains that there is still something past which is independent of human existence and *Dasein*'s temporality and historicity – that other of which the trace serves as a trace of – as, for example, with the historical documents, monuments and implements which have no world remaining and no *Dasein* which is familiar with them. This requires, in fact demands, a reconstruction by imagination and intelligent interpretation and explanation, before being appropriated into familiarity of human existence. This is the same domain which is entered through a critique of Heidegger regarding the inadequacy of the internal time of phenomenology and his own primordial time that cannot encompass cosmic time. This critique of Heidegger shows clearly how Heidegger's perspective must be recognized in its limits regarding time and

---

<sup>34</sup> Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," p. 265.

hermeneutics, especially concerning that which is not reducible to care. The primordial relation of Dasein to Being is inadequate to deal with the otherness of cosmic time and of texts.

Further, for Heidegger, the drive for Being within his hermeneutical situatedness and the absolute status of the Being-Question constitutive of Dasein lead Heidegger further into a pitfall regarding history. In the *Rule of Metaphor* Ricoeur turns against "the manner in which Heidegger opposes all other ontologies by confining them inside the bounds of 'the' metaphysical."<sup>35</sup> Continuing with Kemp, we see that "This 'destruction of metaphysics' signifies in Ricoeur's eyes an 'unacceptable claim...[to put] an end to the history of being,'<sup>36</sup> a claim which is no more legitimate than the Hegelian attempt to demonstrate the closing of history.<sup>37</sup> Rather than support such a destruction or, today, deconstruction, of metaphysics, Ricoeur asks: "Which resources of ontology are capable of being reawakened, liberated and regenerated by coming in touch with a phenomenology of self?"<sup>38</sup> One can see in this criticism of Heidegger's destruction of the history of metaphysics a latent critique of historical time.

Now that we have seen the fundamental critiques made by both Levinas and Ricoeur of Heidegger, we can now contrast them with a view toward bringing their differing ethical orientations together, and in the process, see if situating Ricoeur between Levinas and Heidegger allows for a further development of his position in the light of that of Levinas. We have seen that Levinas reveals a twofold separation which Heidegger does not develop: the separation between communal existence or coexistence (*mitsein*) and the singularity and solitude of the existing existent; and the separation between the Other and Being-in-the-world. Taking into account Ricoeur's critiques of Heidegger, we can see first that Ricoeur's insistence on remaining on the ontic level gives initial philosophical focus a basic affinity with that of Levinas, for the ethical relation emphasized by Levinas takes place between to

---

<sup>35</sup> See: Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas," p. 48. The focus of our discussion here is from the end of the *Rule of Metaphor*: Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, sj, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), especially p. 311.

<sup>36</sup> Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas," p. 48: Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p., 312.

<sup>37</sup> Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas," p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas." P. 49 .

concretely existing singularities existing in some sense in separation and external to one another. Although Ricoeur himself does not agree with the intense separation, he does allow for a certain alterity which is not so far removed from that of Levinas as to prevent an ethical relation of Levinas' kind. It is precisely Ricoeur's alterity of time which allows a further extension of his philosophy in the direction of Levinas, and, picking up on a theme of the ethical freedom in the second person as not too far from the face to face, we can develop his position in a greater affinity for a positive contribution from Levinas, while leaving his overall ethical framework and principle in tact. And it is this general context of the ethical framework and principle, bringing an adapted Aristotelian teleology and Kantian deontology together form a coherent ethics that serves as a critique and an extension beyond Levinas.

While Levinas has been seen to critique Heidegger's treatment of time as not reaching time's alterity, especially in relation to death, Ricoeur's critique centers around cosmic time as external to and other than internal time, thus tying time to the cosmic rather than the Other as Levinas does. They both, however, have recognized the insufficiency of Heidegger's temporality of Dasein in relation to some other as the failure or break out of subjectivity or of Dasein. Now, time as other for both Levinas and Ricoeur can be brought together, since the cosmic is definitely other than temporality of Dasein, as seen earlier, and thus overlaps with Levinas's view. The cosmic time of Ricoeur certainly must be admitted in a full treatment, and just as the cosmic time includes any singularity (me) independently of the time of Dasein, i.e., it is the time which preexists us and surrounds us, and into which we are incorporated, it likewise is the time in which the Other is included, and in which the Other participates. Just as my time shares in the cosmic in so far as I am of the cosmic, so too for the other. Thus the alterity overlaps in time, and the alterity of time of the other reveals again the alterity of the other. Thus, Ricoeur's alterity of time of the cosmic can be brought to Levinas' alterity of the Other. And this Other is the place of the injunction or call to responsibility. We must reflect further on the other separation which Levinas includes against Heidegger, the separation between communal existence or coexistence (*mitsein*) and singularity of the existent. We must see if there is a connection with Ricoeur in spite of his critique of Levinas. The question concerning Ricoeur is whether he really accounts for a "singularity" or an overcoming of Heidegger on this point to the extent



that Levinas does so. Ricoeur does seem to include the singularity in the face to face, but the question as posed leaves open the extent to which he has explicitly incorporated it.

In the context of Ricoeur's own conviction of the priority of the ethical over the moral, Levinas's language of summons and injunction seems already too moral in a way similar to Kant in relation to Aristotle: i.e., the ethical is the foundation of the moral, and the injunction, duty and the law should not arise on the ethical horizon too soon. Ricoeur delves below moral duty to find a latent "ethical sense" which can be invoked in cases of "undecidable matters of conscience".<sup>39</sup> It must be remembered that Ricoeur, in the Seventh and Eighth Studies of *Oneself as Another*, polarizes Aristotelian ethics of virtue and Kantian morality of obligation, showing all the while the more fundamental dimension of the ethical aiming at or seeking of the good life. It is clear, then, why solicitude of the ethical is presupposed for the injunction: the critique of Kant in the Eighth Study could well be applied to Levinas, that the injunction is invoked too soon, even with the substitution of the face and the infinite for the Kantian pure rational moral law. Thus, in this present context, it is clear why Ricoeur shows that Levinas needs the ability to respond and the ability for some kind of reciprocity based on solicitude, which itself is caught up in seeking the good life or human good. But one has to admit that, in defense of Levinas, even Ricoeur has recognized the basic dimension of the face to face for ethics. And earlier in *Oneself as Another*, before confronting the position of Levinas, Ricoeur has already laid bare the notion of self-esteem latent within and intrinsic to the ethical aiming at the good life, from which he now extracts, or within which he interprets, a basic solicitude having the status of a "benevolent spontaneity."<sup>40</sup> Such benevolent spontaneity is the bases of a receiving at the same level as being called to responsibility in acting in accordance with justice, which is presupposed by any response of responsibility. This reciprocity, or receiving and reaching, is not the same as the equality of friendship, but it does compensate for the dissymetry. Although the whole of the Aristotelian framework eventually comes to light in reflection as the prerequisite framework for morality, it does not necessarily get the first focus within a

---

<sup>39</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 190.

<sup>40</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 190.

philosophical reflection. And even for Ricoeur, as has been seen, it is freedom in the second person or the face of other in the personal relation which begins ethics and takes on the connotation of transcending the values of our culture and times.<sup>41</sup> Further, it is violence and evil which demand that the limit of the Aristotelian framework is recognized.

Ricoeur contends that it is the search for equality across inequality which establishes the place of solicitude in ethics. Solicitude bespeaks a lack belonging to self-esteem, as the reflexive moment of the wish for the good life, constituted with a lack evolving with a need, a need for friends, and giving rise to the awareness of the self among others. Thus it is seen that solicitude is not external to self-esteem, but is constituted as a moment of self-esteem in its lack and need.

In taking Ricoeur to task for a too severe criticism of Levinas, Kemp admits that Ricoeur's critique is not too severe if one agrees with Ricoeur that "grounding ethics requires one to ascribe to solicitude a more fundamental status than obedience to duty."<sup>42</sup> This is a critical point, for it focuses precisely on Ricoeur's basic aim: to provide a quasi Aristotelian ethical framework and an adjusted Kantian deontological principle. The total backdrop and context for this critique of Levinas is Ricoeur's own efforts to critique and open up Kantian ethics of duty or obligation to its proper grounding in an ethics or an ethos, coming from the opposed direction. And in this Ricoeur's critique makes sense. But both Ricoeur and Levinas disagree with Kant to the extent that they each remove the priority to the absolute a priori moral law given to pure practical reason; and each opens the way to the fundamental role of desire, liberated from the Kantian interpretation. While Ricoeur wants to ground the obligation to law in the ethics of teleology, and in this context we could fix solicitude of our present context, Levinas wants to bring obligation alive in the concrete situation of the face to face, thus breaking out of totality, including even breaking out of the framework that Ricoeur is so careful to provide. Ricoeur's criticism of Kant can well be levied against Levinas in that he brings up the injunction too soon, but Ricoeur now has to supply for Levinas what he supplies for Kant, a foundation and a framework for ethics, which is precisely what he has intended all along. Although in reflecting on the

---

<sup>41</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "The Problem of the Foundation of Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 28, 1978, pp. 178 & 182-184.

<sup>42</sup> Kemp, "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas," p. 55.

moral situation one might first begin with the transcendence of the "face to face," this beginning does not supply an adequate foundation for ethical life, which has transpired at a basic level long before this reflection catches it in the act, so to speak. And this is precisely where Ricoeur incorporates a quasi Aristotelian teleological dimension into the ethicomoral situation. And while Ricoeur might want to add this to Levinas, and rightly so, it can be found that in the context of totality, Levinas has already to some extent included the situation which makes the "face to face" possible within totality.

Retaining Levinas' responsibility within Ricoeur's ethicomoral integration allows Ricoeur's place of receptivity to be integrated with an element of Levinas' view of totality, the latent exteriority. But this must preclude any subordination of Levinas's exteriority of the face and infinity to the totality, which he so consistently and rigorously avoids, and which would falsify or remove precisely the uniqueness of his view of alterity. In accepting the role of solicitude in human existence, Ricoeur has developed a place within interiority that really allows a response to the face of the Other. And in doing so, he has accounted for a central, indeed, the central point of Levinas, that a breakthrough--a break out-- of the "totality" of traditional philosophy is necessary for there to be a face to face encounter. This is precisely what Ricoeur has done in interarticulating the two movements of Heidegger and Levinas.<sup>43</sup> And incorporating this alterity of the Other is not entirely alien to Ricoeur's previous work, for he has encountered it in his consideration of the alterity of cosmic time, as seen above. So too here, the exteriority of the Other is outside the domain of the Heideggerian world, and of Levinas' totality. This is precisely the element of Levinas which must not be jeopardized in our present expansion of Levinas's view in order to clarify how a relation is possible within interiority. And, I dare say, Ricoeur seems to want to embrace this face to face in indicating it as the place where ethics really begins. And it is precisely in accepting the alterity of the Other that he has taken a positive element in agreement with Levinas, a point which even deconstruction likes. But this affinity with deconstruction cannot be exaggerated, for, in this context of even a mitigated deconstruction, Levinas' account of the ethical relation is lost to the deconstructive process, so that what remains is only the obligation of deconstructing. And nothing of

---

<sup>43</sup> It may be worth mentioning that the opposition Ricoeur draws is between Levinas and Husserl, and it is within this context that Heidegger comes into the discussion.

Ricoeur's undertaking as a project of ethicomoral philosophy, except this same alterity which he shares with Levinas, can survive this deconstructive process.

Hence, by bringing the opposing movements of Heidegger and Levinas together, Ricoeur is able to adhere to a positive contribution of postmodern deconstruction without succumbing to the allure of its plunge into the abyss, forsaking the priority of the enterprise of reason. Thus, by focusing on both Levinas' and Ricoeur's critiques of Heidegger, we have been able to find the common ground of alterity between them, which, in spite of the distance which separates them, allows an integration which supports Ricoeur's ethicomoral position.<sup>44</sup>

Loyola University

PATRICK L. BOURGEOIS

---

<sup>44</sup> See footnote 28 above.