



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

- This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
- A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
- This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
- The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
- When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

MYSTERY AND METHOD

The Mystery of the Other,
and its Reduction in Rahner and Levinas.

Michael Purcell

Ph.D. Thesis
University of Edinburgh

1996



Abstract

Karl Rahner, responding to the problems raised by Kant's critical philosophy, sought to present a Thomistic metaphysics of realism in a modern thought-form through a reduction of the interrogative thrust of the intellect to its possibility conditions, and so, like Maréchal before him, attain an absolute affirmation of Being. Rahner's transcendental system, however, would seem to have been overtaken by a more existential stress in phenomenological thinking.

Emmanuel Levinas, with his thought of the Other and his attempt at an excedence from Being, would seem at first glance to sit uncomfortably alongside Rahner's system, yet, a closer reading of both unearths a remarkable convergence in their thinking. The deeper phenomenological reduction which Levinas undertakes to reveal the inter-subjective context of consciousness helps to humanise Rahner's approach. This thesis attempts a fruitful confrontation of both thinkers by, firstly, indicating the tension between Rahner's own philosophical propaedeutic and his theological writings, particularly on grace, mystery and the love of God and neighbour, where he affirms that human existence is ultimately *reductio in mysterium* and that human fulfilment is to be found in a personal relationship with a human Other. A second purpose is to show how these same theological themes can be developed from within Levinas' own thought, and how his own philosophy can provide a worthwhile context for Christian theology.

The thesis unfolds by considering the various methods - metaphysical, transcendental and phenomenological - which surround both thinkers (Chapter 1) and then proceeds to outline their various philosophical influences (Chapter 2). Since the notion of Being as self-presence is fundamental in Rahner, and since Levinas refuses a philosophy of presence, Chapter 3 questions the privilege of presence. This will lead, in its turn, to a rethinking of the notion of subjectivity: the subject is not to be considered as presence-to-self but as a relationship with the Other (Chapter 4). This relationship is experienced in Desire (Chapter 5) and in the responsibility experienced before the face of the Other (Chapter 6). The relation between ethics (the good) and Being is pursued in chapter 7. Finally, the notion of *mystery* is indicated as the theme which inspires the work of both Rahner and Levinas (Chapter 8). Rahner's unmastered mystery will become Levinas' incomprehensible *infinity* in the presence of which the subject is called to response and responsibility.

CONTENTS

Table of Contents	iv
Abbreviations	viii
INTRODUCTION	x
0.1 Rahner and Levinas: The Possibility and Necessity of the Confrontation	xi
0.2 Biographical Details	xxix
1. METHOD	1
1.1 The Question of Method	2
1.2 The Phenomenological Method	9
1.21 The Inadequacy of Evidence in Husserl's Phenomenology	13
1.22 The Openness of Phenomenology.	19
1.23 The Eventful Dissimulation of Thought	22
1.3 Rahner's Transcendental Reduction	26
1.4 Another Reason, or the Other as Reason	33
1.41 Reason as 'Reductio in Mysterium'	36
1.42 Levinas' Reason	38
1.5 Lévinas' Reduction	49
1.51 Saying (le Dire) and Said (le Dit)	52
1.6 A Transcendental Method?	58
1.61 Kant's Transcendentalism	59
1.62 A Dynamic Transcendental Framework	65
1.63 Lévinas' Diachronic Transcendentalism	68
1.7 Summary	77
2. PHILOSOPHICAL ORIGINS	80
2.1 The Dynamism of the Intellect, or, What can I know?	82

TABLE OF CONTENTS

v

2.2	Rahner's Metaphysics of Knowledge	89
2.21	Presentation of the problematic in Thomas	89
2.22	The Convertibility of Being and Knowing	91
2.3	The Subject as the Point of Departure for the Metaphysical Question	94
2.4	Transcendental Subjectivity as Self-Presence in Knowledge and Freedom	99
2.41	Human Knowledge	99
2.42	Human Freedom	105
2.5	The Place of the World	107
2.51	Sensibility	118
2.6	What must I do? What have I the right to hope for?	122
2.61	Kant's Ethical Project	122
2.62	Kant's Ethical Project in Lévinas	129
2.63	The Thanatological Undoing of Being	131
2.64	Hoping Beyond Being	141
2.7	Summary	145
	3. BEYOND PRESENCE	148
3.1	The Dialectic of Performance and Concept	152
3.2	The Interrogative Relation	162
3.21	A relation of a third genre	167
3.22	Discontinuity	176
3.3	The Neutral Turn, or Illeity	178
3.4	The Ultimate Question	183
3.5	Summary	187
	4. SUBJECTIVITY AND INFINITY	189
4.1	Subjectivity and Being	190
4.11	The metaphysical itinerary: beyond being	190

4.2	Metaphysics and Transcendence	201
4.3	To be is to be conscious of...	208
4.31	Phenomenology and Ontology	212
4.32	Lévinas' Criticisms of Husserl	218
4.4	The Idea of Infinity: Descartes and the Cogito	220
4.41	The Agent Intellect and the Excess	228
4.5	Summary	234
	5. DESIRING THE OTHER	236
5.1	Transcendence as Desire	237
5.11	The Dynamic of Desire	238
5.12	The disinterestedness of Desire	243
5.2	Proximity	245
5.3	Rahner on Desire	249
5.31	Desire as Intellectual Dynamism	250
5.32	Natural Desire in de Lubac	253
5.33	Rahner's Criticism of "La Nouvelle Théologie"	255
5.34	De Lubac's Criticism of Rahner	257
5.4	Lévinas on Desire, and graced existence	261
5.5	Summary	265
	6. THE FACE AND ITS SACRAMENTALITY	267
6.1	Sign, Image and Reality	269
6.11	The Ambiguity of the Sign	274
6.2	The Symbolism of the Face	276
6.3	Sacramentality	279
6.31	Sacrament as Word	282
6.32	Symbolic Reality	287

6.4	Language as Responsibility	292
6.41	Signification as the 'one-for-the-other' of substitution	298
6.5	The Face of the Other and the trace of God	303
6.6	Summary	308
	7. THE GOODNESS OF BEING	311
7.1	The Analogy of Being in Rahner	314
7.2	An Uncompromised Alterity	322
7.3	Alterity and Analogy	325
7.4	Analogy in Lévinas	328
7.5	The event of Being	334
7.6	The Goodness of Being	343
7.7	The Problem of the Social	344
	8. THE MYSTERY OF THE OTHER	348
8.1	Philosophy and Theology	349
8.2	Summary	351
8.3	<i>Cet Autrui est étrangement mystérieux</i>	360
	Bibliography	368

Abbreviations:

K RAHNER

Concept of Mystery	<u>The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology</u> , in TI, IV, pp.36-73
Concerning Nature and Grace	<u>Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace</u> , in TI, I, pp.297-317
Experience of Self	<u>Experience of Self and Experience of God</u> , in TI, XIII, pp.122-132
Experience of Transcendence	<u>Experience of Transcendence from the Standpoint of Catholic Dogmatics</u> , in TI, XVIII, pp.173-188
Foundations	<u>Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity</u> , (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978). (Originally published as <u>Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums</u> , Freiburg, 1976)
Human Question of Meaning	<u>The Human Question of Meaning in face of the Absolute Mystery of God</u> , in TI, XVIII, pp.89-104
HW	<u>Hearers of the Word</u> , in <u>A Rahner Reader</u> , G McCool (tr.), (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975); originally published as (<u>Hörer des Wortes</u> , Munich, 1963). There is also an English translation by M Richards, (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1969)
Incomprehensibility	<u>An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas</u> , in TI, XVI, pp.244-254
Love of Neighbour	<u>Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God</u> , in TI, VI, pp.231-249
SW	<u>Spirit in the World</u> , W Dych (tr.), (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968); originally published as <u>Geist in Welt: Zur Metaphysik der Endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas Von Aquin</u> (1939)
TI	<u>Theological Investigations</u> , 20 vols. Various translators, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961 onwards)

A comprehensive bibliography of Rahner's works in English, see C J Pedley, An English Bibliographical Aid to Karl Rahner, in Heythrop Journal, XXV (1984), pp.319-365

E LEVINAS

- CPP Collected Philosophical Papers, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978)
- DEHH En Découvrant l'Existence avec Husserl et Heidegger, (Paris: J Vrin, 1967)
- DMT Dieu, la Mort et le Temps, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1993)
- DQVI De Dieu qui vient à l'idée, (Paris: J Vrin, 1986)
- EE Existence and Existents, (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1978)
- EN Entre nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre, (Paris: Bernard, Grasset, 1991)
- GP God and Philosophy, in Philosophy Today, 22 (1978), Summer. (Originally in Le Nouveau Commerce, Cahier 30-31, Printemps, 1975), pp.127-145
- HAH Humanisme de l'autre homme, (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1972)
- OB Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, Alphonso Lingis (tr.), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) (Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974))
- TI Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority, Alphonso Lingis (tr.), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979) (Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961))
- TIHP The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology, A Oriane (tr.), (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1973) (La Théorie de l'Intuition dans la Phénoménologie de Husserl, (Paris: Librairie F Lacan, 1930))
- TO Time and the Other, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987)

A comprehensive bibliography of works by Lévinas can be found in R Burggraeve, Emmanuel Lévinas. Une bibliographie primaire et secondaire (1929-1985), Centre for Metaphysics and Philosophy of God, Leuven.

A guide to the works of Blanchot is to be found in Substance, 14, (1976), pp.142-159

Introduction

*'Theology has always caused me a lot of trouble. The more I ponder and delve into it, the darker and mistier it seems to me to be. It is certainly no science for subtle invention, and without love it would be no good at all. But I love it because it values love above all else; and grace is never lacking where love comes first.'*¹

0.1 Rahner and Levinas: The Possibility and Necessity of the Confrontation.

This thesis attempts to confront fruitfully the theological thinking of Karl Rahner and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Any confrontation, or even comparison, presupposes a certain convergence or contiguity of interest. Dialogue demands a certain coming together, which nonetheless still respects the differences and distance between the interlocutors. If this were not so, the communicative power of language would soon disintegrate into the confusion and closed circle of the same. Thought may assimilate the strange and foreign in terms of the same and familiar, yet the ultimate failure of this quest for comprehension and comprehensivity is the possibility and guarantee of thinking's continual movement beyond its present.

The way of convergence, however, is a narrow one; writing, as Derrida notes, is 'the responsibility of *angustia*: the necessarily restricted passageway of speech against which all possible meanings push together, preventing each other's emergence.'² The anguish of the act of writing means that what can be written is always suppressed by what is actually written. Hence, Levinas can write in his own Preface to *Humanisme de l'autre homme*,

¹ Lady Study to the Dreamer in Wm Langland, Piers the Ploughman, Book X, Study and Learning, (London: Penguin, 1966), pp117-18

² Jacques Derrida, Force and Signification, in Writing and Difference, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.9

*'L'avant-propos, toujours écrit après le livre, n'est pas toujours une redite en termes approximatifs, de l'énoncé rigoureux qui justifie un livre. Il peut exprimer le premier - et l'urgent - commencement, le premier "c'est-à-dire" - qui est aussi le premier dédit - des propositions où, actuelle et assemblée, s'absorbe et s'expose, dans le Dit, l'inassemblable de l'un-pour-l'autre, signifiant comme Dire.'*³

Like speaking, writing is difficult because, not saying enough, too much is said. The task of this essay is to advance Karl Rahner and Emmanuel Levinas along the narrow way of convergence, and for two principal reasons:

Firstly, in order to grasp afresh what Rahner is saying. Is such a task necessary? It is on account of the conviction that Rahner's theology remains relevant but requires a new *Denkform* that the task is made necessary. The notion of *Denkform* is found in J B Metz who, in his *Christliche Anthropozentrik*, understands it as the fundamental form which a philosophical reflection takes. He writes that '[t]hat which most characterises a way of thinking is not primarily what is explicit in it, but the dominating horizon presupposed in each expression, not what is thematically stated, but the dominating direction of the statement... not the statements themselves, but the way one looks upon them.'⁴ Gerard McCool comments: 'The *Denkform*, even though it seldom, if ever, reaches the level of conscious explicitation, is a thinker's fundamental understanding of his own self and being in general. Thus his *Denkform* is the horizon against which his reflections constantly proceed, and which, in consequence, influences his interpretation of every object which falls under his philosophical investigation.'⁵ Rahner, by

³ E Levinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972), p.11

⁴ J B Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik: Über die Denkform des Thomas von Aquin*, (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1962), p.34

Jörg Splett, in his article on *Thought-Forms*, (*Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. VI, London: Burns & Oates, 1970), pp.255-257, locates the introduction of the expression *Denkform* into philosophical discussion in H Leisegang's *Denkformen* (1951). A 'thought-form' is a paradigmatic way of thinking against a particular *Weltanschauung* which predominates in that perspective. Splett notes that the notion of *Denkform* was transposed to ontology by J B Metz and employed by him to mean 'man's comprehensive understanding of being and of himself, the horizon that encompasses all events, and gives its essential nature to an epoch in the history of the spirit' (ibid., p.256). It is 'never merely a form' for it cannot be adequately distinguished from its content, nor can it be clearly exposed for it proceeds 'from the transcendental experience which the finite spirit has of beings and of itself' (ibid.).

⁵ G McCool, *Philosophical Pluralism and an Evolving Thomism*, in *Continuum*, II, 1 (1964), p.11

confronting Thomas and Kant, sought to provide theology with a modern *Denkform* which would better equip it to dialogue with contemporary philosophical thinking. Recognising the anthropocentric *Denkform* of Thomas, he appreciated that Thomas' thinking, although framed in Aristotelian categories, was modern, not mediaeval, in that it adopted an anthropocentric rather than a cosmocentric viewpoint.⁶ In addressing the problems raised by Kant for the possibility of metaphysics, Rahner attempted to translate Thomas into a modern post-Kantian *Denkform*. Unfortunately, contemporary philosophy has developed beyond Kant, and Rahner's own transcendental response to the Kantian problematic seems largely to have been overtaken in philosophy. Yet, Rahner's extensive theological enterprise remains influential for theological thinking; if it is to continue to make a relevant contribution to theological debate then what he writes needs to be able to dialogue with a thinking which has long passed by the way of transcendentalism. Is such a task possible? Splett notes that, on account of the transcendental origin of a particular *Denkform* and its historical expression, '[a] thought-form may develop new possibilities and a fuller life as freedom becomes aware of itself and as stimulating contacts are made with other forms.'⁷ It is my conviction that the philosophical insights of Emmanuel Levinas provide a new context or philosophical *Denkform* for a re-reading and deepening of Rahner's transcendental *Denkform*.

Secondly, to pursue Levinas philosophy into the realm of Christian theology to see how it can be fruitfully developed and contribute to the ongoing reflection on fundamental Christian doctrines. It is my conviction that Levinas' style of doing philosophy can have a positive influence on, for example, the theologies of grace and the sacraments, and Rahner's philosophical anthropology, by an ethical redemption of the ontological which is so prevalent in Rahner's thought.

What is to be avoided, however, is a too simple identification of Rahner with Levinas, such that Rahner becomes Levinas, or Levinas becomes Rahner. Both are different, and any attempt to interpret each reductively in terms of the other would preclude the further possibilities which reflection on their work might offer. All we seek to do is show how, despite their differences, and perhaps because of their differences, one can hear themes in each which are consonant with the other, and, having heard,

⁶ See J B Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik: Über die Denkform des Thomas von Aquin*, p.23

⁷ J Splett, art. cit., p.257

open avenues by which each can be advanced into areas where they might otherwise not go.

Undertaking such an enterprise involves a re-reading, or, what has come to be called a deconstruction. This is not, however, to be understood as a negative enterprise which violently and systematically takes what an author wrote apart. Rather, as Druscilla Cornell points out,⁸ deconstruction is a 'philosophy of the limit' which operates by 'refocussing attention on the limits constraining philosophical understanding' and 'exposes the quasi-transcendental conditions that establish any system,' thereby avoiding the reduction of the philosophical tradition to 'an "unreconstructable" litter.'

Such a re-reading which draws attention to framework limits so as to go beyond them is in-keeping with both Rahner and Levinas. It is to attempt what Rahner himself, deconstructively, attempted in *Geist in Welt*, where, confronting Thomas and Kant, he wrote of the need 'to salvage the eternal in a philosophy from the irrelevance of merely what has been.'⁹ In his Introduction to *Geist in Welt*, Rahner writes that

'[i]f it is absolutely necessary, then, to begin with the starting point given by Thomas and to abandon one's self again and again to the dynamism of the matter itself so that historically accessible fragments of his philosophy can really become philosophy, it is naturally inevitable that such starting points given by Thomas will be pushed further by one's own thought.'¹⁰

He goes on to say, by way of defence against commentators of Thomas, that his work will not be a simple historical commentary on Thomas, but will try 'to relive the philosophical event itself in Thomas'.¹¹ The approach of Levinas is similar for in his

⁸ D Cornell, The Philosophy of the Limit, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.1

⁹ K Rahner, Spirit in the World, Wm Dych (tr), (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968, p.li)

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.1

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. li

J B Metz, in his foreword to Spirit in the World, stresses that Rahner's work, though faithful to tradition, is not a 'restitution, a merely invigorated repetition of historical findings' (xiv) but 'mediates itself precisely through its own origin' (xiv). Rahner himself distinguishes his task from that of the commentators, when he writes, 'This work intends to present one part of the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge.... By the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge we mean the teaching of Thomas Aquinas himself. We presume the right, therefore, to try to understand him from his own writings, without appealing to his commentators and the testimony of his school, and without going into the historical origins of his doctrine' (xlix). Whether or not Rahner

own doctoral thesis on the Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology, he writes that he 'would like to study and present Husserl's philosophy as one studies and presents a living philosophy,'¹² immersing himself in it in order to come face to face with the same 'things' which Husserl addresses. Derrida perhaps suggests the same when, quoting Merleau-Ponty, he writes,

'Communication in literature is not the simple appeal on the part of the writer to meanings which would be part of an a priori of the mind; rather, communication arouses these meanings in the mind through enticement and a kind of oblique action. The writer's thought does not control his language from without; the writer is himself a new kind of idiom, constructing itself.'¹³

The event of writing, says Derrida, is *inaugural*, for 'it does not know where it is going, no knowledge can keep it from the essential precipitation towards the meaning that it constitutes and that is, primarily, its future.'¹⁴ Taking Rahner, as writer, as 'a new kind of idiom,' the task is to try to *relive the inaugural philosophical event itself* in Rahner.

Derrida, justifying his own method, provides some initial methodological guidance. '[T]he writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely.'¹⁵ In a critical reading, therefore, one must recognise the governance of the system within which writing occurs

is faithful, as Metz maintains, to the 'teaching of Thomas Aquinas himself' is another question. When *Geist in Welt* was presented as his doctoral thesis at Freiburg in 1936, it was rejected by M Honecker, his promotor, as not representing the authentic thought of Aquinas. For a fuller treatment, see Cornelio Fabro's *La svolta antropologica di Karl Rahner*, Milan 1974 which views Rahner as a radical deformer of Thomas (*deformator thomisticus radicalis*). However, whether or not Rahner properly gains the philosophical event in Thomas which he seeks is not the question here. *Geist in Welt* marks the initial articulation of Rahner's own philosophical thinking; it is this thinking which calls for scrutiny.

¹² E Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. André Orianne (tr.), (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. xxxiii

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Force and Signification*, in *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, 1978, p.11; (from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'An Unpublished Text', tr Arleen B Ballery, in 'The Primacy of Perception', ed James M Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp.8-9. Text first published in *Revue de métaphysique et Morale*, Oct-Dec, 1962)

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.11

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (tr), (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 158

for '[t]he person writing is inscribed in a determinate textual system,'¹⁶ and one 'must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses,'¹⁷ in order to produce the 'signifying structure.' To produce a signifying structure is not to *reproduce* 'by the effaced and respectful doubling of commentary, the conscious, voluntary, intentional relationship that the writer institutes in his exchanges with the history to which he belongs.'¹⁸ Although such a 'doubling commentary' has its place in critical reading, it 'has always only *protected*, it has never *opened*, a reading.'¹⁹ Yet, one must remain within the text, for it is the only referent to which we can legitimately relate. 'There is no outside text (*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*)'²⁰ which acts as a vantage point from which to understand the text. '[R]eading must be intrinsic and remain within the text.'²¹ What commentary aims at is not simply the preservation of the self-identity of the text; it also 'leaps over the text towards its presumed content in the direction of the pure signified.'²²

With regard to Rahner, the task is firstly, therefore, to recognise the language and logic which provides the context for Rahner's own particular discourse, but which, as *con*-text not only provides a supporting framework for his theological enterprise, but also a limit within which his thought is constrained. It is to recognise that Rahner operates with a transcendental philosophy, founded on a variety of ontological and epistemological presuppositions, which, in large degree, dictate the direction and manner in which his thought proceeds. The human subject is conceived as an intellectual dynamism towards the horizon of Being which presents itself in its inherent knowability to a knowing subject. The model is thus one of a centrally situated *ego cogito* surrounded at each turn by an ontological horizon against which objects are perceived and understood and in terms of which they derive significance.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.160

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.158

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*, p.159

²² *ibid.*

However, remaining within the text, it is also to recognise elements within Rahner's thought which strain against the constraint of his structure and place it in question. For example - and negatively - , although a titular concern in Spirit in the World, it seems that the significance of the world, even though a positive determination of finite spirit, gets *passed over*. Just as Heidegger criticised the metaphysical tradition which preceded him for its tendency to understand the phenomenon of the world either in terms of '*the ontical depiction of entities within the world*' or in terms of an '*ontological Interpretation of their Being*', and so 'passed over' the phenomenon of worldhood, Rahner seems to operate with an ontical understanding of the world, neglecting its pre-ontological existentiell signification, and so the ontologico-existential concept the worldhood of the world seems similarly to be passed over.²³ Rahner's world seems to be merely notional, and there is little trace or taste of what Levinas will term the 'elemental' world of enjoyment, far less any significance attached to it. More significantly, however, the world of Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word seems sadly an un-peopled, impersonal world. Against this background, Rahner's later reflections on mystery and the fulfilment of the human person in a loving relationship with his neighbour seem to be excessive with respect to his own transcendental system, grounded as it is within an ontological framework.

Returning to the notion of *Denkform*, H Egan, in his consideration of The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon²⁴ speaks of the *mystical horizon* which informs Ignatius' way of reflection, and situates Rahner within such a horizon. In so doing, there is the implicit acknowledgement that, insofar as Ignatian spirituality informs Rahner's way of thinking, it provides a wider *Denkform* within which Rahner's ontological and transcendental *Denkform* is situated, and thus Rahner might be said to be already beyond his own framework. Rahner himself speaks of the wider influence of Ignatius of Loyola on his thinking,

'I do think that in comparison with other philosophy and theology that influenced me, Ignatian spirituality was indeed more significant and important... I think that the spirituality of Ignatius himself, which one learned through the practice of prayer and religious formation, was more significant for me than all learned philosophy and theology inside and

²³ See M Heidegger, Being and Time, J McQuarrie & E Robinson (trs.), (London: Harper & Row, 1962), pp 91-94

²⁴ See H Egan, The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon, (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), p.14-17

outside the order.²⁵

In fact, acknowledging the work of H Egan just mentioned, he remarks that, besides his "transcendental theology", one of the ideas which is very important to him is 'the logic of concrete individual knowledge in Ignatius Loyola' which is 'basically and typically Jesuit' but which the traditional type of fundamental theology written by Jesuits neglected. '[T]he scholastic Jesuit theologians did not use the greatest and most important riches from the *Spiritual Exercises* to fertilise their own theology. Instead, they presupposed some sort of essential and rational theory of knowledge as the only possible one and didn't realise that Ignatius had taught them something entirely different.²⁶ Rahner recognised in Ignatius the attempt to express thematically, systematically and formally a thought and logic which was not the profane logic of Aristotelian philosophy, but what Egan terms a '*lived supernatural logic*' which is implicit in the lives and actions of all people insofar as human life is ultimately an experience of transcendence towards a term or an alterity which is excessive to the self and which disturbs and disrupts that profane logic which accompanies everyday living. If one might advert to Levinas, it is a logic which cuts across 'the logic of contradiction' 'where the other of A is the non-A, the negation of A, but also across dialectical logic, where the same dialectically participates in and is reconciled with the other in the Unity of the system.²⁷ The logic of unquenchable Desire which regulates the relationship with Infinity is otherwise. With regard to Ignatius, Rahner asks whether there is 'for Ignatius a fundamental evidence and certainty which is presupposed by the various rules and techniques for the Discernment of Spirits and which performs the same function as the first principles of logic and ontology do for the rest of knowledge and which, distinct from the rules, makes them possible, so that they are the application and regulated putting into practice of this fundamental certitude? The rules would thus represent as

²⁵ K Rahner in an interview with Leo O'Donovan, Karl Rahner at 75 years of Age, for *America Magazine*, 10 March, 1979, in Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982, (New York: Crossroads, 1986), p.191

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.196

²⁷ E Levinas, Totality and Infinity, A Lingis (tr.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1979), p.150

it were a supernatural logic and themselves refer back to their own "first principle".²⁸ Key to this supernatural logic is consolation without previous cause (*consolación sin causa precedente*),²⁹ which is outwith 'the rest of knowledge' grounded in the first principles of logic and ontology, and which has its own intrinsic evidence. The point is that thought has its own context or horizon within which it unfolds, and its own point of departure from which it proceeds. For Ignatius, his thinking was in the context of a mystical horizon, 'an utterly basic experience which became ever more explicit and active throughout his life,' namely 'the intrinsic link between his own mystery as man and the mystery of God in Jesus Christ.'³⁰ For the Ignatian *Denkform*, consolation without previous cause constitutes the key experience within this mystical horizon. But, what does consolation without previous cause mean? Ignatius himself writes in *Exercise 330*: 'without any previous perception or knowledge of any object from which such consolation might come to the soul through its own acts of intellect and will',³¹ which Rahner interprets as 'without conceptual object.'³² Egan comments,

'We maintain, therefore, that if a consolation is given in such a way that it was *not previously* asked for, that it is out of proportion to "what I want and desire," that it transcends the grace *expected* from the meditation at hand, and draws the exercitant wholly into God's love, then we have the consolation without previous cause.... God alone enters, renders the specific meditation at hand transparent (hence, "without conceptual object") and draws the exercitant beyond what he wants and desires, entirely into His love. We understand the Ignatian "without previous cause," therefore, to mean a consolation which totally transcends the "what I want and desire" of a particular meditation, a disproportionate consolation which God alone can cause.'³³

²⁸ K Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, Burns & Oates, London, 1964, p.130 (Originally, *Das Dynamische in der Kirche*, Herder, Freiburg)

²⁹ Cf. Exercises, 336, where Ignatius writes, 'It belongs to God alone to give consolation without previous cause, for it belongs to the Creator to enter into the soul, to leave it, and to act upon it, drawing it wholly to the love of his Divine Majesty. I say, without previous cause, that is, without any previous perception or knowledge of any object from which such consolation might come to the soul through its own acts of intellect and will.'

³⁰ H Egan, *op. cit.*, p.29

³¹ See K Rahner, *Dynamic Element*, p.132

³² *ibid.*, p.133-4, n.28

³³ H Egan, *op. cit.*, p.35

In other words, the key Ignatian experience and an experience from which Rahner's thought takes its origin is the experience of the Absolute who, excessive and disproportionate to any subjective power, draws close with the consolation of his grace.

What I hope to be able to indicate is that such elements within Rahner's writing can act as a 'blind spot' (*tâche aveugle*) or *scotoma*³⁴ and can provide a point of entry as well as *un point de départ* for his thinking other than the philosophical propaedeutic of the transcendental framework outlined in Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word which usually provides the initial chapters of works which consider Rahner and which is presented as the foundation of his other works. One need only note the way in which works on Rahner unfold from an initial consideration of the structure and method of his thought in Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word and then move on to a consideration of specific theological themes. While this may be perfectly understandable from a methodological point of view, it carries the danger of allowing the structure of Rahner's thought to dominate and act as the backdrop or horizon of understanding for whatever else he has written to the neglect of the fact that the actual method or style often subverts methodology, as Charles Reed in his work on method in Levinas indicates.³⁵ What is being advocated here is a counter movement which would indicate the way in which specific elements in his thought, such as the concept of mystery and the love of neighbour, loosed from their structural confinement, enable a more fruitful reading of Rahner.

A brief survey of the more accessible presentations of Rahner's thought in English serves to illustrate the point. For example, Louis Roberts states quite bluntly

³⁴ In a chapter entitled, '*...That Dangerous Supplement...*' in Of Grammatology, Derrida views the notion of 'supplement' in Rousseau's writing as 'a sort of blind spot' around which his text is organised. 'In certain respects,' he writes, 'the theme of supplementarity is certainly no more than one theme among others. It is in a chain...*But it happens that this theme describes the chain itself...* [T]he concept of the supplement and the theory of writing designate textuality itself in Rousseau's text...' (p.163). The notion of the 'blind spot' finds its counterpart in transcendental thinking also. B. Lonergan, in Insight, A Study of Human Understanding, London, 1973, employs the notion of *scotosis* for the unconscious aberration which occurs in human understanding, and the resulting blind spot a *scotoma* (pp.191-92).

³⁵ See C W Reed, The Problem of Method in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Ph.D thesis, 1983, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International), and Levinas' Question in Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.73-82

that 'to understand Rahner's hermeneutics is to understand his theology'³⁶ for his hermeneutics 'really do knit the scattered published works of this theologian into a tight system' and 'it is almost impossible to separate philosophical principles from theological conclusions.'³⁷ Further, '[u]ltimately, any theology will only be as valid as the philosophy that gives rise to it.' Francis Fiorenza, in his Introduction, sees Spirit in the World as providing 'the unifying principle and presupposition of Rahner's whole theology'³⁸ and the 'source' of Rahner's theological synthesis³⁹ which becomes the concrete and practical development and application of the 'formal outlines and abstract structures' of Spirit in the World, and which 'can only be adequately understood when Spirit in the World is understood.'⁴⁰ Karl-Heinz Weger adopts a similar approach, saying that the transcendental method, more than his anthropological approach, clearly determines his thinking, that the transcendental method 'can always be found in theology,'⁴¹ and that future theology will be 'even more explicitly a transcendental theology.'⁴² The same development in presentation is given by George Vass, who outlines the flow of the chapters in the first volume of his book on understanding Rahner:

'a concise statement of Christian faith as proposed by Rahner (1), the subsoil of which is, and is meant to be, a philosophical theology (2). From this the knowing subject (3) is opened up to its preeminent object (4-5) whose eventual revelation he is obliged to hear (6). In this new

³⁶ Louis Roberts, The Achievement of Karl Rahner, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p.8

³⁷ One would want to argue, on the contrary, following Maurice Blanchot's question on the nature of a fragment, that the great value of Rahner's work is the scattered and fragmentary nature of so much of it, and the fact that he has turned away from an attempt at systematisation. See Maurice Blanchot, L'Entretien Infini, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p.451ff.

³⁸ Francis Fiorenza, Introduction to Spirit in the World, 'Karl Rahner and the Kantian Problematic,' (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968), p.xix

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.xlv

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.xx

⁴¹ Karl-Heinz Weger, Karl Rahner: an Introduction to his Theology, (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), pp.17-18

⁴² *ibid.*, p.18

awareness he is called to believe in the Mystery that is God' (7).⁴³

Vass begins with Rahner's statement of faith and, following an ontological excursion through Being, ends up in the affirmation of Mystery. Yet, while Vass is right to situate Rahner's philosophical enterprise in the context of his formulations of Christian belief, and while he acknowledges that 'Rahner's philosophy cannot be treated in isolation...[but]... is integrated into the entirety of his thought to the extent that much of his later theological position can only be understood in the light of his philosophical work, and *vice versa*,⁴⁴ he nevertheless sees the thinking of Spirit in the World as a philosophical prolegomena to Rahner's overall project, failing to give due consideration to the fact that Rahner's formulae of faith are by way of *response* to the mystery which has already and always drawn close to the human person in the experience of grace. His thought seems to be presented as an *intellectus* which ends up in *fides*, rather than a *fides quaerens intellectum*.

The very first line of Thomas Sheehan's doctoral thesis presents itself as an investigation of 'subjectivity and transcendental method as the two bases of Karl Rahner's theological anthropology.'⁴⁵ Later, in Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations, 'a critical examination of [Spirit in the World] with a particular focus on Rahner's debts to and arguments against the thought of Martin Heidegger,'⁴⁶ Sheehan exhaustively and somewhat exhaustingly presents Rahner's philosophical foundations almost solely in terms of Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word with little attempt to show that reflections on specific themes throughout Rahner's many articles might have any philosophical significance in his thought. Throughout the entire book, Sheehan's only direct references to Rahner's other works are drawn almost exclusively

⁴³ George Vass, A Theologian in Search of a Philosophy: Understanding Karl Rahner, Vol. 1, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1985), p.xiii

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.19
Vass, unfortunately, does not address the significance of *vice-versa*.

⁴⁵ T J Sheehan, Subjectivity and Transcendental Method as the Fundamental Groundwork of Karl Rahner's Theological Anthropology, Ph.D. thesis, Fordham University, 1971, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms)

⁴⁶ *idem*, Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987), p.1

from 'The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger.'⁴⁷ There is a further quote, referring to Heidegger, taken from 'The Passion and Asceticism,'⁴⁸ a single reference to both 'Aquinas: The Nature of Truth,'⁴⁹ and 'Theology and Anthropology,'⁵⁰ and two references to 'Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God,'⁵¹ dealing, in part, with philosophical scepticism.

Sheehan interestingly, in the context of this latter article, speaks of Rahner's 'movement beyond the ontological... to the theological... - a strategy that stays within the parameters of ousiology,'⁵² a philosophy of substance, and notes that Rahner's 'retrieval of the unsaid in Aquinas puts some pressure on the ousiological seams of the transcendental garment in which Rahner wraps the Angelic Doctor,'⁵³ which 'gives rise to the question about pressure on the ousiological seams.'⁵⁴ Thus, Sheehan can ask '[d]oes Rahner tear the garment and surpass ousiology?'⁵⁵ Unfortunately, Sheehan does not really develop this question other than in the final pages when, quoting from Foundations of Christian Faith, he writes that 'Rahner's later shift from the language of beingness to that of mystery seems to me to represent far more than a rhetorical strategy; it is rather a rending of the ousiological garment, a surrender of its language and viewpoint in order to attempt to find words adequate to an insight that transcends the metaphysical experience. Rahner's break with metaphysics is, to be sure, neither

⁴⁷ K Rahner, 'The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger,' A Tallon (tr.), in Philosophy Today, 13 (1969) (First published in French in Recherches de Sciences Religieuses, 30 (1940), pp.152-71)

⁴⁸ idem, 'The Passion and Asceticism' in TI, III

⁴⁹ idem, 'Aquinas: The Nature of Truth', in Continuum II (1964)

⁵⁰ idem, 'Theology and Anthropology' in The Word in History T P Burke (ed.), (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966)

⁵¹ idem, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God', a lecture delivered at the University of Chicago, Nov 8, 1974

⁵² T J Sheehan, Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations, p.227

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.228

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

clean nor consistent.⁵⁶ Sheehan points out that Rahner does speak of 'infinity' or 'infinite actuality' in reference to the 'mysterious incomprehensibility of the God of faith,' but asks whether 'these [are] the careless slips of a theologian who is not fully aware of when his philosophy edges beyond ontology, and when it falls back into it?'⁵⁷ Again, the question is not answered, nor is its possible significance for Rahner's philosophy addressed.

While accepting the methodological convenience of first presenting the framework and then applying it to the wider interests of Rahner's theology, what is being argued in this thesis is that such an approach is blind to the deeper significance of Rahner's theology, namely that it is not so much a maieutic which, beginning with the subject, finally arrives at incomprehensible mystery, but rather is, like human existence itself, a *response* to that mysterious other, which Levinas will speak of as 'otherwise than being,' 'otherwise than knowledge,' which has always and already drawn close to the subject as grace and glory. I use the term 'blind' in two regards; firstly, insofar as it indicates something seen but not recognised, a sight frustrated by the structure of vision; secondly, however, blind in a more positive sense which gives attention to the paradox of proximity, whereby the Other, escaping any focal point, is both too close and too distant. If sight is 'contact at a distance'⁵⁸ and belongs to a philosophy of presence and possession, then a 'blind spot', when sight fails, gives a way beyond an ontology of understanding towards a metaphysical relationship with the Other.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.313

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Maurice Blanchot uses the phrase 'contact at a distance' in The Space of Literature Anne Smock (tr.), (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p.32, to describe the relationship between subject and object in terms of vision. Levinas, in Existence and Existents, Alphonso Lingis, (tr.) (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1978) employs the phrase 'possession at a distance', thereby stressing the appropriating tendency of the subject with regard to objects which fall under its gaze (p.46).

⁵⁹ Levinas distinguishes ontology and metaphysics. Ontology, 'a reduction of the other to the same by the interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being,' has been the feature of western metaphysics, and, to the extent that Rahner's theory is 'theory as comprehension of being', he remains within the ontological tradition. Levinas proposes, in place of ontology, a metaphysics which does not reduce alterity to the same, but, with critical intention, respects exteriority and calls into question the appropriating power of the same. Such a critique is metaphysics,

Now, thought as an excessus beyond ontology towards what is other than the world of Being is the dominant theme in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas, in his preface writes that Totality and Infinity 'presents itself as a defence of subjectivity.'⁶⁰ This is achieved, however, not by an original consideration of the self and its consciousness which thereafter opens on to exteriority, but by asserting the 'philosophical primacy of infinity'⁶¹ or the priority of the Other. This is not to abandon philosophy and its historical concerns of subjectivity, knowledge and truth; rather it is to found them in the already given and lived experience of the relationship with the other. It is to affirm exteriority as the basis of subjective interiority. 'The ethical relation, opposed to first philosophy which identifies freedom and power, is not contrary to truth; it goes unto being in its absolute exteriority, and accomplishes the very intention that animates the movement unto truth.'⁶² It is precisely in the relationship with the other person that philosophy is confounded, and yet enabled to go beyond its limits, by being attentive to its proper origin. Henceforth, the situation in which 'the subject is origin, initiative, freedom, present'⁶³ is reversed such that subjectivity is to be appreciated as 'welcoming the Other, as hospitality.'⁶⁴

But this is to re-think the task of philosophy. If, formerly, philosophy's proper task was viewed as the return to the origins of the self within consciousness, now philosophy's proper task is its reflection on what is other. Thought is not to be viewed in terms of *adequation* to an object. Consciousness is no longer to be defined in terms of an intentionality which is fulfilled in the possession and representation of the object. Signification is not in the gift of the subject. The essential relationship with alterity is

'transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same... the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge. And as critique precedes dogmatism, metaphysics precedes ontology' (TI, pp.42-43). Further, insofar as the relationship with Being is always by way of an (ethical) relationship with an existent other, 'ontology presupposes metaphysics' (ibid., p.48).

What is being argued here is that Rahner's real intention is not so much an ontology, as Levinas understands it, but a metaphysics in Levinas' sense of the term.

⁶⁰ E Levinas, TI, p.26

⁶¹ ibid.

⁶² ibid., p.47

⁶³ idem, OB, p.78

⁶⁴ idem, TI, p.27

pre-eminently a *non-adequation* in which what is thought is always in excess of the capacity of thinking. But '[t]o contain more than one's capacity is to shatter at every moment the framework of a content that is thought, to cross the barriers of immanence'⁶⁵ into an exteriority which is its own signification and sense, into a transcendence which, with respect to the subject, maintains itself as absolute and other.

Now, this need, which Levinas recognises, to leave behind the confinement of the island of interiority and affirm the philosophical primacy of exteriority has parallels with the transcendental project undertaken by Joseph Maréchal and pursued by Karl Rahner who comments that in the experiences of everyday life 'man is forever occupied with the grains of sand along the shore where he dwells at the edge of the infinite ocean of mystery.'⁶⁶ Responding to the Kantian Critique of the possibility of metaphysics and the seeming impossibility of affirming an objectivity absolute with respect to the subject, that is, the impossibility of the ontological affirmation of the object, Maréchal, by considering the dynamism inherent within the intellect, seeks to attain a transcendental deduction of the ontological affirmation, saying that, unless this is possible, '*nous demeurons, de droit confinés à l'intérieur du sujet comme tel, nous sommes emmurés dans le "relatif", et aucun artifice de démonstration ne nous permettra de "jeter un pont" vers l'extérieur et l'absolu.*'⁶⁷ In other words, subjective interiority, as Levinas will want to show, finds its foundation and defence in the absolute exteriority of alterity. For Maréchal's realism, the affirmation of the ontological reality of the object is essential, for it is the a priori which conditions all acts of affirmation, preceding thought and action, although known only a posteriori through reflective analysis. Unless there is an ontological affirmation of the object, the subject remains hopelessly bound up within the confines of its own interiority, and from this follows the Cartesian problematic of bridging the gap between a thinking subject and an external world. If the Absolute has not already 'placed its mark on the basic tendency of our mind,'⁶⁸ then the mind's activity as an orientation 'in its most intimate depths' towards

⁶⁵ ibid.

⁶⁶ K Rahner, The Experience of God Today, p.159

⁶⁷ J Maréchal, Le Point, I, p.12; V, p.14

⁶⁸ idem, A propos du sentiment de présence chez les profanes et chez les mystiques, in Etudes sur la psychologie des mystiques. Tome Ier, (Paris and Bruges: Editions Universelles, 1924), p.120

absolute being, truth and goodness is without foundation. For Maréchal, then, the absolute reality of the object is not simply a postulate of theoretical reason, but 'intervenes, as internal condition of possibility, in the same constitution of the object necessary to our knowledge.'⁶⁹ Rahner, building on Maréchal and employing a Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge recognises the subject-object divide as a false problematic. The problem 'does not lie in bridging the gap between knowing and object by a "bridge" of some gap: such a "gap" is merely a pseudo-problem.'⁷⁰ Before any knowledge - the mark of subjectivity - there is the situation of always and already finding oneself in the exteriority of the world in sensibility. 'It is not [therefore] a question of "bridging" a gap, but of understanding how the gap is possible at all.'⁷¹

Now, for Maréchal, the absolute exteriority of the other - the ontological affirmation - is attained by a consideration of judgement as affirmation; for Rahner, it is reached through a consideration of the interrogative impulse of the finite spirit. In both, however, the absolute is affirmed in terms of Being. What is lacking in the transcendental framework employed both by Maréchal and Rahner - a lack or *lacuna* acknowledged by Maréchal - is the personal other in the presence of whom, as interlocutor, questions are raised, and before whom judgement has significance. With Van de Wiele one can ask '*si l'être-au-dehors-de-soi-même, l'être-au-monde, en un mot la 'transcendance', ne constituent pas le propre de l'esprit fini en tant que tel.*'⁷² Such an understanding of the human subject which would recognise the intersubjective, relational and finite nature of human existence would be more in-keeping with the thrust of contemporary philosophy which stresses that it is this 'being-with-others', where 'the other' is appreciated as a 'personal other', which represents '*une structure totalement originelle d 'l'essence de l'homme.*'⁷³ Like Vande Wiele, '*nous croyons qu'il est*

⁶⁹ idem, *Le Point*, III, p.306; Cf. *Le jugement*, p.281

⁷⁰ K Rahner, SW, p.75

⁷¹ K Rahner, SW, p.75

⁷² J Vande Wiele, *Métaphysique et pensée contemporaine: étude critique*, in *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 61 (1963), p.107

⁷³ *ibid.*, p.106

One should note that the intersubjective dimension was recognised by Maréchal himself towards the end of *Cahier V* of *Le point de départ de la Métaphysique* when he identified certain lacunae in his work, namely, the 'metaconceptual' and 'irrepresentable' aspects of human experience, and the personal dimension of life. He wrote, '*L'être*

*préférable de rechercher l'Absolu par la médiation d'une description complète et minutieuse de l'esprit humaine dans sa totale densité et dans ses rapports avec le monde et avec autrui.*⁷⁴ It is in Levinas that absolute exteriority is personalised in a relation which is first and foremost ethical, and in respect of which the language and logic of Being is neither adequate nor appropriate. It is this fact which is key to understanding the development of this present work: in Levinas the absolute is an ethical absolute. This ethical absolute is not attained by way of Being as the fruit of a further ontological reflection, as if there were first ontology and then ethics. Ethics is always and already otherwise than being or beyond being. It is not farther away than Being, as if one could describe the arc of Being, beyond which knowledge cannot travel, but rather, being's other, or otherwise than being, an ethical other dimension outwith the three-dimensional ontological structure within which thought operates, an other which thereby contests the privilege of ontology.

intellectuel est une "personne" et ne peut satisfaire d'une Fin suprême qui serait seulement "Chose" à posséder: si Dieu est notre Fin dernière, il semble devoir l'être en tant que "personnel". Mais, de personne à personne, la seule relation susceptible de combler les aspirations profondes est le don réciproque et libre de l'amitié (p.607-608).

Rahner, too, throughout his theological writings speaks of the centrality of the personal; other in human development. Human nature is 'a multidimensional, dynamic reality, realising itself only when turning lovingly to another person' (The Commandment of Love in relation to the Other Commandments, in TI, 5, p.441), and, 'a priori openness to the other human being belongs essentially to man's transcendental' (Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God, in TI, 6, p.237).

The important point is not that the intersubjective dimension to human existence is neglected by Rahner, or by Maréchal for that matter, but that, within the transcendental structure of their thought, it appears as secondary, if not accidental, to the intellect's relation to absolute being.

0.2 *Biographical Details*

As the principal thinkers in this thesis may well be new and unfamiliar to the reader, some biographical details will serve to situate them:

Joseph Maréchal

Joseph Maréchal was born on 1st July, 1878 at Charleroi, Belgium, where he received his schooling at the Jesuit *Collège du Sacré Cœur*. After entering the Society of Jesus in 1895, he began his philosophical studies at the Jesuit Scholasticate in Louvain in 1898. Rather than continue philosophical studies for a fourth year, he turned his attention to biology, completing a Ph.D in that subject at *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*, Louvain. Maréchal was ordained in 1908 and began thereafter, in 1910, to teach biology and experimental psychology at the Jesuit scholasticate in Louvain. While a refugee in England during the war years with some Jesuit students, he began work on the various *Cahiers* of *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique*, which continued following his return to Belgium in the autumn of 1915. Work was also begun then on his *Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics*. *Cahiers I, II, and III* were published during 1922-23, and the influential *Cahier V*, *Le Thomisme devant la philosophie critique*, which confronted Aquinas and Kant, appeared in 1926. *Cahier IV* was published posthumously.

Maréchal died, aged 66, at Louvain on December 11th, 1944.

Karl Rahner

Karl Rahner was born on 5th March, 1904 at Freiburg im Breisgau, West Germany, where he received his primary and secondary school education at the *Realgymnasium*. In 1922, he entered the Society of Jesus at the Jesuit Novitiate in Feldkirch/Voralberg, Austria. From 1924-27, he pursued his philosophical studies at the Jesuit philosophates at Feldkirch and Pullach (near Munich), spent 2 years teaching at the Jesuit house of studies in Feldkirch-Tisis, before undertaking theological studies at the Jesuit theologate in Valkenberg, Holland, from 1929-1933. On July 26th, 1932, he was ordained a priest. After a final year of Jesuit formation, he began his doctoral studies in philosophy in 1934 at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, where, under the direction of Martin Honecker, he wrote and defended his thesis, *Geist in Welt*, in

1936. The thesis was rejected as not being a true interpretation of Thomas. He continued doctoral studies in theology at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, and in December of 1936, received the degree of Doctor of Theology from the University of Innsbruck. Following his *Habilitation*, he began his university teaching career as lecturer in dogmatic theology at the University of Innsbruck. Various academic positions followed.

From 1939-44, he lectured in Vienna; from 1945-48, he was professor of dogmatic theology at the Jesuit theologate in Pullach, before returning, in 1948, to the theology faculty at Innsbruck where, in 1949, he became professor of dogma and the history of dogma. Recognition of his theological value was recognised when he became a *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council. In 1964, he moved to the University of Munich to become professor of Christian Philosophy and the Philosophy of Religion, and, then, in 1967, professor of dogma and the history of dogma on the Faculty of Catholic theology at the University of Münster/Westfalen. 1969 saw him become a member of the Papal Theological Commission.

Karl Rahner died soon after his 80th birthday on 30th March, 1984, in Innsbruck.

Rahner's publications are many and varied, perhaps the most well-known being the sixteen volume *Schriften zur Theologie*, spanning 1954-1984, translated as Theological Investigations in 22 volumes. The reader is referred to the list of abbreviations and bibliography for a full list of works used in this work.

Emmanuel Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas was born on January 12th, 1906 in Kovno, Lithuania into an orthodox Jewish family. During the First World War, the family emigrated to Karkov in the Ukraine. In 1923, he went to Strasbourg, France, where he began his philosophical studies, and where he met Maurice Blanchot. Like Rahner some six years later, he spent 1928-1929 at Freiburg-im-Breisgau to follow courses offered by Husserl and Heidegger, and where, in 1930, he completed his thesis on The Theory of Intuition in the Phenomenology of Husserl. Also in 1930, he became a French citizen. During the war years, he was a prisoner in a German prisoner of war camp, and, although Jewish, was protected by his French uniform. Following the war, he was part of the circle which gathered around *le Collège philosophique*, which had been founded and was animated by Jean Wahl, the significance of which Alain Finkielkraut describes in La sagesse de

l'amour:

'Au lendemain de la Libération, Jean Wahl fonde, à Paris, rue de la Montaigne-Sainte-Genève, le Collège philosophique. Cette institution, aujourd'hui complètement oubliée, fut, pendant quelques années, le lieu de la pensée vivante en France. S'y donnaient à entendre, en effet, des discours non académiques, des recherches nouvelles, des prospections risquées qui n'avaient leur place ni dans l'Université, ni dans les grandes revues de plus en plus mobilisées pas le combats du temps.

Il faut que représenter ce collège comme une sorte d'espace préservé de tous les conformismes, une enclave soustraite à la tyrannie naissante de la politique en même temps qu'affranchie d'une tradition philosophique pusillanime et somnolente...'⁷⁵

It was in such a philosophical climate that Levinas emerged, though, as Finkielkraut points out, outwith this circle, his words found hardly an echo in the post war philosophical debate, and it was some 30 years later, that this 'discrete and demanding philosopher' was more generally known. In 1947, Levinas was named director of *L'École Normale Israélite Orientale*. In 1961, he became a professor at the University of Poitiers, and in 1967, professor at the University of Nanterre. In 1973, he was named a professor at the Sorbonne.

Levinas outlines the various influences which formed his own thinking, making the point that '*[u]ne pensée philosophique repose sur des expériences préphilosophiques*',⁷⁶ of which François Poirié, in conversation with Levinas, identifies three.

Firstly, literary influences: asked what it was that led him to philosophy, Levinas responds,

'Je pense que ce sont d'abord mes lectures russes. C'est précisément Pouchkine, Lermontov et Dostoïevski, surtout Dostoïevski. Le roman russe, le roman de Dostoïevski et de Tolstoy, me paraissait très préoccupé des choses fondamentales. Livres traversés par l'inquiétude, par l'essentiel, l'inquiétude religieuse, mais lisible comme quête du sens de la vie.'⁷⁷

Secondly, the Hebrew Bible, especially Talmudic texts and Rabbinical

⁷⁵ A Finkielkraut, *La sagesse de l'amour*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p.15

⁷⁶ François Poirié, *Emmanuel Levinas: Qui êtes-vous?* (Lyons: La Manufacture, 1987), p.10

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 69

commentary. Sean Hand⁷⁸ notes that 'the fact of revelation (which has been contrasted with reason ever since the mediaeval writings of Saadya, often called the father of Jewish philosophy) leads Levinas to present the Bible as the model of ethical transcendental philosophy.' In his own introduction to *Du Sacré au Saint*⁷⁹ when speaking of the relation of the oral Torah to the written Torah, Levinas writes; '*La Thora orale parle 'en esprit et en vérité', même quand elle semble triturer des versets et des lettres de la Thora écrite. Elle en dégage le sens éthique comme l'ultime intelligibilité de l'humain et même du cosmique.*' The Jewish writings, especially the Talmud, though it is not itself a philosophy - since philosophy tends to be a Greek phenomenon - is nevertheless a rich source of experiences which can nourish philosophy. As Levinas says in *Quatre Lectures Talmudiques*⁸⁰: '*si le Talmud n'est pas la philosophie, ses traités sont une source éminente de ces expériences dont se nourrissent les philosophies.*'

Thirdly, the historical experience of emigration across Russia, and then to France, the rise of Hitler and National Socialism, and the experience of the holocaust.

Of specifically philosophical influence is the thinking of Husserl, Heidegger, Bergson. Responding to a question from Richard Kearney on his philosophical itinerary,⁸¹ Levinas acknowledges his indebtedness to Bergson's theory of time as concrete duration (*la durée concrète*), the phenomenology of Husserl, with whom he studied at the University of Freiburg for two semesters in 1928-29, and Heidegger, who, after the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927, was then the leading light in German philosophy.

⁷⁸ Sean Hand, (ed.), *Introduction* to the chapter on 'Revelation in the Jewish Tradition,' a presentation of *L'au-dela du Verset*, in *The Levinas Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

⁷⁹ E Levinas, *Du Sacré au Saint*, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1977), p.10

⁸⁰ idem, *Quatre Lectures Talmudiques*, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1968), p.12

⁸¹ R A Cohen: *Face to Face with Emmanuel Levinas*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p.13

Maurice Blanchot

Levinas acknowledges the influence of Blanchot, whom he met at Strasbourg where they were students together during almost the whole time that Levinas spent there. He writes of Blanchot,

*'Il me mentionne parfois dans ses livres et m'élève beaucoup dans tous les sens du terme. Je veux dire que je me trouve très élevé quand dans ses interventions il se rapproche de moi. Sur beaucoup des points nous pensons en accord. Il a traversé une évolution toute intérieure où il n'y eut jamais la moindre concession, même à l'égard de soi.... Il choisissait toujours le chemin le plus inattendu et le plus noble, le plus dur. Cette élévation morale, cette aristocratie foncière de la pensée est ce qui compte le plus et élève.... Il fut aussi pour moi comme l'expression même de l'excellence française; pas tant à cause des idées qu'à cause d'une certaine possibilité de dire les choses, très difficile à imiter et apparaissant comme une force très haute. Oui, c'est toujours en termes de hauteur que je vous parle de lui.'*⁸²

Maurice Blanchot, author and critic, has been writing for the past fifty years, yet his work has been relatively unknown outside France until quite recently. However, although his texts are becoming more accessible to an English-speaking readership, they remain in themselves inaccessible, for Blanchot's main thrust is the infinite inaccessibility of the work (*oeuvre*). The inscription at the beginning of Blanchot's Le Très-Haut states quite simply, '*Maurice Blanchot, romancier et critique. Sa vie est entièrement vouée à la littérature et au silence qui lui est propre.*' Michel Foucault writes that '[s]o far has he withdrawn into the manifestations of his work, so completely is he, not hidden by his texts, but absent from their existence, that for us he is that thought itself - its real, absolutely distant, shimmering, invisible presence, its inevitable law, its calm, infinite, measured strength.'⁸³ To a world espoused to philosophies of light and systems of integration, Blanchot's thought presents itself - if Blanchot can ever be said to be 'present' - as a thought from the outside of any philosophy and any system. His themes are those of 'night', 'darkness', 'absence', distance, 'impossibility' and 'obscurity' rather than day, light, presence, proximity, possibility, and clarity; and work is an interrupting of standard philosophical discourse. His writing, rather than being a philosophical presentation, is the non-philosophy of the book whose theme cannot be presented or re-presented. This emphasis on the non-philosophy of the book is a

⁸² E Levinas, in François Poirié, op. cit., p.71

⁸³ M Foucault, Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from the Outside, (New York: Zone Books, 1990), p.19

challenge to the privilege and primacy of thought. As Levinas notes, 'Blanchot does not see in philosophy the ultimate possibility, nor, moreover does he see human limitation in possibility itself, in the 'I can' (*je peux*).'⁸⁴ Foucault remarks that it is now necessary to think through fiction for 'I speak' runs counter to 'I think'. 'I think' relates to the I's self-certainty as in the Cartesian project, but 'I speak' is distance, dispersion, effacing of existence. It is the outside and the disappearance of the speaking subject who is less the responsible agent of discourse, but a 'non-existence in whose emptiness the unending of language uninterruptedly continues.'⁸⁵ Hence Mark Taylor can write that, for Blanchot, 'the book fails, always fails. A non-absent absence, which is *not* a presence, eternally returns to interrupt the author and tear to pieces the pages of his book.'⁸⁶ A book moves towards the creation of a systematic totality, and yet fails in representing the thought of the author. With respect to the author, the book is strangely absent. It is strange and foreign (*étrange*), outside of the author's own space, and the author outside of the work's space. It is the *neutral* space.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ E Levinas, Sur Maurice Blanchot, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1975), p.9

⁸⁵ M Foucault, Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from the Outside, p.11

⁸⁶ M Taylor, Altarity, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.226

⁸⁷ An extensive bibliography of, and essays on, Blanchot can be found in Sub-stance, 14, 1976. Further reading on Blanchot can be found in Emmanuel Levinas' Sur Maurice Blanchot, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1975).

1.

Method

1.1 *The Question of Method*

The question of method raises itself at the beginning of any enquiry. Otto Muck indicates that '[t]he question concerning methodology is an indication of a crisis [in which] the access to reality most familiar to us appears to have been called into question with regard to its fundamental validity.'¹ Methodology, however, although it 'accompanies inquiry,' 'does not project a complete and adequate description of the way *a priori*.'² Rather, method unfolds as inquiry progresses. The problem of charting and unravelling method was brought into focus by Kant's critical turn. Whereas formerly, metaphysics had concerned itself with the *object* of the investigation - Being - rather than with its own implied *method*, with Kant the method by which philosophy proceeded was to be exposed. Emerich Coreth, writing from within a transcendental perspective, reflects that previously '[t]he question was never raised about the basic method of metaphysics, that method by which metaphysics, if possible at all, should validate and build itself up in conformity with its own nature.'³ Maréchal indicates the same, contrasting the approach inaugurated by Kant with that of previous thought, when he writes, '[i]f the epistemology of the ancients did not remain foreign to all critical preoccupation, their theory of knowledge proceeded from another viewpoint than the modern Critique.'⁴

Kant had found inspiration in the new scientific method of the positive sciences which stood in marked contrast to the lack in the method of metaphysics, whose 'prevailing mood [was] that of weariness and complete indifferentism - the mother, in all the sciences, of chaos and night' (A, x). Where the positive sciences had succeeded, metaphysics alone had 'not yet had the good fortune to enter upon the secure path of a science' (B, xiv), but remained a 'random groping' among 'mere concepts' (B, xv). If

¹ Otto Muck, The Transcendental Method, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p.11 (Original edition Die Transzendente Methode in der Scholastischen Philosophie der Gegenwart, (Innsbruck: Verlag Felizian Rauch))

² *ibid.*

³ E Coreth, The Problem and Method of Metaphysics, in International Philosophical Quarterly, 3, (1963), p.403 (Hereafter, Problem and Method)

⁴ J Maréchal, Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance, cahier V, Le Thomisme devant la philosophie critique, 2me ed., (Brussels: L'Édition Universelle, 1949), p.47

metaphysics was to secure itself, it needed to undergo a critique of itself. 'This attempt to alter the procedure which has hitherto prevailed in metaphysics, by completely revolutionising it in accord with the example set by the geometers and physicists, forms indeed the main purpose of this critique of speculative reason. It is a treatise on method, not a system of the science itself' (B, xxii). As Heidegger notes, 'The aim of the Critique of Pure Reason is fundamentally mistaken if this work is interpreted as a "theory of experience" or as a theory of the positive sciences. The Critique of Pure Reason has nothing to do with a theory of knowledge.'⁵ Kant continues, that the Critique 'will, therefore, decide as to the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general, and determine its sources, its extent, and its limits - all in accordance with principles' (A, xii). The Critique is thus concerned with the possibility of Metaphysics, and a proper methodology is at the root of that possibility.⁶

The question of method in an enquiry in which Levinas figures pre-eminently raises particular problems, for Levinas' methodology is continually challenged by his method and style. Those who have previously written of the method by which his work progresses populate their texts with questions. Steven Smith points out that Levinas' pursuit of the ethical with its 'uncompromising treatment of God and neighbour ... seems to negate the minimum conditions of sense and reason,'⁷ and raises questions for interpreters:

'how can there be a rational argument concerning an infinite that avowedly exceeds any rational totality? How can there be a phenomenological description of something that is not evident, or an ontological analysis of something that is beyond being? If Levinas' analysis is neither phenomenological nor ontological, what is it? Why call it philosophy?'⁸

Charles Reed opens his discussion on Levinas' Question by asking, 'How does he do it?'⁹

⁵ M Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem*, p.16

⁶ See D P Dryer, *Kant's Solution for Verification*, (London, 1966), p.23, n.1

⁷ Steven G Smith, *Reason as One for Another: Moral and Theoretical Argument in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, in Richard Cohen (ed.) *Face to Face with Emmanuel Levinas*, (Alnaby: State University of New York Press,) 1986, p.53

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ C W Reed, *Levinas' Question*, in Richard Cohen (ed.) *Face to Face with Emmanuel Levinas*, p.73

The question of method arises often in reading Levinas. He is 'aggravatingly profound' but where is the philosophical rigour?

'Is he merely naïve and moralistic? Is there a deep structure contained within his thought? Or does he prod us into responding to his writings by asking an unheard of question?'¹⁰

In fact, Reed, having written his doctoral dissertation on the problem of method in Levinas' philosophy in 1983,¹¹ admits only three years later in 1986 that he is 'now firmly convinced that the question of method is simply the wrong entrance into Levinas' thought. Methodology is essentially a quest for transparency about the foundations of thinking; it not only assumes a structure but it assumes the strict and formal repeatability of certain procedures.¹² Levinas apparently fails with regard to the transparency and predictability of procedure.

The reaction which Levinas' philosophy provokes derives in large measure from the clandestine manner in which his philosophy operates. Maurice Blanchot, who will prove an invaluable guide and interpreter in this work, likens the reaction provoked by Levinas to that provoked by scepticism.

'Levinas wrote... that scepticism was invincible. While easily refuted, the refutation leaves scepticism intact. Is it really contradicted when it openly uses reason that destroys it? Contradiction is also the essence of scepticism.... The invincible scepticism that Levinas admits shows that his own philosophy, his metaphysics... affirms nothing that is not overseen by an indefatigable adversary, one to whom he does not concede but who obliges him to go further, not beyond reason into the faculty of the irrational or towards a mystical effusion, but rather towards another reason, towards the other as reason or demand. All this appears in each of his books. Doubtless, he follows the same path; but in each case, the unexpected emerges to render the path so new or so ancient that, following it along, we are stuck as by a blow to the heart - the heart of reason - that makes us say within ourselves, "But I've also thought that; I *must* think it."¹³

¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹ idem, The Problem of Method in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Ph.D Dissertation, 1983, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International). (Hereafter Problem of Method)

¹² idem, Levinas' Question, p.74

¹³ M Blanchot, Our Clandestine Companion, in Richard Cohen (ed.) Face to Face with Emmanuel Levinas, p.42

In other words, Levinas' thought recognises an inherent rationality in reality, but the reality so indicated is not the reality which has become the victim of a philosophical entrapment by thought, and in which the ethical is simply an adjunct or derivative; the reality which Levinas recognises as rational is, first and foremost, an ethical reality, and this provides the wider framework within which philosophical thinking becomes operative; however, it is a framework which calls all other frameworks into question. For Levinas, reason's 'essential interest' lies beyond the speculative or the epistemological in the ethical, and to *experience* the ethical is to recognise that 'the Real is rational and that the Rational alone is real' and that there are reasons 'that "reason" does not know, and which have not begun in philosophy.'¹⁴ As Reed indicates, the real provocation which Levinas effects is not simply his philosophy but the questions which touch us in our humanity. His claim about the 'nature of questions' is that 'they arise from our relation to what lies outside of ontology, beyond being.'¹⁵ To this extent, then, any method which is operative in Levinas' thinking must be an anti-method, not in that it rejects method but insofar as the protoethical experience which animates thought constantly disturbs, disrupts, and finally undoes any methodology which would claim a sure foundation or yield a conclusive result.

The question of method is equally important in Rahner, and raises questions of foundations, philosophy and methodology. In her study of Rahner's Theological Method,¹⁶ Carr indicates the threefold problematic which confronts any attempt at 'an expository and interpretative analysis of the theology of Karl Rahner' and 'his characteristic way of doing theology,'¹⁷ which, like Levinas' provocation, presents itself as a response to those questions which touch us in our humanity.

'The problem is foundational in that it raises the question of the point of departure for theology, whether and in what way that grounding lies in concrete experience and thought. It is, implicitly at least, philosophical, calling for analysis of all that is presupposed about the human situation in any theological affirmation. It is, finally, a methodological problem for it asks how theology is to be done in the light of what is thus known

¹⁴ E Levinas, GP, p.143

¹⁵ C W Reed, Levinas' Question, p.74

¹⁶ Anne Carr, The Theological Method of Karl Rahner, (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) (Hereafter, Method)

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. vii

about human persons and their world.¹⁸

One might say that Carr identifies, firstly, a phenomenological perspective with regard to the problem of method: foundations relate to *concrete experience* and thought; secondly, a transcendental perspective: presuppositions require reflective analysis; and thirdly, a methodological perspective which enquires about the relationship between practice and knowledge. That Rahner's transcendental approach to philosophy and theology has been heavily criticised cannot be doubted. Yet, this criticism need not *necessarily* be definitive, for although Rahner takes as his starting point 'the principle that every philosophy, i.e. every genuine metaphysics worthy of the name must proceed along the lines of transcendental philosophy, or else it is not philosophy in this authentic sense at all,¹⁹ nonetheless such an approach need not *necessarily* take its point of departure the irreducible questioning *of being* from which he begins. A transcendental philosophy calls for a phenomenologically adequate articulation of 'concrete experience and thought,' and, as Levinas indicates, this concrete experience is not primarily speculative and theoretical but ethical. Finally, with regard to the methodological problem which Carr indicates, one can perhaps venture the suggestion that, like Levinas, whose own characteristic way of doing and undoing philosophy subverts any methodology, Rahner's own method and style of doing theology 'in the light of what is ... known about human persons and their world'²⁰ provides the beginnings of a resolution to the foundational (phenomenological) and philosophical (transcendental) problematic which Carr indicates, and enables Rahner's thought to be advanced beyond the captive fetters of the transcendental method as he makes use of it.

In this particular enquiry, then, three particular methods are placed in question, and a fourth is sought as a way of going beyond them. There is first of all what might be called the metaphysical method which pervaded the tradition, whose validity Kant called into question in the Critique of Pure Reason, and which is often contrasted by

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁹ K Rahner, Reflections on Methodology in Theology, p.85

²⁰ The omission of the '*thus*' from Carr's quotation is deliberate and important, for knowledge of human persons and their world is not the fruit of philosophical analysis but the seed.

transcendentalists with the transcendental method.²¹ The question, however, is not quite as simple as questioning the possibility of metaphysics, and effecting a transcendental transposition by which metaphysics might be rescued, but actually has to be taken deeper to enquire whether it is actually possible to overcome metaphysics itself. This is particularly important when dealing with Levinas' project of attempting an ex-cendence from Being and the onto-theological tradition of Western Philosophy. Joseph O'Leary notes that '[m]etaphysics has been normative for Western thinking for two and a half millennia, the governing Logos of our culture, identical with the force of reason itself,²² and that '[t]he struggle to articulate that [new critical] relationship [with the metaphysical tradition], in opposition to the tendency to fall back uncritically into the language of metaphysics, may be called the "overcoming of metaphysics."²³ The questioning of the metaphysical tradition as to its methodology may have been a major task among Catholic theologians in the transcendental tradition, Rahner included, but one can ask whether, in their adoption of a transcendental method as a way of vindicating the ontological claims of the metaphysical method and answering Kant's question of the possibility of metaphysics in the affirmative, and by arresting that transcendental reflection too soon, they fail to overcome metaphysics itself but are kept within its thrall.

The second method, therefore, placed in question is the transcendental method itself. The transcendental edifice which Rahner has constructed is impressive, and has been seen 'as representing the *ne plus ultra* of theological enlightenment.'²⁴ However, it is not unassailable. O'Leary remarks that 'the assurance with which Rahner passes from everyday reality to the infinite mystery of God, by means of this remarkable

²¹ One can note here that, ultimately, both the Metaphysical method and the Transcendental Method as employed in Rahner's *Maréchalism* transcendentalism have the same concern for objectivity. In the metaphysical critique the ontological affirmation of being - the metaphysical object - is taken for granted, in the transcendental critique it is to be transcendently deduced from the phenomenal object. Marechal writes, '*Car la Critique ancienne pose d'emblée l'Objet ontologique, qui inclut le Sujet transcendental; et la Critique moderne s'attache au Sujet transcendental, qui postule l'Objet ontologique.*' (*Le Point*, V, p.69)

²² J S O'Leary, *Questioning Back: the Overcoming of Metaphysics in the Tradition*, (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1985), p.1

²³ *ibid.*, p.1

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.97

conjunction of the theological, the transcendental, and the phenomenological, must arouse doubts whether the sturdy and opaque texture of the world can be so easily transcended towards its infinite foundations,' and asks, '[h]ow reliable is the transcendental logic which engineers the transition?'²⁵ The fundamental categories which Rahner employs to describe human reality, such as freedom, luminous self-presence, and loving acceptance of finitude are, says O'Leary, mystifications, and, at an ideological level, the 'immense influence of Rahner's theology' may not be as innocent as it seems but 'goes hand in hand with the ahistorical mystification of his transcendentalism'²⁶ which absolved the subject from practical engagement in the world and removes the human person's transcendental concerns somewhat from the flesh. A more radical and more adequate questioning has been avoided which might be more consistent with the experience of human reality and thus more phenomenologically adequate. Rahner tends to convince 'by the appeal of his metaphysical convictions' rather than 'by a concord between these convictions and the phenomenality of human existence.'²⁷ His 'phenomenological fleshing out of the transcendental deduction... always comes after the speculative fact, a varnish on its bareness...'²⁸ O'Leary draws attention to the lack of 'phenomenological restraint'²⁹ in Rahner who 'cannot defend his language on the ground of phenomenological fidelity to the experience of faith; faith, therefore, does 'not reflect a trusting openness to the mystery of God, but rather a flight from the poverty of inauthentic faith.'³⁰ The immediate self-presence of the subject in knowledge and freedom 'never becomes the focus of an autonomous phenomenological enquiry'³¹ nor are its thematic or unthematic poles addressed with 'phenomenological precision.' O'Leary concludes that Rahner's 'transcendental system steals the show from

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.88

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.97

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.89

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ O'Leary notes that 'Rahner's positing of transcendent and transcendental grounds is so lacking in linguistic or phenomenological restraint.'*(ibid.*, p.111)

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.88

³¹ *ibid.*, p.90

the data and robs them of their intrinsic meaning'³² on account of '[t]he chronic ineffectiveness of Rahner's gestures towards phenomenology [which] can only be explained by a reluctance to relinquish the mastery over experience which his categories promise.'³³ O'Leary writes, therefore, that 'a philosophical and poetic questioning about human being is surely conceivable which need not fit into the structures of Rahner's transcendental thinking,³⁴ and which would be more phenomenologically adequate.

This brings us, thirdly, to the phenomenological method. If Rahner is to be criticised for a lack of phenomenological fidelity to experience, Levinas is one who has embraced phenomenology but who sees its own inadequacy in its classical expression. Although he claims that he is simply expanding on Husserl's phenomenological method, Levinas has little to say on method itself. Concerning method, he says,

'I would also tell you that I know no more about it. I do not believe that a transparency in method is possible, nor that philosophy is possible as transparency. Those who have spent their lives on methodology have written many books in place of the more interesting books they could have written. What a pity for the walk beneath the noon-day sun that philosophy is said to be.'³⁵

Nonetheless, if not strictly a method, Levinas' philosophy nonetheless perhaps constitutes a fourth approach and style of doing philosophy which reminds us that 'philosophy [is] life itself,' 'our companion day and night,' 'the clandestine friend we always respected, loved.'³⁶

1.2 *The Phenomenological Method*

The disavowal of methodological transparency by Levinas presents problems in any approach to his work, however, as is perhaps seen in Reed's admission that, although in his own doctoral work he 'did uncover something like a method within Levinas' thought, a way of proceeding that often seemed closer to a style than a method

³² *ibid.*, p.95

³³ *ibid.*, p.91

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.95

³⁵ E Levinas, *Questions et reponses* in *Le Nouveau Commerce*, 36-37 (Spring), p.75

³⁶ M Blanchot, *Our Clandestine Companion*, pp.41-42

and that was built upon an observation about the structure of all questioning... [and] ... named that method "diachronic transcendentalism",³⁷ such an approach does not attain Levinas' philosophy. While Levinas does acknowledge a debt to phenomenology, his use of the phenomenological method is 'exorbitant' and 'indirect,' and the progress of his work owes more to his 'characteristic way of doing,' to the gestures of the original philosophical style which methodological analysis fails to grasp. 'By considering structure to be primary and procedures to be repeatable, methodology misses the question to which structure is only a response,'³⁸ namely, the question of the ethical encounter with the other person as the proto-philosophical experience. The distinction between methodology and method is important. If methodology, as a *logos* about *methodos*, attempts a system, method is the more pragmatic way of effecting a way beyond, in which a *meta-hodos*, is achieved. Levinas constantly seeks a way beyond, and his way of doing philosophy is perhaps better termed *meta-hodological* than methodological for his way, as a way beyond, is always also a way beyond methodology. His method subverts methodology.

Reed, his subsequent doubt about the value of a methodological approach notwithstanding, identifies in his doctoral thesis three main characteristics of Levinas' method which work against methodological coherence and transparency. Firstly, there is the 'rejection of the phenomenological conception of evidence as the presence of consciousness to its object' and so an excessus with regard to the phenomenological enquiry as presented by Husserl; secondly, Levinas proceeds by way of a reduction whereby the ontological signification of language is reduced; thirdly, Levinas operates with a 'diachronic transcendental method,' which is 'necessarily addressed to an interlocutor' and which, therefore, 'prevents the formulation of a transparently founded transcendental system of signification.' Levinas rejects 'method as a transparent procedure which is imposed on events and phenomena for the purpose of ordering them

³⁷ C W Reed, Levinas' Question, p.73-74

It is this 'structure of all questioning' which needs further consideration when one approaches Rahner. Rahner views the question as the only 'must' of human existence, the one fact which refuses to be dispersed by thought. Rahner, beginning from the fact of the question in human existence, undertakes a transcendental reflection to uncover its conditions of possibility. Levinas, however, provides a deeper reflection which recognises that the question is not the first datum of human existence but enjoys a position of secondary which respect to a prior inter-personal context.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.74

rationally.³⁹

Is Levinas, then, a Phenomenologist?⁴⁰ The question of the link between Levinas thought and phenomenology is often raised. Levinas recognises that Husserl's great contribution to philosophy was a method. In Signature, he acknowledges that

'Husserl will be remembered for having brought to philosophy a method. It amounts to an analysis of "intentions" which maintains the irreducibility of the various experiences of the real, delineates the unsuspected horizons in which this reality situates itself when one heeds the "intentions" which apprehend the real, and fixes the original standing of beings thus approached. But the method consists especially in recognising a dignity of experience and of apprehension in the attitudes of the mind (and of the body) which until now were not supposed to play a part in discovering being. These experiences of a new type, totally strange to the subject-object archetype, sometimes are foundations of the contemplative thought which fixes things and ideas and are prior to the technique which handles them and fashions them.' (Signature)

Levinas himself suggests that, '[i]n spite of everything, I think what I do is phenomenology, even if it not according to the rules laid down by Husserl, even if the

³⁹ idem, Problem of Method, p.28

⁴⁰ There is, of course, the deeper question raised by Derrida in Violence and Metaphysics. An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas (Writing and Difference, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978) of whether Levinas attempt to go beyond the philosophical tradition can be undertaken apart from 'philosophy'. The question of the death of philosophy, of philosophy's own possibility, is itself, says Derrida, a philosophical question. '[T]hose who look into the possibility of philosophy, philosophy's life and death, are already engaged in, already overtaken by the dialogue of the question about itself and with itself; they always act in remembrance of philosophy, as part of the correspondence of the question with itself' (80). With his thought of the other, Levinas attempts to think the difference. But the Hebraic relation of transcendent alterity still demands its Greek articulation. Derrida acknowledges the Greek source of 'the entirety of philosophy' but this is simply to recognise that 'the founding concepts of philosophy are primarily Greek' and outside such a medium 'it would not be possible to philosophise, or to speak philosophically' (81). Levinas, however, attempts the impossible in his 'departure from Greece.' His *thought* summons to 'a dislocation of the Greek logos, to a dislocation of our identity' (82) and a liberation 'from the Greek domination of the Same and the One' (83). But such a thought 'nevertheless seeks to define itself, in its primary possibility, as metaphysical' (83).

One would want to say, however, that Levinas does not propose a wholesale discarding of tradition, but rather seeks to reduce the experience of doing philosophy to a more originary protoethical (Hebrew) experience with which the concepts and structures of (Greek) thought have to grapple interminably and always without resolution.

entire Husserlian methodology is not observed.⁴¹ In the Preface to *Totality and Infinity*, he indicates that the notions he develops in the book 'owe everything to the phenomenological method.'⁴² It might seem therefore that one could adopt a strictly phenomenological approach to Levinas' thought, that is, 'it may be suggested that there is a (unique) "object" to which his extraordinary "descriptions" happen to be "adequate",⁴³ but whether it is useful to extend the notions of object and description to Levinas' enterprise and attempts is doubtful for Levinas thought tends to be *sui generis*.⁴⁴

In what sense, then, can Levinas be considered a phenomenologist? Smith points to Levinas' rejection of phenomenology's "principle of principles," its conception of evidence, and his denial of Heideggerian ontology.⁴⁵ Strasser expresses his conviction that Levinas' philosophy 'differs essentially from all that has been conceived as phenomenology up to now' when he writes that 'Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophies are the starting point of Levinas' path of thought' but that he 'moves away increasingly from Husserl's idealism'⁴⁶ and maintains his relationship with the classical phenomenological movement 'at a distance.' Although 'his philosophy does indeed show traits which are characteristic of phenomenological thinking... it is... a novel phenomenology.'⁴⁷ Craig Vasey considers Levinas an "anti-phenomenologist" 'without

⁴¹ E Levinas, *Questions et Reponses*, p.72

⁴² idem, *TI*, p.28

⁴³ S Smith, *Reason as One for Another*, p.53 Smith recognises this in Th. de Boer, *Tussen filosofie en profetie*, c.V

⁴⁴ Smith wishes 'to show the *sui generis* character of Levinas' nontheoretical yet genuinely philosophical argument, and - because I take "rationality" to be the conception of last resort governing the demands for justification that may be directed to a philosophy - to elucidate the implications for philosophy of the "rationality" that Levinas proposes, and that his achievement presupposes' (53). For Levinas, says Smith, reason is governed by the understanding of intersubjectivity laid out in *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.62

⁴⁶ S Strasser, *Emmanuel Levinas* in H Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd Ed., (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1984), p.614

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.648

connoting by this term that his philosophical position is non-phenomenological.⁴⁸ Rather, Levinas is 'squarely within the phenomenological tradition, in such a way that his ideas cannot be understood apart from this tradition,⁴⁹ and, although he often comes to contrary conclusions, he 'consistently takes Husserl's work as the starting point for his own reflections.⁵⁰ The fundamental notion of phenomenology, says Vasey, is radically developed by Levinas and 'constitutes a revitalisation of Phenomenology,⁵¹ which is evident in Levinas' rethinking of intentionality and its relation to proximity.

1.21 *The Inadequacy of Evidence in Husserl's Phenomenology*

Husserl, in the *Cartesian Meditations*,⁵² had stressed the intentionality of consciousness; consciousness is always a consciousness *of* something; it has a noetico-noematic transcendental structure, such that in each act of consciousness, a subjective noesis bestows meaning (the *Sinnggebung*) on its noematic correlate, the intentional object. Levinas notes that

'[i]n Husserl's philosophy (and this may be where we have to depart from it), knowledge and representation are not on the same level as other modes of life, and they are not secondary modes. Theory and representation play a dominant role in life, serving as a basis for the whole of conscious life; they are the forms of intentionality that give a foundation to all others.⁵³

⁴⁸ C R Vasey, Emmanuel Levinas: From Intentionality to Proximity, in Philosophy Today, 25 (1981), p.178

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

Vasey notes that, in his most recent writings, Levinas goes *beyond* the notion of intentionality, and in Otherwise than Being abandons expressions such as 'incarnate intentionality', the 'intentionality of enjoyment' and affective intentionality', reserving the term only for the Husserlian notion of intentionality. The origin of the possibility of thematisation lies much deeper than incarnate intentionality; it derives from the experience of proximity which is 'a relation which pre-exists the relations that consciousness of... establishes, it pre-exists the noetico-noematic structure of intentionality' (*ibid.*, p.186).

⁵² Edmund Husserl, Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology, D Cairns (tr.), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973)

⁵³ E Levinas, TIHP, p.53

In Totality and Infinity, reflecting on the relationship between enjoyment and representation, he writes of Husserl's understanding of intentionality,

'We know the rhythm with which the thesis is exposed: every perception is a perception of the perceived, every idea an idea of an ideate, every desire a desire of a desired, every emotion an emotion of something moving...; but every obscure thought of our being is also oriented toward *something*.... Yet already with the first expression of intentionality as a philosophical thesis there appeared the privilege of representation. The thesis that every intentionality is either a representation or founded on a representation dominates the *Logische Untersuchungen* and returns as an obsession in all of Husserl's subsequent work.⁵⁴

It is this dominance of the representational model which is the focus of Levinas' main criticism of Husserl's understanding of intentionality, for it implies that human existence is accessible through theoretical and objectifying consciousness. For Husserl, it is only 'inasmuch as we know an object theoretically that we have access to it as existing.'⁵⁵ The consequence of this is that Being is thus made to be 'a correlative to theoretical intuitive life, to the evidence of an objectifying act.'⁵⁶

However, the notion of evidence in Husserl in deficientas Reed points out. Husserl argued against the natural attitude with its spontaneous reason which presumed the adequacy of perception, the attitude that things are as they appear, and are known as such. Such a security of reason has never been assured, however, for reason can be fooled and deluded. The natural attitude has not yet woken up to reality, and calls for a critical reason *other* than spontaneous reason, and a need of a sober vigilance in the face of a naïve realism or naturalism which accepts the adequacy of the evidence of an uncritical *adequatio intellectus et rei*. As Levinas says, '[i]t is not necessary to sleep, it is necessary to philosophise.'⁵⁷ And to philosophise is to do phenomenology.

Levinas recognises in Husserl a concern that rationality, the principle of principles, be adequate and perfected, and although for Husserl, the rationality of

⁵⁴ idem, TI, p.122

⁵⁵ idem, TIHP, p.134

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.94

⁵⁷ See E Levinas, *De La Conscience à la Veille: A partir de Husserl*, in DQVI p.35. Levinas writes that 'In the present essay, one contests precisely this ontological interpretation of reason in order to lead towards a reason understood as *awakening (veillée)* in which objectivity and objectivation only raise themselves to a certain depth, in which sleep is not yet dissipated.'

phenomenology will always be couched in the language of gnoseological expression, whether ontic or ontological, nevertheless, Husserl's *transcendental reduction*, says Levinas, draws attention to a sense of philosophy other than that of the adequate relation of thought to the world, and which will better explain lived experience. According to Levinas, the motivation of phenomenology is the instability and inadequacy of evidence and the naïve adequation of thought to the world.

'In the *Ideas I*, the passage to phenomenology is called the *transcendental Reduction*. It is accomplished in a Cartesian manner: from the inadequation of evidence relative to the world and to the things which belong there - through the suspension of belief in the existence of this world and these objects which are affirmed despite their uncertainty - to the search for certainty or adequate evidence of reflection on the *cogitation* to which this belief belongs - in order to measure there the degree of its certainty or uncertainty.⁵⁸

But one also finds in *Ideas* the notion of an *essential* liberation of sensed thought from the norms of adequation as

'gathering into a theme, as representation and as presence ... [whereby] ... the reduction would be not the discovery of uncertainties compromising certitude, but an awakening of the spirit beyond certainty or uncertainty... an awakening in which there is profiled a rationality of thought - the signifyingness (*signifiance*) of sense - cutting across the norms which command the identity of the Same.'⁵⁹

Such an apodictic rationality finds its interpretation in the *Cartesian Meditations* where 'the "adequation" of intuition and the signitive act which intuition fills⁶⁰ is abandoned, since '[i]ntuition in its internal sense is... incapable of filling the signitive intention.'⁶¹

In the *First Meditation (para 6)*, Husserl attempts to clarify the notions of *absolute certainty* and *absolute indubitability*. Naïve consciousness presumes evidence to be more or less perfect. To the extent that it is less than perfect, it is incomplete and inadequate and calls for 'perfecting' through a synthesis of 'further harmonious experiences in which these attendant meanings become fulfilled in actual experience'⁶² so that '*adequate evidence*' might be attained. Scientific or critical rationality, however,

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.42

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.43

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.44

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² E Husserl, *op.cit.*, p.15

demands the more stringent criterion of *apodicticity*, or *absolute indubitability* of evidence.

'Any evidence is a grasping of something itself that is, or is thus, a grasping in the mode "it itself", with full certainty of its being, a certainty that accordingly excludes every doubt. But it does not follow that full certainty excludes the conceivability that what is evident could subsequently become doubtful, or the conceivability that being could prove to be illusion - indeed, sensuous experience furnishes us with cases where that happens.... An *apodictic* evidence, however, is not merely certainty of the affairs or affair-complexes (states-of-affairs) evident in it; rather it discloses itself, to a critical reflection, as having the signal peculiarity of being *at the same time the absolute unimaginableness* (inconceivability) of their *non-being*, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as "objectless", empty...'⁶³

As a scientific or critical enterprise, the first and defining question for philosophy is the apodicticity of evidence.

Now, as soon as one embarks on the quest for apodictic evidence, it becomes apparent that '[t]he evidence for the factual existence of the world is not apodictic'⁶⁴ since sensuous experience is open to illusion. Further, insofar as the experienced world is the basis of science, it, too, is compromised as a discipline. What, then, asks Husserl, can be the basis for judgements, or for evidence, which could found apodictically a comprehensive philosophy, a question which leads to the *ego cogito* as *transcendental subjectivity* (*para.8*), 'the ultimate apodictically certain basis on which any radical philosophy must be grounded.'⁶⁵ Since the world - and the sociality and culture associated with it - only claim being, it can only be regarded as a phenomenon of being and not something that is, and so must be bracketed in a phenomenological epoche with regard to its absolute existence. But, having so done, this 'does not leave us confronting nothing.'⁶⁶ Rather, it yields the pure living of the subject and, accompanying it as its own, all 'phenomena' in the phenomenological sense. Thus,

'[t]he epoche can also be said to be the radical and universal method by which I apprehend myself purely: as Ego, with my own pure conscious life, in and by which the entire Objective world exists for me and is precisely as it is for me. Anything belonging to the world, and spatio-

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp.15-16

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.17

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.18

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.20

temporal being, exists for me - that is to say, is accepted by me - in that I experience it, perceive it, remember it, think of it somehow, judge about it, value it, desire it, or the like. Descartes, as we know, indicated all that by the name *cogito*.⁶⁷

Levinas comments,

'as we suspend the judgements made in the natural attitude, we still face the consciousness which makes these judgements and resists the epoche of the phenomenological reduction. We cannot "exclude" or "disconnect" the judgements that apply to consciousness. The absolute and specific existence of consciousness... guards it against such exclusion. By virtue of this existence, the act which posits consciousness has an absolute certainty, the certainty of the *cogito*.

Thus, the phenomenological epoche leads us to considering conscious life. Conscious life is revealed as an intention directed at being and asserting the existence of its objects. These can be found in consciousness in the form of *noemata*, which are inseparable from consciousness. They are found "in brackets", to use Husserl's expression, or "reduced" to what they are for consciousness and ready to be studied by phenomenology.⁶⁸

Now, although 'the ego is accessible to itself *originaliter*' in transcendental experience, the 'strict adequacy' of this experience only extends to the ego's living present, grammatically expressed as *ego cogito*. Thus, in addition to the apodictic evidence of the cogito, Husserl also posits 'an indeterminately general presumptive evidence' to which belongs 'not only the ego's past, most of which is completely obscure, but also his transcendental abilities and his habitual peculiarities at that time'⁶⁹ which, though strictly non-experienced, are nevertheless necessarily also meant. This evidence functions as 'an open, infinite, indeterminately general horizon, comprising what is itself not strictly perceived' or 'assured absolutely' but which opens on to what presumptively determines more particularly the being of the *ego cogito*. As Husserl writes, 'Each perception is an *ex-ception* (*jedes Erfassen ist ein Herausfassen*).'⁷⁰ 'Cogitation makes the *cogitatum* its own by extracting it from a background which constantly accompanies it and which may become itself the object of an *Herausfassen*.'⁷¹

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.21

⁶⁸ E Levinas, TIHP p.147

⁶⁹ E Husserl, *op.cit.*, p.23

⁷⁰ E Levinas, TIHP, p.19 quoting *Ideen*, 35

⁷¹ *ibid.*

Husserl returns to the notion of presumptive evidence in his *Third Meditation* (para.28), and posits the world as 'an idea correlative to a perfect experiential evidence.'⁷² Evidence is essentially and necessarily *one-sided*, with each evidence referring beyond itself to infinities of other evidences or, more precisely, to 'a multiform horizon of unfilled anticipations,' which, as awaiting fulfilment, are mere meanings, referring, in their turn, to corresponding potential evidences.⁷³ 'The aspects which we see at any given moment always indicate further aspects,'⁷⁴ virtually infinitely, and although these aspects are drawn into a process of 'perfecting' and 'actualising' through a synthetic transition from evidence to evidence, nevertheless, this synthesis is such that it necessarily remains incomplete and inadequate, given the infinite horizon of possible new meanings and evidences. Thus, '[t]hings are never known in their totality; an essential character of our perception of them is that of being inadequate;⁷⁵ and, 'any such synthesis must always involve unfulfilled, expectant and accompanying meanings.'⁷⁶ Now, it is precisely this wider horizon which constitutes the actual life of the subject, and which is always in excess of consciousness, which is to be transcendently reduced. As Levinas notes, in an emphasis which recalls Rahner's insistence on historical humanity, "The phenomenological reduction is precisely the method by which we are going back to concrete man...."⁷⁷

⁷² E Husserl, op.cit., p.61

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ E Levinas, TIHP, pp.21-22

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.22

⁷⁶ E Husserl, op. cit., p.62

⁷⁷ E Levinas, TIHP, p.146

Although Husserl's reduction seeks to render the horizon as an object for consciousness, a noetic correlate of a noema, Levinas own reduction will make the point that precisely because the horizon as other (*autre*) is *autrui* it is never given to consciousness as a counterpart of knowledge.

1.22 *The Openness of Phenomenology.*

Husserl describes the level of the Ego - 'where subjectivity is most living its life'⁷⁸ - in terms of sleep and waking. The exposition of apodicticity was brought to a close in *para. 9* of the Cartesian Meditations with the affirmation of the essential inadequacy of intuition: what is intended and what is perceived are not the same. Consciousness, as noematic-noetic correlation, is inadequate to *homo vivans*, and self-consciousness, as an absolute knowledge, presents an inadequate model for the 'living present of the *cogito-sum*,' for presence to self is already disturbed by a rupture within immanence; and this is: awakening and life (*réveil et vie.*)⁷⁹ For Levinas, to approach the question of subjectivity in terms of an immanent experience in which exteriority is reflected upon and represented within consciousness is to betray life as lived experience. Husserl may have seen the phenomenological reduction as a perfecting of knowledge, but its true import is its recognition that such knowledge, rather than being a perfecting, is a petrification and paralysation of life: the spirituality of thought has not been so much an adventure of knowledge, but the drowsiness which is part and parcel of wakefulness.⁸⁰ Intentionality as representation makes Being 'a correlative to theoretical intuitive life, to the evidence of an objectifying act,'⁸¹ and this 'constitutes an unnecessary restriction of Phenomenology's discovery, diminishing "the scope and interest of the assertions that all acts of consciousness are 'objectifying acts' and constitute being.'"⁸² Levinas, therefore, rejects the noema-noesis structure of consciousness as primordial,⁸³ in favour of seeing the true significance of the phenomenological reduction as the reanimation or reactivation of the life 'forgotten or

⁷⁸ idem, DQVI, p.47

⁷⁹ See, idem, La Philosophie et l'Éveil, p.102

For a fuller discussion of the relationship between life and awakening, with particular reference to the doctrine of grace in Rahner interpreted in the light of Levinas, see my forthcoming article, '*Gloria Dei, Homo Vigilans: Waking up to Grace in Rahner and Levinas*,' *Louvain Studies*, Autumn, 1996

⁸⁰ See, idem, DQVI, p.53

⁸¹ idem, TIHP, p.94

⁸² *ibid.*, p.134

⁸³ See E Levinas, TI, where he writes, '[o]ne of the principal theses of this work is that the noesis-noema structure is not the primordial structure of intentionality' (p.294).

weakened in knowledge,¹⁸⁴ and the introduction of a rationality other than the rationality of a natural consciousness intending the world. Although the transcendental reduction 'works back from the inadequate evidence of the experience of the world to the reflexion on the cogitations in which this experience is done, to measure the degree of certitude or incertitude of this experience,¹⁸⁵ and, in so doing, liberates sensed thought from the world with its norms of adequation, identification, thematisation, and re-presentation, nevertheless, the reduction does not simply halt at the certitude of the *cogito*, but awakens the *cogito* to a meaning *despite* the incompleteness of knowledge and identification, an incompleteness severing the norms which command the identity of the Same. And this is a meaning other than the subject.

Now, by taking the reduction further, the *ego cogito* is itself rendered vulnerable,¹⁸⁶ for at the point where the noematic-noetic correlation breaks down, the transcendental reduction reveals the consciousness already wounded and compromised by what is other than consciousness.

Levinas writes that '[p]henomenology is method in an eminent way because it is essentially open;¹⁸⁷ it can be applied to a number of domains, whether science, Kantism, or socialism, and provides 'an interpretative structure for a diverse array of possible "facts".¹⁸⁸ Its eminence, however, derives from its own ability for 'critical self-reflection,¹⁸⁹ whereby one can have not only a phenomenology of the diverse sciences and regions of being, but also a phenomenology of phenomenology. Now, openness 'can signify the openness of every object to every other object, in the unity of the universe', and it 'can designate the intentionality of consciousness.'¹⁹⁰ Within these two senses, one can recognise also Rahner's understanding of the human subject as a transcendental openness to Being or as an oboediential potency for Revelation. There is a third sense,

⁸⁴ idem, *La Philosophie et l'Éveil*, p.99

⁸⁵ ibid., p.100

⁸⁶ For the relation between subjectivity and vulnerability, see Levinas' article, *Sans identité: III Subjectivité et Vulnérabilité*, in HAH, pp.91-95

⁸⁷ idem, '*Réflexions sur la "technique" phénoménologique*,' in DEHH, p.111

⁸⁸ C W Reed, *The Problem of Method*, p.66

⁸⁹ ibid., p.67

⁹⁰ E Levinas, HAH, p.92

however, of openness which is no longer 'the essence of being which opens itself in order to show itself' nor 'consciousness which opens itself to the presence of essence' but which is the openness 'of skin exposed to wounding and outrage,' beyond everything that can be shown, or exposed to comprehension.⁹¹ In recognising that 'access to the object makes up the being of the object,'⁹² the reduction is a method for the revelation of the being of those objects present within consciousness. But, insofar as the reduction can further be reflexively reduced, the phenomenological method is shown to be no longer simply a technique for the revelation of being but is 'a *method of the revelation of their revelation*.'⁹³ But this means that an absolute *transcendental ego* is called into question. Since the way of access to a being constitutes 'the essential event of being,'⁹⁴ being 'lacks an absolute hegemony,'⁹⁵ but also, since access itself - that is, the *ego cogito* - is exposed in phenomenological scrutiny as the very difference which is at its core, as a transcendence within its immanence, a situation is exposed in which the ego's positioning in being and the categories of being is inadequate to its life. There is an other than being which, as access, compromises being and the subject's position in being. In short, the apodicticity of the *ego cogito*, which the Husserlian Reduction affirms despite the inadequacy of evidence, is itself inadequate to the evidence. Its own apodicticity is seen to be dependent in that it is constituted by what is other than and outwith the play of being. Husserl may have awoken the subject beyond naïve realism to a more phenomenological understanding of the world with its basis in the absolute ego, but he failed to pay sufficient regard to the dormant intentions, the forgotten horizons which disturb the noematic-noetic identity of the Same. At the core of the ego is not the peaceful possession of a self content within its ontological slumbers and assigning significance to objects on the basis of access constituting essence, but, rather, a wakefulness before a radical alterity which awakens the ego to its true significance. The presumed position of consciousness is shown already and always to be an *ex-position*, for the locus of subjectivity is always and already elsewhere than in

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *idem*, '*Réflexions sur la "technique" phénoménologique*,' in DEHH, p.115

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.117

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ C W Reed, *The Problem of Method*, p.70

consciousness. It is this third understanding of openness as reflexivity which is, according to Reed, Levinas' contribution to phenomenological method, and which Smith recognises as Levinas' 'transposition from the descriptive to the performative mode.'⁹⁶

1.23 *The Eventful Dissimulation of Thought*

Levinas is not content with a descriptive phenomenology. The performative mode which Smith recognises in Levinas is evident in the way in which he notes how thought breaks up into events. Writing of the notions addressed in Totality and Infinity, he says that they

'owe everything to the phenomenological method. Intentional analysis is the search for the concrete. Notions held under the direct gaze of the thought that defines them are nevertheless, unbeknown to this naïve thought, revealed to be implanted in horizons unsuspected to this thought; these horizons endow them with meaning - such is the essential teaching of Husserl. What does it matter if in Husserlian phenomenology taken literally these unsuspected horizons are in their turn interpreted as thoughts aiming at objects! What counts is the idea of the overflowing of objectifying thought by a forgotten experience from which it lives. The break up of the formal structure of thought (the noema of a noesis) into events which this structure dissimulates, but which sustain it and restore its concrete significance, constitute a *deduction* - necessary and yet non-analytical.'⁹⁷

⁹⁶ S Smith, art.cit, p.56

⁹⁷ E Levinas TI, p.28

This eventful dissimulation of thought, whereby its conceptual and descriptive apparatus falls before its performance, is applied by Reed to Totality and Infinity, especially the *Preface*, in which Levinas speaks of the eschatological break up of the totality. The 'real import' of eschatology is that 'it does not introduce a teleological system into the totality' nor does it lie 'in teaching the orientation of history' but rather it 'institutes a relation with being *beyond the totality* or beyond history.'⁹⁸ 'It is a relationship with *a surplus always exterior to the totality*.'⁹⁹ But Levinas wishes to articulate this break up of the totality in terms of philosophy rather than eschatology, and in particular from the starting point of the philosophical notion of evidence. For Levinas, the philosophical significance of evidence is that its natural locus is not a representational relationship with Being. The 'irrefutable evidence of totality' is contested, for 'war and totality' do not coincide with 'experience and evidence;' rather, 'philosophical evidence refers from itself to a situation that can no longer be stated in terms of "totality",'¹⁰⁰ and this situation cannot be reached by ontology or phenomenology. It is possible to 'proceed from the experience of totality back to a situation where totality breaks up, a situation that conditions the totality itself.'¹⁰¹ And this situation is infinity, 'the gleam (*éclat*) of exteriority or the transcendence of the face of the Other.'¹⁰² Reed indicates that

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.22

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.24

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*

A Dondeyne, in his article, *Inleiding tot het denken van E. Levinas*, (*Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 25, 3 - 4, 1963), draws attention to the significance of the 'and' in the title of Totality and Infinity and views this as best introduction, or point of entry into the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. Dondeyne writes, '*Merk op: er wordt gezegd: "Totalité et Infini", niet: "Totalité ou Infini". Stond er "Totalité ou Infini", dan zou dit twee dingen kunnen betekenen: ofwel dat de begrippen "totaliteit" en "oneindigheid" synoniem zijn, ofwel dat we hier met een dilemma te doen hebben zodat we vóór een keuze worden geplaatst. Voor Levinas zijn "totaliteit" en "oneindigheid" niet synoniem; niettemin zijn beide begrippen onmisbaar voor een authentisch filosofisch denken, d.w.z. een denken dat aan de menselijke bestaanservaring volle recht laat werdervaren, zonder een of andere dimensie ervan te verdonkermanen'* (p.555). A phenomenology which is adequate to our human experience and can fully explain it must embrace both concepts. In bringing them together Levinas distinguishes each from the other, but confirms the philosophical primacy of infinity (See E Levinas, *Preface to Totality and Infinity*). Perhaps one can recognise here the difference between *and* as a logical operator, and *and* as a philosophical operator. Whereas *and* as a logical operator is purely a

translating *éclat* by gleam is to impoverish the term and to maintain it within a the notion of light. *Eclat* is outburst, fragment, scandal; it is clatter, verbal, auditory. Maurice Blanchot makes a similar point when he attacks the notion of the *ensemble* with his thought of the 'shattering' (*éclatement*) effect of a fragment's violence. What is a fragment? he asks. The tendency is to regard a fragment as part of a whole. These few pages of this text have a con-text which would give them significance; the detail of that painting is organised within the frame of the total scene; this phrase of music plays its part in the sym-phony or the con-certo. Parts relate to wholes, and presuppose the whole to be available to our understanding. The whole gives the part its significance. But, says Blanchot, a fragment really does violence to the whole and cries out for its own particular integrity. There are parts which are charged with a significance in excess of the systematic whole, and which though seemingly surplus to the requirement of the balance of the whole, nonetheless serve the whole precisely because of the violence they do to the whole, and forever create fissures within it which open on to continued significations.

'Whoever says fragment ought not say simply the fragmenting of an already existent reality or the moment of a whole still to come. This is hard to envisage due to the necessity of comprehension according to

(reversible) connective distinguished from the disjunctive *or*, philosophically speaking, *and* functions both conjunctively and disjunctively, bringing together or associating realities which, nonetheless, remain separate.

One can perhaps see this in the 'laughter which shattered... all the familiar landmarks' of Foucault's thought as he read the classification of animals in 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia' which divided animals into those 'belonging to the Emperor', 'embalmed', 'tame', ... 'drawn with a very fine camelhair brush' etc. (See M Foucault, *The Order of Things, An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock, London, 1970, p.xv; originally, *Les Mots et les choses*, Gallimard, Paris, 1966)). By means of *and*, the *ratio* of continuity, with its own particular classificatory *episteme*, has 'insinuated itself into the empty space, the interstitial blanks *separating* all these entities from one another' (p.xvi). In other words, *and* is a tool in the hand of totality. However, the fact that the *and* is insinuated between realities points also the their discontinuity and disjunction, or, as Levinas might say, their absolution one from the other in the very relation which associates them. Writing later of history in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault says, 'The cry goes up that one is murdering history whenever, in a historical analysis - and especially if it is concerned with thought, ideas or knowledge - one is seen to be using in too obvious a way the categories of discontinuity and difference, the notions of threshold, rupture and transformation, the description of series and limits.... But one must not be deceived: what is being bewailed with such vehemence is not the disappearance of history, but the eclipse of that form of history that was secretly, but entirely related to the synthetic activity of the subject... that ideological use of history by which one tries to restore to man everything that has unceasingly eluded him for over a hundred years' (p. 14).

which the only knowledge is knowledge of the whole, just as sight is always a view of the whole. For such comprehension, the fragment supposes an implied designation of something that has previously been or will subsequently be a whole - the severed finger refers back to the hand.,¹⁰³

just as a Heideggerian tool derives its significance in its relation within a referential totality centred on Dasein. But, the significance of a fragment's 'shattering' (*éclatement*) or 'dislocation' (*dislocation*) is not simply a negation of a prior positivity of being, or a privation, but is a pointing to the value of discontinuity as a prior philosophical theme with its own meaning and value. Dislocation is not a lesser situation calling for the mending and healing of the whole, but, like the *dépaysement* of exile, is the establishment of a new relation with the Outside. The fragment has a significance beyond the whole and has the capacity to fracture the whole. It is '[a] piece of meteor detached from an unknown sky and impossible to connect with anything that can be known.'¹⁰⁴ The *éclat* of exteriority in the face of the Other, like a fragment, is that situation which effects the *éclatement* of the totality. Insofar, then as phenomenology, as a method of philosophy, aims at a comprehension effected through a bringing to light, it 'does not constitute the ultimate event of being itself,'¹⁰⁵ for, outwith being, there is already a situation in which the hegemony of being has been shattered.

Now, this 'break up of the formal structure of thought' into events which 'restore its concrete significance' is a deduction which is not guided by the ideal of objectivity which animates theoretical thought. Rather, it pursues a *transcendent intention*, outwith the noesis-noema structure within which Husserl was confined, and thus it goes beyond Husserl. 'Husserlian phenomenology has made possible this passage from ethics to metaphysical exteriority.'¹⁰⁶ It is this 'nonevident moral relation which, when given a philosophical witness via the perturbation of theoretical truths, "restores the concrete significance" of these truths in discourse.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ M Blanchot, IC, p.307

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 308; *Entretien*, p. 452

¹⁰⁵ E Levinas, TI, p.28

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.29

¹⁰⁷ S Smith, *art.cit.*, p.57

1.3 *Rahner's Transcendental Reduction*

Now, the transcendent intention, which can be explicated through a transcendental reflection on the human spirit's dynamic intentionality is evident in Rahner's first work, Spirit in the World, in which he undertakes a transcendental reflection on the human spirit's dynamic intentionality. Rahner, however, maintains himself within a metaphysical framework within which there is a precise correlation between being and knowing, and he is guided by the notion of the intelligibility of the whole, that is, being; like Husserl, his thought is noematic-noetically structured. The noematic question intends being as its noetic correlate. This epistemological thrust is developed in Hearers of the Word, which attempts to show 'that human consciousness enjoys an intrinsic openness to divine being'¹⁰⁸ which is founded on the inherent knowability of God. Hoye notes that what Rahner is asserting with 'speculative consistency' is 'that God himself falls within the horizon of man's cognitive potentiality'¹⁰⁹ and that this assertion is based upon 'his transcendental analysis of the content of human consciousness.'¹¹⁰ But, says Hoye, to affirm that God is knowable *in himself* is not thereby to affirm that he is knowable *for man*. Rahner's understanding of God in Hearers of the Word 'lacks certain fundamental indispensable notes,'¹¹¹ for though it understands God in his transcendentality, that transcendentality 'pertains not to the totality of reality but solely to cognitive reality.'¹¹² In other words, Rahner's reduction of the contents of consciousness remains within the noematic-noetic structure of thought. As such, one would want to say that it halts too soon.

Hoye goes further, however, and recognises a 'fundamental dualism' in Rahner which can *only* conceive of reality in terms of the admixture of Being and non-Being, and which, therefore, confines God within an ongoing onto-theologism.¹¹³ This, says

¹⁰⁸ W J Hoye, A Critical Remark on Karl Rahner's *Hearers of the Word*, in Anonianum, 48 (1973), p.517

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.518

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p.523

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Hoye argues that God is reduced to the status of creaturehood, a composite which comprises, as one aspect, absolute *Sein*. God 'has' rather than 'is' absolute *Sein*, as Metz renders it in the second edition of Hearers, and thus is also characterised by the 'ontological difference,' albeit a difference which culminates in

Hoye, leads to the situation which gives 'a notion of God that is unable to conceive of divine transcendence in respect to the totality and, for the same reason, is devoid of authentic divine immanence in creatures.'¹¹⁴ In other words, Rahner pays insufficient regard to divine *difference*. However and *ironically*, the possibility of a philosophy of religion is achieved in Hearers of the Word by this very dualism for the association of the principles of *Sein* and *Nicht-Sein* both brings God, as Being, within the horizon of consciousness but maintains him, as Not-Being, beyond knowledge. It is the language of Being which hampers Rahner's thought, for '[w]hile justly asserting the necessity of something *other* than *Sein*... he finds himself in the dilemma of unavoidably treating this non-Being in terminology belonging to Being.'¹¹⁵ The question, then, is a question about this *other* than Being. As Hoye concludes, 'Nevertheless, for want of a name, the region of reality to which *Nicht-Sein* testifies proves to be insusceptible to integral subsumption into Rahner's attempt at transcending creation.'¹¹⁶ Further, '[t]he attempt to grasp reality within the (albeit infinite) perimeter of human consciousness (*Erkenntnismetaphysik*) excludes the supremely important datum that consciousness enjoys a type of reflection that is more than the a priori "structure of the known," and more than self-presence: It is also aware of the existence of the unknown as such, *i.e.* of the other than consciousness.'¹¹⁷ Rahner's transcendental reflection needs to be deepened by taking it further along the way of a deeper phenomenological reflection which exposes it to an ethical other-than-Being which finds its limitation, not in *Nicht-Sein* but in the positive experience of ethical responsibility evoked by the Other whom Being and its categories can neither contain nor render justice to.

Now, Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word do, however, contain elements which point to the possibility of an egress from the cognitive framework by a further inter-subjective reduction which situates cognitive drive within the context of the proto-ethical experience of alterity. Anne Carr, who had to reach Rahner's method

absolute 'ontological identity, α νοησις νοησοως

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.529

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.530

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.531

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp.531-532

'by inference from his writings on more particular topics'¹¹⁸ argues that Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word are often taken to be philosophical works which lay the foundation for metaphysics and theology, - and here is the difficulty of those who read both these 'philosophical' works as a prerequisite for understanding Rahner's theology! - but they are, rather, 'a theology which looks like philosophy.'¹¹⁹ Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word may be taken as Rahner's initial word on his project, but they are certainly not the final word. In fact, seen in the context of his later thinking which emphasises a person's transcendental *experience*, one can ask whether in fact they are even an initial word and not a particular response conditioned by a particular Kantian philosophical problematic. If his thought is pursued beyond his transcendental framework as outlined in Spirit in the World towards those events in which 'the formal structure of thought' breaks up, that is, the dialogic and loving encounter with the Other, then this event enables, not so much the passage from the dynamism of the intellect to the ontological affirmation of being, but more the 'passage from ethics to metaphysical exteriority.' Rahner's concern, enabling a fruitful confrontation with Levinas, is not primarily the development of a transcendental system, but the failure of theology to concern itself with the hearer of revelation.¹²⁰ His attempt to address that concern for the hearer of Revelation in terms of transcendental subjectivity, however, has perhaps proved less than totally successful and has not been as widely accepted as it might, not necessarily because of any methodological failure but because, as we say, his reduction halts too soon.

Is it possible, then, to deepen Rahner's reduction in a methodologically coherent manner? As soon as one moves beyond the terms of Spirit in the World and begins to speak in terms of the 'hearer of revelation' rather than the 'transcendental subject', the framework begins to be less one centred on an *ego cogito*, and more one which is embraced by the dialogic capacity of the human person. The very notion of "hearer" presupposes one who is addressed by another who speaks first. In fact, by approaching the philosophy of religion as 'the Ontology of the "*Potentia Oboedientialis*" for

¹¹⁸ B Lonergan, A Response to Father Dych's "Method in Theology According to Karl Rahner", in Theology and Discovery, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), p.54.

¹¹⁹ Anne Carr, Method, p.4, quoting K Rahner, Transcendental Theology, in Sacramentum Mundi, Vol. VI, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p.287

¹²⁰ ibid., p.2

Revelation,¹²¹ Rahner has already introduced at the beginning of his enquiry the possibility of a way beyond ontology through the notion of revelation. What Hearers of the Word does to Spirit in the World is actually to change its declension. The nominative of speaking in the question with its immediacy and intransitivity becomes the accusative of hearing which is always mediate and transitive. The solitary subject seeking within itself the transcendental source of its question becomes the one who discovers himself always and already the subject of an address. Carr indicates three inter-related stages of development in Rahner's 'characteristic method of thought.'¹²² Firstly, Spirit in the World attempts, by a retrieval of the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge, to demonstrate 'the dialectic unity and interdependence of knowledge of the world and metaphysical knowledge in human performance.'¹²³ Its accomplishment, says Carr, is the fact that Rahner 'has moved from an analysis of the performance of knowing into a metaphysics which encompasses more than knowledge.'¹²⁴ Although the person is considered as a knowing subject, the *Vorgriff* is presented as 'a movement of the total human spirit in its dimensions of cognition and striving' indicating the 'intrinsic emergence of will in human self-realisation.' The resolution of the Kantian problematic depends then on 'a reflection on the reciprocity between knowledge and will or theoretical and practical reason.' Further, because human performance and its unthematic horizons in human consciousness are his concern, 'he has moved beyond the concept to experience.'¹²⁵ As first glimpsed in Spirit in the World Rahner's method is,

¹²¹ See K Rahner, HW, chapter 1

¹²² A Carr, op. cit., p.59

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.86

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

This movement by Rahner beyond the concept to experience is viewed negatively as 'an inherent weakness within his thought' by P Burke (Conceptual Thought in Karl Rahner, Gregorianum, 75, 1 (1994) pp.65-93). Burke writes that, in Rahner, '[a]s the essential, or formal order is relativised by the existential order in which the essential order is grounded and to which it is referred, so the universal concept, which refers to the form, is relativised by the sensible singular form from which it cannot be separated, and the horizon of all-being to which it is referred. Thus the form or concept, to whatever extent it exists distinctly within the Rahnerian analysis of knowledge, is always and inevitably relativised' (p.86). Again, Burke maintains that 'because the concept is always referred to both "esse" and the concrete, "this-there", such reflection or conceptualisation can never grasp the fundamental unity of subject and objective reality and bring it to conceptual objectivity. A concept can only be a limited objectification of this original consciousness' (p.89). It 'is always and only an

says Carr,

'basically a Kantian transcendental reflection, but embodies an equal emphasis on "reduction" and "deduction". That is, it begins with an analysis of human knowing, an attempt to discover all that is simultaneously implied in that performance; then the conditions for the possibility of each dimension of knowledge are uncovered, in order that the structure of the experience itself may be more exactly described. Rahner moves from the a posteriori or ontic level to the a priori or ontological level, and then back again to the starting point. The empirical reality is analysed to show what is involved a priori; the a priori is explicated in order to state more precisely the structure of the empirical experience.'¹²⁶

The second stage is developed in Hearers of the Word which explores the implications of the unitary phenomenon of Spirit-in-the-World, that is, of the *conversio* as always and already the human situation, and 'develops an ontology of human historicity as the locus of the metaphysical question', 'the place where a possible revelation might occur,'¹²⁷ for 'the question of the human knower reveals not only the openness and hiddenness of being but also the historicity and freedom of human existence.'¹²⁸ Hearers of the Word also attempts to clarify the difference between philosophy of religion and theology, but this, in turn, demands an answer to the question of whether and how it is possible for metaphysics to attain God. For Rahner, theology is not primarily the science of God in the objective genitive sense of *theou logos*, but rather, subjectively-genitively understood as 'so completely dependent on the act of God that it cannot be given its foundation by the human mind . . . is the original hearing of God's revelation, integrated in rudimentary fashion within human understanding.'¹²⁹ It is this "original theology" which is subsequently reflected upon and systematised. Rahner's effort, then, is to provide a foundation for 'a "demonstration of the possibility in man for hearing the

approximation of the original unified self-presence of the subject... existing only as a shadow of the reality which it seeks to capture' (p.92). Now, although Burke laments the danger which this conceptual relativisation poses for the development of doctrine opening the door to neo-Modernism, it is the very inadequacy of the concept to express adequately lived-experience which enables thought to be pursued as an endless adventure towards infinity. Human existence is not a poor expression of the perfect life of thought, but is a rich mystery before which thought is revealed to be inadequate and always late.

¹²⁶ A Carr, op. cit., p.87

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p.60

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p.88

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p.90

message of God" if such a message were given and if humanity were granted the capacity to hear.¹³⁰ In other words, Rahner seeks to preserve the integrity of a properly theological enterprise in the face of a philosophy of religion which would deprive theology of its fundamental autonomy by metaphysically dictating and limiting its possible scope.¹³¹

The presupposition of Hearers of the Word is that it is possible to show that 'listening for a possible command of God somehow belongs to human nature and really is human knowledge...., and at the same time, is really a supernatural revelation, "mysterium stricte dicta."¹³² In other words, man, as spirit, is metaphysically constituted as 'attentive to a possible revelation' that is, as a transcendental openness to God. Hearers of the Word thus becomes 'an analytic of the being of man (*menschlichen Seins*) as that which has the capacity to hear a revelation'¹³³ in which Rahner attempts to show 'how the natural human constitution is a positive openness for a possible revelation from God (and therefore the possibility of theology)¹³⁴ by a 'transcendental reflection on the conditions for the possibility of revelation.'¹³⁵ Now, until one enjoys the direct vision of God, God must reveal himself by a "word" which the person can understand. Rahner must, therefore, 'define the characteristics of human transcendence in order to determine the place of possible revelation.'¹³⁶ 'Metaphysical anthropology thus becomes an ontology of the obediencial potency for a possible free revelation, and the philosophy of religion an analysis of the human capacity for such a revelation.'¹³⁷

Now, the fact that Rahner's "philosophical" description of the human person is determined by his theological conviction that revelation is a given and that only a theological consideration of the human person is adequate invites criticism. Carr writes,

¹³⁰ K Rahner, Hearers, p.10 (*Hörers*, p.24)

¹³¹ See A Carr, op. cit., p.90

¹³² K Rahner, Hearers, pp. 18-19; Hörer, p.32-33

¹³³ *ibid.*, p.33; Hörer, p.49

¹³⁴ A Carr, op. cit., p.92

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p.93

Rahner's understanding of the human subject as *naturally and positively* open to divine revelation develops in the context of the Nature-Grace debate in Catholic theology, and in dialogue with de Lubac and *la nouvelle théologie*. See later.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p.102

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p.103

'Hearers of the Word is ultimately too limited because its starting point and its statement of the problem of philosophy of religion is construed simply as the problem of knowledge. Hence it remains fundamentally intellectualist, despite its inclusion of the intimate relationship of will and love to knowledge. At the same time, it is too much to be genuine philosophy because it is in fact fundamental theology. It presupposes the existence of God and the possibility of revelation, a position which can be justified theologically but which is not philosophically grounded in Hearers of the Word. Significant as the work is, its value is diminished because of methodological confusions.'¹³⁸

However, the methodological confusion, says Carr, which is seemingly apparent in Rahner can be clarified if one allows oneself 'to follow the development of his theological work to determine his understanding of the foundation for theology, for only in this way will his theological method be understood, not as something totally worked out beforehand and then applied to various aspects of theology, but as a method which emerges in the course of concrete theological reflection.'¹³⁹ Such a clarification emerges 'in his notion of the supernatural existential and its concomitant factor of revelation as primarily transcendental and only secondarily as reflexive articulation in categorical-verbal revelation.'¹⁴⁰ And this, says Carr, 'implies important differentiations in his understanding of philosophy, human nature, and revelation, and signifies implicit self-criticism on Rahner's part with regard to his early writings.'¹⁴¹

The third stage in the development of Rahner's theological method is found in his reflection on the Supernatural Existential. In his article on The Theological Concept of Concupiscence,¹⁴² Rahner argues that 'a supernatural ordination to grace is already present in the concrete, historical order' and that '[t]his ordination is not simply an external, juridical decree of God,' but is 'a real ontological existential of man which qualifies him really and intrinsically.'¹⁴³ Indeed, so all-embracing of human existence

¹³⁸ ibid., p.105, quoting Heinrich Fries, *Die katholische Religion philosophie der Gegenwart*, (Heidelberg: F H Kerle Verlag, 1949), pp.258-260

¹³⁹ ibid., p.107

¹⁴⁰ ibid., p.106. See Rahner and Ratzinger, Revelation and Tradition, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), pp.9-25

¹⁴¹ ibid., p.107

¹⁴² K Rahner, *TI, I*, pp.372-382

¹⁴³ A Carr, op. cit., p.110, quoting K Rahner; "Theological Concept of *Concupiscentia*, *TI, I*, p.376

is the supernatural, that philosophy itself 'only exists within the wider context of the supernatural existential, an existential created in the human person and the world from the beginning by the fact of grace (and its concomitant revelation) which always concretely affects the data with which philosophy deals,'¹⁴⁴ and it is thus a transcendental presupposition for philosophical thinking.

Carr concludes that a perspectival shift has occurred in the development of Rahner's foundational from his metaphysics of knowledge to some of the more overtly theological themes treated in his investigations. Whereas Spirit in the World provided the epistemological and metaphysical foundations for theology, and Hearers of the

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.115

Rahner indicates that the human person can only be properly understood in terms of reason and revelation, and that, in fact, reason only attains its true nature when it is understood in its relation and response to an already given address by God to the human person. In The Dignity and Freedom of Man, TI, Vol II, pp.235-263, a paper originally given in 1952 at the Austrian *Katholiekentag*, he writes that this implies that the person is already beyond himself in grace, that is, operates within a supernatural existential. 'This means: the person... is called to direct personal communion with God in Christ, perennially and inescapable, whether he accepts the call in redemption and grace or whether he closes himself to it in guilt... The person is addressed by the personal revelation of the Word of God in saving history which finds its climax in Jesus Christ....; the person is unquestionably situated within the offer of his interior, saving and divinising grace....The supernatural existential is related to what we have called the personal nature of man, as a gratuitous free gift of God, as grace. In this way man exists in nature and "supernature"' (p.240). '[H]is being possesses an ontic and spiritual-personal capacity for communicating with Jesus Christ in whom God has forever made the countenance of man his own and has opened the reality of man, with an unsurpassable finality, in the direction of God' (pp.240-241).

Elsewhere, in Experience of the Spirit and Existential Commitment, TI, XVI, pp.24-34, Rahner makes the point that this supernatural ordering of the human person is constitutive to an understanding of the person, but is something which is *given* to the person. 'The gift of grace through the Spirit of God is in the first instance a genuine self-communication of God to the transcendent human self and not an internal or external categorial reality of human consciousness, material, as it were for free decisions of the human person' (p.24). The point, for our study, is that already the confines of the *ego cogito* have been breached, for Rahner's 'basic assumption' in developing the notion of the supernatural existential is that 'the essential nature of genuine experience of the Spirit does not consist in particular objects of experience found in human awareness but occurs rather when a man experiences the radical re-ordering of his transcendent nature in knowledge and freedom towards the immediate reality of God through God's self-communication in grace' (pp.27-28). That is, '[i]t comes about rather through God's self-communication to the human spirit ('uncreated grace' by which God becomes a constitutive element in human transcendence' (p.26). 'Experience of the Spirit is, therefore, experience of the radical and permanent nature of human transcendence, which goes beyond itself towards God because it is constantly impelled by his self-communication' (p.28).

Word indicated the structure of the human spirit as pointing to the structure of revelation in its essentially historical dimension, the essays relating to the supernatural existential make it clear that, for Rahner, the primary fact is the reality of revelation and divinising grace.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ See A Carr, *op.cit.*, pp.120-121

1.4. *Another Reason, or the Other as Reason*

Now, the criticism which H Fries¹⁴⁶ addresses to Rahner, namely that theological conviction informs rationality in Rahner, raises the problem of the relationship between method and rationality, a problem which is apparent also in Levinas. It is the problem of whether method as transparency can be imposed as a system to order experience and whether rationality operates independently of the particular discourse whether it be the moral discourse of Levinas or the theological discourse of Rahner, *or* whether reason operates other than by coercion and force.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ See A Carr, *ibid.*, p.105

¹⁴⁷ With regard to Levinas' concept of reason, Smith argues that it is 'recreated in Levinas' argument as a function of the moral relation rather than of the theoretical relation' (S Smith, *art.cit.*, p.64). The question of rationality cannot be separated from the question of method, but the significance and the concomitant challenge of Levinas thought for a philosophy used to directness and methodological clarity is 'the basic gratuitousness of his appeal' for 'he does not expect to demonstrate or coerce assent in the necessitarian fashion in which intuitions and arguments are typically wielded in our tradition' (p.65). Smith uses the example of Cain who murders his brother Abel, no doubt implying Blanchot's question in *L'Entretien Infini* when he asks why Cain killed Abel. Cain, as the epitome of the moral sceptic, is 'insensitive to his neighbour's claim' and his action cannot be contradicted as can the assertions of the theoretical sceptic. 'Cain seems rather to have logic and evidence all on his side, for the evidence is of a universal war from which no one can keep a distance, and logic supports this war by defining everything in terms of everything else... so that the pluralism demanded by Totality and Infinity is lacking' (p.65). Now, it is only if Cain is wrong, and that it is the case that I am my brother's keeper, that Levinas' argument is justified, and I am 'warranted or constrained to follow the conceptual development of Levinas' philosophy' (p.65). Smith expands on this: 'Only if I acknowledge the surplus of my being toward my neighbour can I grant the appropriateness of the conceptual surplus of the Levinasian emphasis. In other words, only if I acknowledge *substitution* as the normative structure of intersubjectivity, according to which I am hostage to the need of others, responsible even for their responsibility, need I acknowledge the appropriateness of Levinas' interpretation of *signification* and the corollary interpretation of reason' (p.65). Levinas asserts that Cain is wrong, but cannot demonstrate it from first principles, for, in Levinas' thinking, ethics as the meaning of 'reason as the one-for-the-other' (OB, p.167) is the first principle, and becomes the 'principle of principles' subverting phenomenology's 'principle of principles', namely subjectively centred intentionality. Like grace, 'it belongs essentially to the goodness of this responsibility that it be gratuitous and independent of coercive demonstration. The personal order is different from the ontological because it rests on appeal and obedience rather than on causation and comprehension' (Smith, p.66). In other words the method of truth, emphasising the hodological aspect of method, cannot be by any way other than justice, which is responsibility. Going further, there can be no privileged external, rational viewpoint which one might adopt and which would provide the ontological foundation and methodological structure against which the claims of ethics could be

1.41 Reason as 'Reductio in Mysterium'

Method and foundation are inextricably linked. The transcendental reflection which Rahner employs 'provides not only a method of approach to the foundations of human existence in the world but also mirrors that foundation.'¹⁴⁸ Being solicits the question, and the question intends Being. But this remains problematical: the foundation which motivates the method and which the method seeks to clarify is transcendent with respect to the method. Carr indicates that Rahner 'repeatedly denies that the absolute of being is known as an object or that the mind can form an adequate concept of God.'¹⁴⁹ How is this problem to be resolved adequately? Carr concludes,

'The method will ineluctably move from the manifold truths or mysteries of Christianity to an ultimate reductio in mysterium: their fundamental unity will be approached in the single mystery of human existence as the single mystery of the nearness of God. Such a method results in a theology which is essentially the science of mystery as such, i.e., the concept and the experience of the incomprehensible, nameless, and final mystery which is called God.'¹⁵⁰

judged. Justice is always prior to truth, and although there remains the 'scandalous freedom to deny or disregard the moral context by participating in being on purely ontological terms... [t]he goodness and superiority of the ethical argument, otherwise than being, is its very powerless to squelch Cain, the moral sceptic' (p.68). Cain is always possible, '[b]ut because of the divine inspiration of our already-given moral responsibility - an already-givenness more radical than the theoretical nongiveness of the other - ... Cain is not the arbiter of sense and reason' (p.69).

Similarly, though anticipating the difference in understanding between Levinas and Rahner of the theological relationship, Rahner's theological reason provides the context in which what he argues has meaning, and what he says likewise is 'gratuitous and independent of coercive demonstration' (p.66).

¹⁴⁸ A Carr, op. cit., p.121

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.17

Carr draws attention to Spirit in the World, pp.179-183. Rahner acknowledges the non-objective status of the whither (*Voraus*) of the *Vorgriff*, that is, *Esse Absolutum*, which Rahner here equates with God. But this *Esse Absolutum* is not apprehended as a represented (*Vorgestellter*) object. The fulness of its being is never given objectively, but only made available through reflection, and then only as *esse commune*. But, argues Rahner, although reflection only attains *esse commune*, there must necessarily be an *esse absolutum* as an always and already condition of knowledge. Now, the move from *esse commune* to *esse absolutum* which Rahner identifies as God cannot be as a result of an *a priori* proof of God's existence, but are derived, and derived *theologically*, 'in the *a posteriori* apprehension of a real existent and as a necessary condition of the latter' (Spirit in The World, p.181).

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.268

Rahner himself says that the *reductio in mysterium* 'expresses a methodological pointer for the theologian'¹⁵¹ and is in fact the condition which makes all the perceptions available to the human reason possible,¹⁵² such that theology 'is to be understood as the "science" of mystery as such.'¹⁵³ Although the methods employed by theology 'apply first and foremost in the particular concrete situation of the individual' and do 'not lay any claim to any permanent or universal validity,'¹⁵⁴ that particular concrete situation can be exposed to a transcendental reduction which reveals the subject as an orientation towards mystery as such, and this mystery, 'radically beyond all comprehension' is the horizon which 'makes knowledge possible within its ambience, this ultimate point of reference towards which all knowledge tends.'¹⁵⁵ The relation to mystery, then, is the possibility condition of knowledge. '[T]his fundamental state of being exposed to incomprehensibility is understood precisely as the condition of the possibility of conceptually elaborating, delimiting, and discriminating knowledge.'¹⁵⁶ Egan comments on this when he notes that '[m]uch of [Rahner's] theology is... architectonic, a reduction into Mystery, not really unscientific, for the "unscientific nature of this different kind of discipline which we are striving for lies in the object, not in the subject and his method."¹⁵⁷ The difficulty of the methodological attempt to reduce the mystery within a cognitive confine *lies in the object*. The cognitive exposition of mystery fails because, with regard to a cognitive framework, mystery is *ex-position*; as Husserl already indicated, '*Jedes Erfassen ist ein Herausfassen.*' 'Comprehensive knowledge is a deficient mode of knowing when measured by that knowledge which is beyond all doubt the highest, the most intensive, and that which bestows the deepest blessing upon us, that which takes place in the immediate vision of the incomprehensibility of God.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ K Rahner, Reflections on Methodology in Theology, p.101

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p.102

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.75

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.104

¹⁵⁶ *idem*, The Human Question of Meaning, p.99

¹⁵⁷ H Egan, Mysticism and Karl Rahner's Theology, in Theology and Discovery, p.147

¹⁵⁸ K Rahner, Reflections on Methodology in Theology, p.104

Human reason is able to transcend the concrete because it has always and already transcended itself towards mystery. 'Natural' reason is by its nature already 'supernatural' for the existential of human existence always and already operates within a supernatural horizon. 'Thus,' says Rahner,

'the *mysterium* reveals itself as the condition which makes it possible for us to know that which is not mysterious. The relationship in which man stands to the *mysterium* is a primary and ultimate datum of his own nature and his mode of existence, one of which, in his transcendence, he is constantly aware, though not as the object of his conscious thought, and one which cannot be deduced from any other datum as a secondary phenomenon.'¹⁵⁹

Elsewhere, Rahner writes, 'reason must be understood more fundamentally as precisely the capacity of the incomprehensible, as the capacity of being seized by what is always insurmountable, not essentially as the power of comprehending, of gaining the mastery and subjugating. Reason must be understood... as the capacity of *excessus*, as going out into the inaccessible...'¹⁶⁰

1. 42 *Levinas' Reason*

The place and role of reason is recognised as problematical in Levinas thinking also. David Boothroyd comments that Levinas' thought 'exhibits a commitment to intelligibility; it is philosophical and yet seeks to express what in principle remains beyond the grasp of philosophy.'¹⁶¹ Yet, although Levinas expressly commits himself to reason,¹⁶² nonetheless, Derrida calls attention, in 'Violence and Metaphysics',¹⁶³ to the 'theoretical incoherence of the notions of pure infinity and absolute otherness, or exteriority'. Like a 'square circle', the concept of an 'absolutely other' or an 'otherwise

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.105

¹⁶⁰ *idem*, The Human Question of Meaning, p.97

¹⁶¹ David Boothroyd, Responding to Levinas, in The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other, R Bernasconi & D Wood (eds.), (London: Routledge, 1988), p.17

¹⁶² E Levinas, *TI*, p.204

¹⁶³ J Derrida, Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas, in Writing and Difference, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978)

than being' are empty intuitions and are meaningless.¹⁶⁴ Derrida, highlighting the problem of alterity as it presents itself in Levinas' thought of Totality and Infinity, argues that Levinas proposes an absolute alterity, but that alterity, otherness, can only be understood in terms of being other *than*, that is, in its relation with the Same, a relation which Levinas is keen to exclude, for to be related to the Same, and to be judged other in terms of a relation to the Same is to be contaminated and compromised by the Same, and hence, not to be truly other. The transcendence for which Levinas argues, says Derrida, demands 'as one of its essential meanings'¹⁶⁵ that the self knows itself to be the other of the other, that the self is already implicated in the notion of alterity, otherwise the violence which the Same inflicts upon the other would not only be without a victim; it would be a violence without a perpetrator - 'the violence without victim would also be a violence without author.'¹⁶⁶ Same and other, for Derrida, are in relation, and the only way in which absolution would be achieved from the relation between them is if the other were the other not of the Same, but of the other, other than other; according to Derrida, for Levinas, 'the other is what it is only as the absolute infinitely other absolved of its relation to the Same.'¹⁶⁷ Derrida argues that the theoretical incoherence of an absolute alterity is not some Parmenidean muse which amounts to 'verbiage' or a 'dialectical virtuosity in the play of the Same', but raises problems for the rational coherence of thought itself. He writes,

'(1) The infinitely other... can be what it is only if it is other, that is, other *than*. *Other than* must be *other than* myself. Henceforth, it is no longer infinitely, absolutely other. It is no longer what it is. If it was absolved, it would not be the other either, but the Same. (2) The infinitely other cannot be what it is - infinitely other - except by being absolutely not the same. That is, in particular, by being other than itself (non ego). Being

¹⁶⁴ The 'theoretical incoherence of the notions of pure infinity and absolute otherness, or exteriority' indicated by Derrida derive from an understanding of meaning as a *signification* having the structure of *ceci en tant que cela*. In this structure which, following Husserl, equates meaningful language with intuitive fulfilment, the notion of an 'absolutely other' or an 'otherwise than being', like that of 'a square circle,' remain empty significations, and senseless. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty may have recognised that intuitions also depend for their meaning on the context of significations formed by language and culture, but since language remains in the house of being, to speak of the transcendence of being made no sense (See Levinas, HAH, pp.28ff).

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.126

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*

other than itself, it is not what it is. Therefore, it is not infinitely other, etc.¹⁶⁸

What this means, says Derrida, is that 'the expression "infinitely other" or "absolutely other" cannot be stated and thought simultaneously; the other cannot be absolutely exterior to the same without ceasing to be other.'¹⁶⁹ The corollary of this, of course, is that 'the same is not a totality closed in upon itself'¹⁷⁰ but includes, as part of its meaning, alterity.

Levinas, however, persists in affirming an absolutely other and a pure infinity, and the possibility of such a thought. Seemingly incoherent though the concepts be, he opens *Totality and Infinity* by affirming that *Everyone will readily agree (on conviendra aisement...)*. Although what he writes may invite scepticism, nonetheless, like philosophy's failure to refute scepticism which makes its perennial return, Levinas' assertions, too, escape ultimate refutation for, although seemingly self-contradictory and refutable, they have their origin in an agreement which precedes them and which persists in the face of the logic of contradiction. Questioning begins in agreement, and so is already a response. 'The sceptical attitude, as an essential aspect of all philosophical questioning, must itself be questioned as to its sources.'¹⁷¹

Now, there is not only agreement, but agreement *that it is of the highest importance*. The emphasis on the superlative is 'deeply involved in his "answer concerning method",'¹⁷² but it is not originary. The question of the highest, redefined in the idea of infinity, has no logical or ontological priority, but rather comes an-archically before thought and existence, and rather than founding the world, disrupts it. As such, it 'is entirely opaque to methodology, since no system can be founded upon it. A process of questioning leads back to this pre-originary anarchy, but no response is fully adequate. We can glimpse only a trace of what is adequate....'¹⁷³ But, if the superlative

¹⁶⁸ ibid.

¹⁶⁹ ibid.

¹⁷⁰ ibid.

¹⁷¹ C W Reed, *Levinas' Question* p.75

For the significance of proto-agreement, see my forthcoming article, *Agreement and Disagreements: Thomas Reid and Emmanuel Levinas*, *New Blackfriars*, 1996

¹⁷² See E Levinas, *'Questions et Reponses*, pp.74-75

¹⁷³ C W Reed, *Levinas' Question* p.76

'disrupts the way in which knowledge is conceived,'¹⁷⁴ what does it mean *to know*? Totality and Infinity offers a critique of comprehensive knowledge and the phenomenological conception of consciousness as consciousness *of* something; '[i]ntentionality... cannot account for the absolute transcendence that the idea of infinity requires....' However, insofar as 'everyone *agrees* that it is important *to know*, ... knowledge is under the sway of opinion, and, 'says Reed, 'we suspect that Levinas has no intention of replacing our ready agreement with a certain knowledge. The agreement remains prior to knowledge; it is never superceded.¹⁷⁵ In other words, the *ego cogito* is not the final indubitable foundation of knowledge, but finds itself already and always within a relation which transcends the ego; for Rahner, this is articulated in terms of the supernatural existential - the supernatural is already and always an existential of Dasein; for Levinas, it is the relation with the infinity or extreme otherness of the Other. Now, what is placed in question is precisely the relation between knowledge and morality, that is, *whether we are duped by.... morality*. Descartes had placed morality 'at the furthest extremity from the founding moment; morality was the fruit of the tree of knowledge.'¹⁷⁶ But Descartes also valued the superlative as the foundation of knowledge, seeing in the certitude of the infinite the support of the *cogito*. To his own question of whether the idea of the infinite is 'discovered by a reasoning or an intuition that can posit only in themes', Levinas answers that '[t]he infinite cannot be thematised, and the distinction between reasoning and intuition does not apply to the access to infinity.'¹⁷⁷ Access to infinity is by way of a superlation which emphasises the superlative to the point of hyperbole such that 'they are enabled to describe something that absolutely exceeds their grasp.'¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.77

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.78

¹⁷⁷ E Levinas, *TI*, p.211

¹⁷⁸ C W Reed, Levinas' Question p.78

This problematic finds a parallel in the question of the meaningfulness of religious statements and the Thomistic doctrine of analogy. See, for example, James F Ross, "Analogy as a Rule of Meaning for Religious Language," in *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1976). Ross maintains that a response to the question '[c]an you show that religious statements are meaningful?' (p.93) can be articulated in terms of analogy, and by so doing, one is

Reed's conclusion is that 'we have been duped by morality to the extent that we expect some new knowledge to alter the agreements under which we live'; further, '[s]tructurally the dupery is even more explicit, for... we place the ego at the centre of the moral universe, thus excluding the others whom morality supposedly involves.'¹⁷⁹ In other words, '[w]e have been duped by morality to the extent that we place the ego above and before the other person.'¹⁸⁰ But, 'Levinas does not believe that any knowledge will alter our agreement as to what is of the highest importance. And so... we have not been duped by morality....; morality, by preserving the position of the other person above the ego, preserves the absolute transcendence that invests experience with meaning.'¹⁸¹ Elsewhere, speaking of the dupery of uttered truth, Levinas writes,

'If no truth uttered could, without dupery, obtain as a primary truth, the interlocutor as a being and the relationship with the interlocutor's being, that is, language, situates one above the totality, and makes one able to seek it is out, if not discover, the dupery involved in the truths put forth.'¹⁸²

enabled to '(1) preserve the transcendence of God; (2) preserve the intelligibility of theological language; (3) make sense of the claim that human experience can furnish some evidence for the truth of the theological beliefs' (p.133)

See also, and especially, David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, (London, SCM Press, 1981), pp.408-438, where he speaks of analogy as 'articulating similarity-in-difference' (p.408). Significantly for this present work, Tracy draws attention to Rahner's linking of Mystery and Analogy. He writes, '[t]he obscure, for Rahner, is understood as obscure only on the other side of the clarity provided by those analogies and that order. The incomprehensible is theologically retrieved as incomprehensible only on the other side of a theological comprehensibility of those analogies and that order. Radical mystery is theologically understood not as a puzzle or problem but as mystery only on the other side of a critical, reflective retrieval of the intelligibility of the concepts in the doctrines and the ordered relationships among the major doctrines. The unity achieved is never the deadened uniformity beloved by a univocal mind but a unity-in-difference disclosed by similarities-in-difference to an analogical mind. For Rahner, reality not merely has analogies but *is* analogy through and through. As the analogous journeys of the mystical *theologies* remind us, even the religious silence evoked by an intensified (i.e. mystical) religious experience of the originating event is *theologically* understood as silence only on the other side of that speech, that reflective, second-order, kataphatic speech proper to the mystical theological as speaker' (p.412).

¹⁷⁹ ibid.

¹⁸⁰ ibid., p.79

¹⁸¹ ibid.

¹⁸² E Levinas, The Ego and the Totality, pp.42-43

Now, this proto-agreement between interlocutors which sustains expressed agreement, and in relation to which alone the possibility of 'agreeing to disagree' or 'agreeing to differ' have any sense is articulated by Levinas, in Otherwise than Being, in terms of the distinction between what is uttered - *le Dit* - which is capable of duping us, and the actuality of uttering itself - *le Dire* - which is the prior relationship with an interlocutor which is able to support and vouch for what is uttered. 'The essential condition for propositional truth is not in the disclosure of a being, or of the being of beings, but the expression of an interlocutor to whom I *tell* both the being he is and the being of his being.'¹⁸³ This implies a *faith* or *trust* in the other person. 'An interlocutor is not affirmed

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, p.43

Levinas seems to distance himself from Heidegger here. Graham Ward points out, however, that 'the distinction between the Saying and the Said is Heidegger's before being Levinas' (Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.112). Charting the development of Heidegger's thought, particularly regarding poetic language, Ward says that 'Heidegger listens in the poetry to what is unsayable' and 'is moving beyond hermeneutics towards that which is the condition for hermeneutics,' to the 'transcendental condition for language' (pp.114-15). 'The Word is a hint, and not a sign in the sense of mere signification' (On the Way to Language, p.27). Further, that 'hint' points towards the inadequacy of a phenomenological approach, or, we might say, the failure of the transcendental reduction in Husserlian phenomenology to address adequately the human situation of inter-subjectivity and the need to take the reduction further.

David Boothroyd also questions whether Levinas's phenomenological analyses and subsequent claims are 'as radically opposed to Heidegger as he clearly thinks' (Responding to Levinas, p.17), because, despite any difference, 'there remains the fact that they are both attempting to deconstruct/surpass/delimit/go beyond... the logocentric tradition' (p.19). Heidegger's project in Being and Time is an 'existential hermeneutic,' founded on Dasein's precomprehension of Being, in which 'Being is both disclosed and dissimulated in and by the question of Being - in language' (p.21). Being hides *within* the ontic metaphor of language, appearing in but transcending 'metaphysical (ontic) determination,' as 'a *trace* which marks the withdrawal of Being within the ontic metaphor' (*ibid.*, p.21). Levinas, says Boothroyd, fails to give due weight to the 'ontological difference' in Heidegger, and asks whether Derrida is not correct in saying that 'Levinas confirms Heidegger in his disclosure: for does not the latter see in metaphysics (in metaphysical ontology) the forgetting of Being and the dissimulation of the ontological difference?' (Derrida, Violence and Metaphysics, p.142). By confirming Heidegger as the extreme example of the violence towards alterity to which the ontological tradition, as a history of Being, is susceptible, Levinas advances his own thought of absolute separation, not within the framework of Being, but in terms of the separation which the fact of speech outlines. 'Speaking (conversation) is understood to do the work of restoring the antecedence of the ethical relation' by interrupting a previously uninterrupted (comprehensive) relation between the same and the other' (*ibid.*, p.25). But this, as Ward, indicates above, is not at odds with Heidegger.

The difference between the two is ultimately theological. 'Levinas's work,' says Ward, 'can be viewed as a Jewish midrash on Heidegger's' (Ward, p.123). Both

like a truth, but believed,¹⁸⁴ not as 'a second source of cognition' but 'presupposed by every theoretical statement.'¹⁸⁵ Where phenomenology fails is in its analysis of uttered truth, and in its halting before the interlocutor. It is 'the face-to-face position characteristic of language [which] admits of a more radical phenomenological analysis.'¹⁸⁶

Now, it is this emphasis on agreement, says Smith, that revises the notion of rationality with which Levinas operates. Whereas the tradition privileges theoretical truth, in the 'root complicity' between its epistemological ontological emphases, Levinas claims that prior to truth there is justice¹⁸⁷ which is irreducible to any teleological unity. The perichoresis of being and knowing is contested by the social relation which is an essential "nonadequation". The other does not present himself as a truth to be known, but 'is the one *in the face of whom* truths are offered and criticised in discourse; he is the judge of the proceedings never the accused.'¹⁸⁸ Although philosophy tends to reduce the order of justice to the order of knowledge and truth, the human context is non-theoretical, primarily moral, and the presupposition of truth.

This elevation of the *truth* of justice over epistemological and ontological truth to the status of a philosophical thesis is immediately problematical, for 'how can

operate 'at the limits of phenomenology,' both are 'metaphysicians of metaphysical desire,' both are 'concerned with origins,' both 'treat concealment' and wish to locate, beyond this concealment, 'the place of the unthought, the wholly other' (Ward, p.123). Heidegger, however, commits himself to the historicity of thought, outside of which there is no alterity, save a hint, and the neutrality of Being, and remains within philosophy; Levinas, in his concern for the transcendent, finds his significant difference from Heidegger in locating the post-metaphysical in an ethical *a priori*, which, ultimately, for Ward, is a theological *a priori*. 'It is the theological perspective that allows Levinas to describe the Saying in profoundly personalist and ethical language' (Ward, p.125). Again, 'Levinas's project, unlike Heidegger's, appeals to monotheism's God. It is this theological appeal that determines the ethical emphasis in his work upon social responsibility and intersubjectivity' (Ward, p.140).

¹⁸⁴ E Levinas, The Ego and The Totality, p.41

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

Levinas writes, 'Faith is not the knowledge of a truth open to doubt or capable of being certain.... it is the face-to-face encounter with a hard and substantial interlocutor...' (*ibid.*).

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.43

¹⁸⁷ See *idem*, *TI*, pp.42-48

¹⁸⁸ S Smith, *art. cit.*, p.55

[Levinas'] case be made except as a statement of the case? How can a rational account be given of something that is not a truth?¹⁸⁹ 'Or is the idea of the other a merely verbal proposition of meaning, unfulfillable and untestable, which thus ought to be excluded from philosophical discussion?'¹⁹⁰ Such questions, however, are grounded in the presupposition of theoretical truth rather than the truth of justice which is 'fundamentally different.'¹⁹¹ For, while the idea of the absolutely other may be incoherent, as Derrida claims, it is must still be asked 'what this incoherence might betoken, or what purpose it serves.'¹⁹² The other may be 'a phenomenological nonobject, absolutely nonevident and independent of any intentional correlation,'¹⁹³ yet nonetheless there is still the social relation within which questions of truth and coherence are asked and answered. Smith argues that, '[b]y calling the social relation "the logical plot of being,"¹⁹⁴ and asserting that being is plural, or that 'exteriority "is" the essence of being,'¹⁹⁵ Levinas uses the language of ontology to express anti-ontology; he answers the question of being by displacing it is.'¹⁹⁶ Thus, 'the paradoxical antiphenomenology and anti-ontology of Totality and Infinity are to be taken, not as phenomenological and ontological theses, but as pointers from phenomenology and ontology to that which they fail to express, the transcendence of the moral life.'¹⁹⁷ It is an approach which

¹⁸⁹ ibid.

¹⁹⁰ ibid., p.56

¹⁹¹ ibid.

¹⁹² ibid.

¹⁹³ ibid., p.55

¹⁹⁴ E Levinas, TI, p.289

¹⁹⁵ ibid., p.292

Rahner also explicitly acknowledges the plurality of Being, when, in "The Theology of the Symbol," he notes that Being cannot be reduced to 'a hollow, lifeless identity' (p.227), but rather that 'a being is, of itself, independently of any comparison with anything else, plural in its unity' (p.227)

¹⁹⁶ S Smith, art. cit., p.55

¹⁹⁷ ibid., p.56

Ward comments that 'Levinas moves through a phenomenological analysis of subjectivity *qua* consciousness towards the other (*l'autre*) beyond and behind the Other person (*l'autrui*). The movement towards the other-in-the-self is a movement towards the collapse of phenomenology' (op. cit., pp.142-143).

approaches the significance of the social relation - which 'does not belong to phenomenology, to the comprehension of "appearance" and "dissimulation"¹⁹⁸ - 'from the standpoint of the phenomenology that it interrupts.'¹⁹⁹

One must approach Levinas philosophy, then, not by asking whether or not it ~~is~~ might be rational 'according to the theoretical-descriptive idea of rationality' but by asking 'how his argument revises the meaning of rationality itself, by challenging the assumption that the pursuit of theory simply justifies itself and controls all meaning.'²⁰⁰

Rationality, theoretically considered, operates within an inter-relational context in which the other ~~is~~ always calls for prior consideration. For Levinas, this demands the assertion of the priority of justice over truth, or of justice as the context within which any uttered truth has meaning; for Rahner, it is the realisation that love is the fulfilment of *ratio* and that justice is the doing of love to the neighbour, before whose mystery there is always more to be done. As Levinas aptly puts it, 'Philosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love.'²⁰¹ The focus of Totality and Infinity, then, is the deformation of phenomenology and ontology which results from the interlocutor's transcendence with respect to the question of his theoretical truth. 'The face to face remains an ultimate situation,²⁰² and the meaning of reason is now apology and appeal to the other as 'the primordial phenomenon of reason,²⁰³ 'the first rational teaching, the condition for all teaching.'²⁰⁴ 'The essence of reason consists, not in securing man's foundation and powers, but in calling him in question and inviting him to justice.'²⁰⁵ The two "reasons" which are evident in Totality and Infinity present two philosophical roads: the one, a cul-de-sac leading to the incoherent idea of the absolute otherness of the neighbour which discredits every theoretical attempt to deal with intersubjectivity (and this 'is, on

¹⁹⁸ E Levinas, DEHH, p.199

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ S Smith, *art.cit.*, p.56

²⁰¹ E Levinas, OB, pp.161-162

²⁰² E Levinas, TI, p.88

²⁰³ *ibid.*, p.252

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.203

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.88

the whole, the main achievement of Totality and Infinity'),²⁰⁶ the other, indicated as a *via eminentiae*, leading 'to a positive claim for the rationality of morality and a positive linkage between justice and being,²⁰⁷ which derives from 'an ethical surplus of saying similar to the theoretical minus of scepticism' and which, although 'essentially refutable' and 'incapable of a coherent appearance in the text of discourse,' is nonetheless 'unquenchable in inspiration' and outwith the 'synchronic teleology of knowing and being.'²⁰⁸ 'The moral, unlike the merely sceptical, is a surplus instead of a denial or privation; but it is equally refutable.'²⁰⁹ Yet, like the sceptical, it perdures. In other words, Levinas operates within a framework of diachronic signification which refuses the disposal of the truly transcendent originary agreement by intuition or the play of being. This means, however, that *Ceci* is not offered for *cela* in a representative or significative manner as in Derrida's structure of meaning as *ceci en tant que cela*, but as a personal, ethical signification which coincides with the moral event of *substitution* in which one is for the other (*moi en tant que celui*). It is the self that "'stands for" the neighbour as does the sign for the signified, one for another.'²¹⁰ Derrida's implicit standard of rationality and meaningfulness, therefore, finds its critic in Levinas who argues that language as representation is only 'a mode of its primordial work of opening interlocutors to each other for mutual service,²¹¹ and that the root structure of reason is the "one-for-another" of substitution and signification,²¹² which is to restate the thesis of Totality and Infinity that philosophy is morality before it is theory. 'Not by emphasis and not by logic does this philosophy appeal, but by an emphasis of evidence and logic based on the elementary solicitation of every person by every other.'²¹³ However, the 'glory of purely "rhetorical" argument is that it is inconclusive' and abstains from the

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.59

²⁰⁷ S Smith, art. cit., p.59

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.62

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.65

²¹⁰ See E Levinas, OB, pp.11-14

²¹¹ S Smith, art. cit., p.61

²¹² *ibid.*; cf. E Levinas, OB, p.167

²¹³ S Smith, art. cit., p.68

coercive demonstration, the winning, which would end all argument, 'in order to preserve what argument is primordially expressive of, namely, moral fellowship.'²¹⁴

²¹⁴ ibid., p.69

Smith points out that this radical introduction of the interlocutor into a methodology has implications for the manner or the style in which the methodology will be pursued and can be compared to the relationship between the methodological assertions of the preface and the main text, Reed comments that 'the methodological assertions of the preface are not necessarily more trustworthy or more insightful than the method as it is performed in the text itself. The method may indeed be opposed to the methodology' (p.72) 'The word by way of preface..... belongs to the very essence of language, which consists in continually undoing its phrase by the foreword or exegesis, in unsaying the said, in attempting to restate without ceremonies what has already been ill understood in the inevitable ceremonial in which the said delights' (Levinas, TI, p.30). Hence the intrinsic importance of style for method. The ceremony of language must happen, and no transcendental methodological discourse can replace or overcome it ~~is~~ because 'the dupery of every spoken truth always returns' (Smith, p.72). 'The ceremonial of the said must always be unsaid; it is must always be brought back to language as a relation to an interlocutor.' (p.73) One can reflect here on the Preface to *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, where the same "undoing" is spoken of. '*L'avant-propos, toujours écrit après le livre, n'est pas toujours une redite en termes approximatifs, de l'énoncé rigoureux qui justifie un livre. Il peut exprimer le premier - et l'urgent - commentaire, le premier "c'est-à-dire" - qui est aussi le premier dédit - des propositions où, actuelle et assemblé, s'absorbe et s'expose, dans le Dit, l'inassembleable proximité de l'un-pour-l'autre, signifiant comme Dire* (HAH, p.11). The methodology employed is always usurped by the recurrent arrival of a Saying at the heart of the Said which overturns the certainties expressed in the Said.

1.5 *Levinas' Reduction:*

The significance of the interlocutor remains to be reduced. But, why is a reduction necessary?

The possibility of being duped is maintained by the equivocity with which language represents the world, such that any *sens unique* must therefore be sought elsewhere than in language's representational function.²¹⁵ This *sens unique* is not a 'foundation to the sciences, a transcendental source from which all knowledge could be systematically reconstituted' but is rather 'an invisible point within the system of meanings around which that system revolves. The significance of the reduction is its capacity to inquire back to that point.'²¹⁶ Levinas writes,

*'L'expérience a toujours été comprise comme essentiellement incertaine de ses prétensions et, dans ce sens, comme égarant la pensée. La nouveauté de la phénoménologie consiste à réduire "l'expérience-prétendant-à-une-vérité" à une conjoncture ayant une signification par elle-même, c'est-à-dire source d'une œuvre transcendente à partir de laquelle la notion même de la vérité prendra seulement un sens. Ces significations sont la clarté originelle. Dans le langage husserlien ce retournement s'appelle Réduction transcendente. Les contemporains qui ne l'accomplissent pas selon les règles de l'art définies par Husserl se placent néanmoins sur son terrain. L'expérience pour eux est source de significations. Elle est éclairante avant d'être probante.'*²¹⁷

Levinas, then, begins from experience while contesting its claim to be the source of meaning. The movement from experience to an *absolute* experience involves 'a reduction from the egological to the intersubjective in which the egological level receives its significance and its justification.'²¹⁸ As Vasey writes, Levinas abandons an active and sovereign subjectivity 'for he finds that what is essential in subjectivity resides in significations, or more exactly in the signification which renders signification significant (*dans la signification qui rend signifiantes les significations*).'²¹⁹ Reed indicates the two aspects of this reduction: firstly, an existential aspect, preeminent in Totality and Infinity, which recognises the inability of reason to order and comprehend

²¹⁵ See E Levinas, *Le Sens Unique*, in HAH, pp.36-39

²¹⁶ C W Reed, *Problem of Method*, p.147

²¹⁷ E Levinas, DEHH, p.162 See also HAH, p.8

²¹⁸ C W Reed, *Problem of Method*, p.149

²¹⁹ C Vasey, *Le problème de l'intentionnalité dans la philosophie de E. Levinas*, in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 85 (1980), p.235

its world adequately, that is, that reason is insufficient to itself.²²⁰ Husserl may have redeemed the ego from its naïve, natural attitude, but he awoke it to the universality of the doxic thesis. 'The ego is awakened from its natural attitude, but it is not awakened from its presumed position at the centre of the world as known;²²¹ and secondly, the theme of Otherwise than Being, which expresses a further level of awakening, indicated but not pursued by Husserl, which takes its origin in 'the exposition of the other (*Autre*) in the Same... in which the subject loses the atomic consistency of transcendental apperception.'²²² '[D]espite its gnoseological expression - ontical and ontological - phenomenology calls attention to a sense of philosophy which does not lead to a reflexion on the relationship of thought to the world, a relationship which sustains the notions of being and of the World.'²²³ Husserlian philosophy enabled a value to be given to thought other than as an explanation of experience, understood as an experience of being or of presence in the world, and which, though it begins in wonder, always remains a relationship of adequation between what is given and what is signified in the subjective unity of transcendental apperception. But 'this is not the sole, nor even the initial modality of the subjective in the Husserlian analyses.'²²⁴ Husserl's analyses are always more surprising than his 'system' and programmatic discourse, for while appealing to intuition 'as the principle of principles,' and while referring evidence to a horizon of the Same, nonetheless, Husserlian phenomenology places in question the formal and thematic logic which would ensure the rationality of reason. The permanent revolution of the phenomenological reduction undertaken by Husserl is that it brings to life again what has been forgotten in knowledge, and places in question the subject understood as intuitive reason and agreement. 'Doesn't the style of Husserlian phenomenology,' asks Levinas, 'multiplying the gestures of reduction and effacing in consciousness every trace of subordination to the world..., call attention to that which is discovered *behind* consciousness submitted to its ontic destiny in the thought of the Same?'²²⁵ 'The reduction signifies the passage from the natural attitude to the

²²⁰ See E Levinas, *De La Conscience à la veille*, pp.34-37

²²¹ C W Reed, *Problem of Method*, p.150

²²² E Levinas, *De La Conscience à la veille*, p.55

²²³ E Levinas, *La Philosophie et l'Eveil*, p.98

²²⁴ *ibid.*, p.98

transcendental attitude,¹²²⁶ and although this passage seems to be a search for certainty, as in Descartes, it shows once again the inadequacy of the experience of the world to thought. With Husserl, we may still be confined within a philosophy of knowing, a theory of knowledge, but, nonetheless, Husserl's reduction liberates sensed thought from the world, from adequation, from identification, from being as the accomplishment of a theme, and from the re-presentation of presence. Levinas continues by saying that '[w]e think that the reduction reveals its true meaning and the meaning of the subjective which it signifies in its final phase, which is the intersubjective reduction. The subjectivity of the subject shows itself in the traumatism of awakening, despite the gnoseological interpretation which, for Husserl, finally characterises the element of the spirit.¹²²⁷ It is not the *ego* of the *alter-ego*, rooted in knowledge and freedom, which is significant, but the *alter* of the *alter-ego* which, in its alterity, contests the *ego*. But this is no longer Husserl, for whom the reduction remained a passage from a less perfect to a more perfect knowledge. The 'astonishing or traumatising' aspect of the Husserlian theory of the intersubjective reduction is the possibility it gives for a 'sobering up,' 'beyond the sobriety of simple lucidity,' in which the self, opposed to the *other* of the self rather than the other *self*, is liberated from itself, and roused 'from dogmatic slumber.'¹²²⁸ 'The Reduction... describes the awakening, beyond knowledge, from insomnia or from wakefulness of which knowledge is only one modality.'¹²²⁹ It is the explosion of the Other in the Same, leading to an absolute insomnia, in which the priority and atomic consistency of transcendental apperception is placed in question. If self-consciousness was posited as an insomnia, vigilant before the anonymity of being, and the first wakening was a waking to a natural, pagan existing devoid of transcendence, absolute insomnia is vigilance before the alterity of the other, who in his very approach contests my natural existence and draws me beyond the confines of my solitary existing with its concerns. To be sure, I may still wish to take recourse to sleep and remain deaf to any appeal from alterity; I can still seek significance by attempting to construct my place in the sun. The tragedy for such a way of living, however, is that

225 *ibid.*, p.100

226 *ibid.*, p.100

227 *ibid.*, pp.102-103

228 *ibid.* pp.103-104

229 *ibid.*, p.104



it is a vain and notional pursuit. Pagan life, a life without alterity, is already betrayed its own existence; the natural, non-transcending, self is not self-assured in its relations, as Husserl demonstrates by showing the inadequacy of consciousness and its evidence. The transcendental Reduction pursued by Levinas reveals a second level awakening, which is not a coming to self-consciousness, but an awakening of the other in me.

'In granting the sense of "ego" to the other, and also in my alterity to myself by which I can confer upon the other the sense of the ego, the here and the there are inverted. It is not a homogenization of space which is thus constituted; it is me - however obviously primordial and hegemonic, however identical to myself and in my "own", however snug in my skin and in my hic et nunc I may be - who passes to the second level. I see my own self starting from the other, I am exposed to the other, I have accounts to render.²³⁰

1.51 *Saying (le Dire) and Said (le Dit)*

Now, Reed argues that it is the second aspect of the reduction - the waking to alterity - rather than the existential realisation of the insufficiency of comprehensive reason, which is more properly methodological, 'for it concerns the ability of philosophy to describe the inversion which occurs in the movement from egological to intersubjective.²³¹ The *sens unique*, around which systems of meaning revolve is the Saying (*le Dire*). But '[t]he Saying occurs only as an overflow of the Said, in an *emphasis* which always implies more than is actually said.²³² However, if Saying only ever shows itself in the Said, which is already within the framework of Being, '[c]an an otherwise than Being ever be liberated from Being long enough to talk about it?²³³ How can the Saying ~~can~~ be led to betray itself, and thereafter reduced? Levinas poses this methodological problem when he asks,

'... whether the pre-original element of saying (the anarchical, the non-original, as we designate it) can be led to betray itself by showing itself in a theme (if an an-archaeology is possible), and whether this betrayal can be reduced; whether one can at the same time know and free the known of the marks which thematization leaves on it by subordinating it to ontology. Everything shows itself at the price of this betrayal, even

²³⁰ *ibid.*, p.103

²³¹ C W Reed, Problem of Method, p.152

²³² *ibid.*, p.154

²³³ *ibid.*, p.155

the unsayable. In this betrayal the indiscretion with regard to the unsayable, which is probably the very task of philosophy, becomes possible.²³⁴

Reed expresses it thus: '[t]he reduction would not be possible if the trace of the Saying were not in some way already visible in the Said; but the reduction would not be necessary if this Saying were simply the transcendental correlate of the Said.'²³⁵ If we grant, with Feron, that there is a reductive movement from the Said to a Saying, and an inverse deductive, constitutive movement from the Saying back again to the Said, how is the Saying to be released from thematic contamination?²³⁶ Feron writes,

*'La réduction commence dans les structures du savoir et de l'intentionnalité. L'analyse de la configuration intentionnelle et linguistique de la connaissance n'est donc pas une étude préliminaire extérieure à la pensée propre de Levinas, elle est déjà prise dans le mouvement de la réduction. La réduction serait-elle d'ailleurs possible si le Dire de proximité n'était pas déjà présent d'une certaine manière dès le point de départ, précisément dans le langage, dans la corrélation du Dire noétique et du Dit, c'est-à-dire dans sa corrélation avec le Dit?'*²³⁷

Of course, one can identify the same double movement in transcendental Thomism.

Coreth recognises both a reductive and a deductive moment, writing that the

'[t]ranscendental *reduction* uncovers thematically in the immediate data of consciousness the conditions and presuppositions implied in them. It is a return from what is thematically known to that which is unthematically co-known in the act of consciousness, to that which is pre-known as a condition of the act. Transcendental *deduction*, on the other hand, is the movement of the mind which, from this previous datum, uncovered reductively, deduces *a priori* the empirical act of consciousness, its nature, its possibility, and its necessity. Whereas reduction proceeds from a particular experience to the conditions of its possibility, deduction goes from these conditions to the *essential* structures of the same experience.'²³⁸

Coreth, however, compromises the unthematic element within the reduction, exposing it to thematisation in the deduction, when he adds that '[t]he two movements are in

²³⁴ E Levinas, OB, p.7

²³⁵ C W Reed, Problem of Method, p.157

²³⁶ E Feron, Ethique, langage et ontologie chez Emmanuel Levinas, in Revue de Métaphysique et de Moral, 82 (1977), p.77

²³⁷ *ibid.*, p.74

²³⁸ E Coreth, Metaphysics, p.37

constant interaction, they influence each other.²³⁹ In other words, the conceptual mediation of what is immediate in experience compromises the absolute value of the horizon, a compromise which, in terms of the relationship between the Saying and the Said, Levinas would refuse.²⁴⁰

Reed identifies the problem which appears in Feron as one of the synchronic operation of the reductive and deductive movements. Hence, the mutuality of interaction and influence. If the Said always offers the Saying as its synchronic correlative, then the Saying as significant beyond the Said, is contested and the reduction rendered redundant. The relationship between Saying and Said, however, is not synchronic, but diachronic, and, therefore the Saying is outwith the possibility of thematic exposition in the Said. Literally, the Saying is *ex-position*. The reductive moment is not on the same plane as the deductive moment. As Rahner notes in reference to his own reduction, there exists '*an irreversible difference... between an original experience of transcendence... on the one hand and the objectifying and verbalising reflection on this experience of transcendence on the other...*'²⁴¹ The reductive movement and the deductive movement are *irreversibly different*. Reed indicates that Feron overlooks the diachronic element, although he implicitly acknowledges it when he writes in the above quotation, that the reduction has already begun (*elle est déjà prise dans le mouvement de la réduction*) in the analysis of intentionality. The Said, prior to any exposure to intentional analysis, is already being reduced by the very fact of the Saying of the Said which gives the Said a significance in excess of the expressed content. The fact that the Said is always on the lips of one who is saying means that the Said can never be scrutinised as a theme isolated from its interlocutor. The text of the Said is always otherwise because it is Said in the *con*-text of a Saying.²⁴² It is not so much the case that

²³⁹ *ibid.*

²⁴⁰ See O Muck, *The Transcendental Method*, (New York: Herder, 1968) when writing of the *principle of mediation*, he says '[o]bjective formulations are necessary when we reflect because language is just as objectively oriented as thought. In the determination of what is grasped in transcendental reflection, we must employ linguistic modes which contain much that we must presently ignore. Its meaning within transcendental reflection *must be restricted*, if it is to be communicated, *to what is intended in transcendental reflection*' (p.316, *italics added*).

²⁴¹ K Rahner, *Experience of Transcendence*, p.176 (*Italics added*).

²⁴² We recognise here a double context. A Saying is always present in and illuminated by a cultural ensemble 'as a text is by its *context*' (E Levinas, "La Trace de l'autre," in DEHH, p.193; *emphasis added*). Thus, the comprehension of the Other is

"*le Dire est Dit*"²⁴³ as "*le Dit est Dire*." The Said is not a pure Said, but, because it involves a Saying, is also always otherwise than Said, and as such is already subject to a reduction. Levinas writes that '[t]he *otherwise than being* is stated in a saying that must also be unsaid in order thus to extract the *otherwise than being* from the said in which it already comes to signify but a *being otherwise*."²⁴⁴ This *saying* and *being unsaid* cannot be assembled, nor can they be 'at the same time,'²⁴⁵ for, were that a requirement, it would be already to reduce being's *other* to *being* and *not being*²⁴⁶ and already once again to affirm the Saying as no more than the correlative of the Said, and once again to engineer its ontological confinement. Saying, rather, is a pure surplus over evidence, theme and logic; it is the positive production of the other *as other* (*autrui*), and it is this which gives all signification its significance (*la signification qui rend signifiantes les significations*), as Vasey has already noted. The contradiction which logic recognises in scepticism's illegitimacy, and which applies in a similar way to the relationship between the Saying and the Said, derives from the tendency to simultaneity, whereas the persistence of scepticism and the insistence of Saying in excess of the Said derives from 'a secret diachrony [which] commands this ambiguous or enigmatic way of speaking, and because in general signification signifies beyond synchrony, beyond essence.'²⁴⁷ Ultimately, what is said has significance not on account of itself, but on account of its issuing in a Saying always excessive with regard to what is said, and, irrespective of whether what is Said is sense or non-sense from whatever perspective, always significant. Simply put, it is only because there is an other who speaks that what is said, whatever is said, has any ultimate significance. 'The face opens the primordial discourse... that obliges entering into discourse.'²⁴⁸ It 'is the evidence that makes

always a hermeneutic and an exegesis. But, having said that, the Other in his Saying, though culturally signified in his textuality, nonetheless signifies as a *context*. The Other does not visit us solely clothed in culture, but remains outwith such a cultural manifestation, signifying by himself (See, *ibid.*, pp.193-194)

²⁴³ E Feron, *De l'idée de transcendance à la question du langage*, Jerome Millon, Grenoble, 1992, p.183

²⁴⁴ E Levinas, OB, p.7

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ E Levinas, TI, p.201

evidence possible.²⁴⁹

Now, the two movements of reduction and deduction which Feron recognises in Levinas' method are also identified by Reed who notes that Levinas' method has two specific procedures - the reductive and the retracing. In the first place, the statement in which the *otherwise than Being* is thematised must be unsaid, and this is accomplished in two ways: firstly, by a simple negation and restatement, and secondly, by an iteration, the characteristic of which is diachronic expression, - like being out of step with oneself and putting one's foot down out of time, or a hardly distinguishable echo which nonetheless returns to disrupt the simultaneity of the Saying and the Said, or like the almost imperceptible delay in long distance calls which interrupts the conversation by disconnecting the Said from its Saying, - a repetitive phrasing in which the place of the concept within the ontological system is called into question. 'Both ways of unsaying the Said function critically, by calling into question the ability of consciousness to comprehend the concepts involved.'²⁵⁰

Now this unsaying of the Said arises within an ethical context, for the relationship with the interlocutor is, before anything else, an ethical relationship. It is this ethical context which resolves the methodic quandary of the incoherence of the absolutely other which Derrida recognised in Totality and Infinity. In Otherwise than Being Levinas attempts to show performatively what language can do, other than represent, in terms of *le Dit* and *le Dire*. Commenting on the passage previously indicated, Smith indicates that Saying belongs to 'a horizon of sociality'²⁵¹ incommensurable with the Said, but its origin and presupposition. Levinas aims to 'perform a "reduction" of the said to saying, to "surprise" saying before it becomes said and thus to resolve the problem of the unsayableness of the good by saying it anyway, in a kind of indiscretion.'²⁵² It is a reduction because like Husserl's phenomenological reduction it opens a radically new and in some sense transcendental field of enquiry.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.204

²⁵⁰ C W Reed, Problem of Method, p.159

²⁵¹ S Smith, Reason as One for Another, p.61; see OB, p.7

²⁵² *ibid.* Cf. E Levinas, OB, p.7

²⁵³ Smith points to Levinas' Ideology and Idealism, A Lesley & S Ames (Trs.) in Modern Jewish Ethics, M Fox (ed.) Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975, p.138, n.4, saying 'Levinas refers to an "*epoche*" of disinterestedness (being the moral condition that distinguishes truth from ideology, justice from power, etc.) and

Saying is a pure surplus over evidence, theme and logic, and the saying of Saying is the 'positive production of the infinite distinct from the negative witness of the gaps created in totality (the phenomenologico-ontological realm) by the theoretical incoherence of the idea of the other.'²⁵⁴ Now, the ethical significance of the Saying has both a material and a methodological implication: materially, 'the problem of the apparent *impossibility* of saying the unsayable is not dissolved but made relative to the inner, properly moral *necessity* of saying the unsayable by saying saying itself;²⁵⁵ Derrida's criticisms are justified, 'but by a justification that is inferior to the justification of the ethical,'²⁵⁶ for just as life is not confined to the theoretical, so neither is language; methodologically, 'the only way to reflect the right relation between morality and theory consistently is to derive the theoretical from the ethical. Only thus can theory be shown to be a mode of that which exceeds it: that is, only thus can the claim that justice is prior to truth be philosophically justified.'²⁵⁷ This is the value of superlatation - 'it does not point to a privation of knowing and being but rather to that of which knowing and being per se would constitute a privation were they abstracted from it.'²⁵⁸ As Levinas writes, '[t]he ethical relation... accomplishes the very intention that animates the movement unto truth.'²⁵⁹ Again, '[t]he face opens the primordial discourse... that obliges entering into discourse, the commencement of discourse rationalism prays for, a "force" that convinces even "the people who do not wish to listen" and thus founds the true universality of reason.'²⁶⁰ And again, '[t]he face is the evidence that makes evidence possible - like the divine veracity that sustains Cartesian rationalism.'²⁶¹

says that ethics is a movement as radical as the transcendental reduction' (S Smith, Reason as One for Another, p.71).

²⁵⁴ S Smith, Reason as One for Another, p.61

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.63

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.62

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.63

²⁵⁹ E Levinas, *TI*, p.47

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.201

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.204

1.6 *A Transcendental Method?*

By requiring metaphysics to undertake a critique of itself, Kant effected a transcendental turn in philosophy. Rahner's own transcendental schema follows on from Maréchal's response to the Kantian problematic. To what extent and in what way can Levinas' thinking be termed 'transcendental'? Levinas notes that philosophy, in tracing its freedom back to what precedes it, is critique. 'Critique or philosophy is the essence of knowing. But what is proper to knowing is not its possibility of going unto an object, a movement by which it is akin to other acts; its prerogative consists in being able to put itself in question, in penetrating beneath its own condition.'²⁶² Insofar as it seeks its own condition, then, it can be termed transcendental. Rahner outlines the characteristics of the transcendental method when he writes,

'Basing ourselves on Kant's definition of concept we can say: A question is posed on the transcendental plane when it asks for the *a priori* conditions that make knowledge of an object possible. The subject who assumed this attitude therefore does not approach the object head on; he does not try to get out of himself, so to speak, so as thereby to encounter the object, but turns back to reflect upon himself and examines in himself, as subject, which conditions permit him to make this object his own. It goes without saying that in the course of this search for the subject's *a priori* conditions for the possibility of knowledge, a certain provisional knowledge of the object is always presupposed. It is also clear that when one tries to identify what conditions the grasp of an object of specifically human knowledge, it is not a matter of any pragmatic, experiential conditions, such as those arrived at by experimental psychology, but of those revealed by an *a priori* deduction, thus conditions necessary for the apprehension of every object that can come under a finite human knowledge.'²⁶³

²⁶² *ibid.*, p.85

²⁶³ K Rahner, The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger, p.129

Now, while a transcendental method attempts to 'penetrate beneath its own condition,' one must ask whether a transcendental approach, while necessarily concerning itself with *a priori* conditions, should uncover those conditions in the knowing subject to the exclusion of 'any pragmatic experiential conditions,' or whether experience, as experience of what is other than the subject, also contributes, in some way, to the framework within which transcendental thinking is operative.

1.61 *Kant's Transcendentalism:*

Kant, as Maréchal notes, undertakes his transcendental critique to 'deliver "the principles of possibility" of objective knowledge, that is, the principles which are logically prior to a particular knowledge, which they intrinsically determine.'²⁶⁴ He writes, 'I call transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowing objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori.'(A11/B25) At the end of his section on the transcendental deduction, 2nd edition, Kant gives the following brief outline:

'The deduction is the exposition of the pure concepts of the understanding, and therewith of all theoretical a priori knowledge, as principles of the possibility of experience - the principles being here taken as the determination of the appearance in space and time in general, and this determination, in turn, as ultimately following from the original synthetic unity of apperception, as the form of the understanding in its relation to space and time, the original forms of sensibility'(B168-69).

Benton describes the general features of Transcendental Arguments in the Kant's *First Critique* as 'a concern with justifying a priori synthetic judgements and an appeal to the conditions of possibility of experience to ground the argument,²⁶⁵ whose 'aim is precisely to establish a framework so that the argument cannot depend upon data that could be given only within that framework.'²⁶⁶ He argues, however, that focusing on the deduction of the Critique of Pure Reason as 'a model for transcendental arguments as such has made it more difficult to see either, in general, what a transcendental argument

²⁶⁴ J Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, III, p.112

²⁶⁵ R Benton, *Kant's Second Critique and the Problem of Transcendental Arguments*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1977, p.4

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.13

is, why it is needed and how it is possible, or more specifically, precisely what structure an argument must have.¹²⁶⁷ Benton therefore proposes his own model of a Kantian argument, indicating that the fundamental problem of the synthesis behind the Deduction is not the linking of concepts, but rather the problem of how a synthetic relation between intuition and concept can be achieved *a priori*, such that the categories are "applicable" *a priori* to all intuition.¹²⁶⁸ Using the transcendental argument structure of the Second Critique, Benton retrospectively illumines the First Critique with regard to 'the question of the *a priori* relation of the faculties for practical reason as well as for theoretical reason.'¹²⁶⁹ The theoretical or speculative knowledge gained in the First Critique is rooted in intellect and sensible intuition; practical knowledge, however, as sought in the Second Critique, flows from the intellect and the will, faculty of desire. The transcendental problem of the Second Critique, therefore, is the *a priori* relation of reason to desire - a relation which is addressed by Levinas - and which is brought to a synthesis in the moral law, 'not because it asserts a connection between concepts, but because it asserts an *a priori* connection between a rule of reason and the faculty of desire (it asserts a determination of the will by pure reason).¹²⁷⁰ But this makes clearer the two features exhibited by transcendental arguments; '[t]he *a priori* relation between the two roots of (for example) theoretical knowledge is a presupposition not only of *a priori* synthetic judgements but also of *experience*,¹²⁷¹ and the common basis of both features is the finitude of the human mind; in other words, 'the fact that for us (according to Kant) knowledge always involves more than one root (A50/B74; B135).¹²⁷² Benton, therefore, proposes the following preliminary model:

'A Transcendental argument will be concerned with establishing the conditions of the possibility of a cognitive framework (but a framework

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.5

²⁶⁸ For a fuller discussion, see D Heinrich, The Proof Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction, in Review of Metaphysics, XXII, 640 (1969). Heinrich locates the problem addressed by Kant in the fact that, for him, human knowledge has two roots - intellect and sensibility - which are irreducible distinct. The deduction, therefore, has to reconcile these two faculties in a synthesis.

²⁶⁹ R Benton, op.cit., p.16

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp.10-11

²⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.11

²⁷² *ibid.*

determined not arbitrarily but by necessary laws). And since the ultimate principle that must be referred to in establishing the "conditions of the possibility of..." is the principle of the unity of apperception (which guarantees the unity of the viewpoint), the argument will be concerned not with just any conditions whatsoever, but rather precisely with the conditions of the possibility of a priori relationships between faculties (that is, relationships between faculties *as such* that allow them to function together to establish a unitary framework) - namely, between those faculties whose functioning is constitutive of the framework in question.²⁷³

Now, Benton argues that, while it is the case that philosophical arguments can involve only concept manipulation, and that these concepts must be *a priori* since they cannot be empirical, it is not the case that *a priori* concepts can ever be *defined* in the strict sense; in other words, 'we can never be sure they are given in their entirety,²⁷⁴ for 'to *define*... only means to present the complete, original concept of the thing within the limits of its concept' (A,727/B,755). Again, '[p]hilosophical arguments can proceed only by concept-manipulation, and yet the concepts with which they deal can never be assumed to be completely given.²⁷⁵ The adequacy of the concept to its object is in the realm of probability rather than apodictic certainty (A728/B756), a point which, as we have seen, resurfaces in Husserl, is expressed by Rahner in terms of the relationship between performance (*Vollzug*) and concept, and is developed by Levinas in terms of the phenomenological inadequacy of evidence. Benton attempts to resolve the difficulty of the two roots of knowledge and the link between judgement and experience by examining the must/can structure of knowledge which Kant develops in the B edition of the First Critique, and which demonstrates the necessity of reason's categorial determination but not necessarily the possibility of such. He writes,

'It might at first seem strange to propose an argument-structure in which necessity is proved first and possibility second (the traditional line of reason being that necessity implies possibility); but it must be kept in mind that the necessity in question is the necessity of consequences logically deducible from a given determination of our conceptual

²⁷³ *ibid.*, p.12

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.14

²⁷⁵ *ibid.*

In an article on Conceptual Thought in Karl Rahner (*Gregorianum*, 75, 1 (1994), Patrick Burke, critical of the relativisation of the concept in Rahner, notes at the outset the inherent contradiction of Kant's enterprise through its limitation of the concept, for 'by asserting that in conceptual knowledge the mind grasped only the phenomenon and not the noumenon, Kant had in fact laid the foundation for the denial of what he sought to assert, namely the validity of conceptual thought' (p.65).

faculties, whereas any further determination of the concept (insofar as it lays claim to being knowledge) involves at least an implicit reference to our sensible faculties, and the conditions of the latter cannot be analytically derived from those of the former.¹²⁷⁶

The point being made is that in the B edition of Critique of Pure Reason, the deduction proves the 'application' of the categories to sensed objects in two separate arguments, which can be explained by employing the distinction between *must* and *can*. The argument is then seen to proceed by proving firstly 'that sensible intuitions in general... must be subject to the categories a priori' although 'it does not show that they *can* be subject to the categories.'¹²⁷⁷ In a second step, the argument moves from the general application of the categories to the particular forms of intuition to demonstrate 'that the conditions they impose on cognition are a priori compatible with the conditions of finite consciousness in general.'¹²⁷⁸ The effect is to highlight the limitation of the concept and its further determination by sensibility.¹²⁷⁹ A revised working model of a transcendental

²⁷⁶ R Benton, p.165, note.

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.15

²⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.16

²⁷⁹ The same *must/can* form of transcendental argument is employed by Rahner when he considers the relationship between nature and grace. The metaphysical concept of 'historical' human nature is 'a synthesis, already achieved beforehand and never wholly resolvable, of *a priori* conditioned "concept" and "intuition" (experience);' but, 'in this history he continually experiences new modes of the single process of the realisation of his essence, which he would never have been able to infer from his essence *a priori*' (K Rahner, Concerning the relationship between Nature and Grace, p.300, n.1). Now, grace is a necessary transcendental condition for that history of self-experience, but, in order that grace might be communicated in human experience (nature), a corresponding necessity in nature is called for. Because God wishes his self-communication to be unexacted, 'he must create man just 'so' (*Darum muß er eben den Menschen "so" schaffen*) that he can receive this self-communication only as grace' (*ibid.*). God, in view of the unexactedness of grace, cannot do other than, that is, must necessarily, create man in the way he has created him ('just "so"') as capable, in his very nature, of receiving that unexacted self-communication. In other words, it is not the case the God must necessarily create, but that, in creating, creation must necessarily be the creation that it is, just 'so.' Steven Duffy, borrowing terminology from C. Peter, explains this *can-must* structure of grace and nature in terms of the *is-contingency* of grace and the *must-be*, or hypothetically necessity of nature (Stephen J Duffy, The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1992, p.92, referring to C. Peter, The Position of K Rahner regarding the Supernatural: a comparative study of Nature and Grace, in Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Association of America, 20, (1965), p.85). Grace is the transcendental condition of nature but this is contingently verified in nature, some elements of which become hypothetically necessary, for example, nature as the hypothetically necessary

argument can be proposed:

'A Transcendental argument is one that is concerned with establishing the conditions of the possibility of a cognitive framework.... The problems of possibility that it will deal with will be problems of the possibility of a priori relations between different human faculties (how they unite, in the sense of functioning together, a priori to produce a given cognitive framework). In addition, we can expect to find in the argument a must/can structure that first establishes a point with respect to a deliberately restricted concept and then, on different grounds, show the compatibility of further determinations with the conclusion of the first step.'²⁸⁰

The point which we wish to stress is, as Benton indicates, that the concept is deliberately restricted, and can be subjected to modification in the light of human experience, as is called for in Kant's Second Critique. This points, however, to the possibility of a change in framework.

In the First Critique, the object appears within the formal *a priori* structure of consciousness. The manifold of sense in sensibility is subjected to the categories and is brought to a synthetic unity by the 'Transcendental Ego,' the original synthetic unity of apperception, which, as the formal unity of consciousness, forms 'the supreme principle for the possibility of understanding.'²⁸¹ Understanding, therefore, arises within the heuristic structure of space and time, which 'regulates ontic manifestations of experience.' It is structurally conditioned. Crawford also interprets as a structure or framework question the transcendental question of the possibility of experience.²⁸² Having indicated Carnap's distinction between internal framework questions and external framework questions regarding the reality of the framework itself, she suggests a third type of question which she terms a 'transcendental question.'

factor for historical humanity, being-in-the-world, corporeality, sociality, self-transcendence. In other words, the transcendental *a priori* of grace is further determined by human experience which is necessarily just 'so' in order that it be congenial for grace. Nature cannot be deduced from an a priori understanding of grace, though this a priori is to be affirmed; the understanding of grace, however, is modified in the light of human experience.

²⁸⁰ R Benton, op.cit., p.18

²⁸¹ C E Winquist, The Transcendental Imagination: an Essay in Philosophical Theology, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1972), p.17

²⁸² Patricia Crawford, Kant's Theory of Philosophical Proof, in Kant-Studien, 53 (1961-62), pp.275-268

'A transcendental question is a question about a framework but *not* a question about the existence of a framework. It is a question we ask about a certain area of knowledge or discourse. The question is: *What is the framework of this particular area of knowledge or discourse?*²⁸³

A transcendental argument, then, establishes a cognitive framework,²⁸⁴ within which 'phenomena are brought into systematic unity' and among which 'lawful relations' obtain.²⁸⁵ However, Crawford suggests that no particular framework can be erected as the only one, 'for a transcendental deduction always justifies a principle relative to some field of knowledge or discourse... *that it is part of the framework of that particular area of discourse.*²⁸⁶ There may well be other heuristic structures, particularly the practical or moral, which provide 'a wholly different framework for knowledge.'²⁸⁷ If we take the transcendental framework outlined by Kant in the First Critique to be a response to the first of the question he asks in A805/B833, namely, 'what can I know?' then, what we hope to argue is that the response to the questions 'what must I do' and 'what have I the right to hope for?' place that particular framework in question, especially when confronted with the ethical encounter with the other person. Benton alludes to the possibility of other frameworks when, in his own model of a transcendental argument, he refers to 'the framework in question;²⁸⁸ Winquist similarly implies the same when referring to Kant's own framework as a classical heuristic structure since it 'anticipate(s) that the intelligibility of the world will be presented as a systematic horizon of an inclusive formal conditions which is invariant through transformations of reference frames.'²⁸⁹

²⁸³ *ibid.*, p.266

²⁸⁴ See Benton, *op.cit.*, p.8

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*

²⁸⁶ P Crawford, *art. cit.*, p.266

²⁸⁷ Benton, *op.cit.*, p.9

²⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.12

²⁸⁹ C Winquist, *op.cit.*, p.19

1.62 *A Dynamic Transcendental Framework:*

When one attempts a Thomistic transposition of Kantian transcendentalism, the name of Joseph Maréchal comes to the fore. In fact, Otto Muck comments that '[i]t is impossible to think of the Transcendental Method in neo-scholasticism without mentioning Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944), and rightly so.²⁹⁰ Rahner, too, indicates that 'we must refer to that work by Maréchal which probably constitutes the best example of a philosopher in the spirit of Aquinas coming to terms with the central problem of Kant.²⁹¹

In *Le Point de depart, III*, Maréchal indicates that his project will attempt the translation of the 'metaphysico-epistemological argument of the metaphysical affirmation of being into a transcendental proof,²⁹² by means of a transcendental reflection, which will go beyond the limits set by Kant's question, '*What can I know?*' The transcendental method, as employed by Maréchal is essentially reflective, since it seeks 'the *value* of the truth of knowledge in the *immanent* essential characteristics of direct knowledge.²⁹³ Its starting point, thus, is the analysis of what is directly and necessarily given in consciousness. Now, for Maréchal, what is truly *given directly* in consciousness, prior to any sort of analysis, is the *object* as intellectually known, and these objects are, *unquestionably*, given to us as "objects in themselves" with an ontological value. However, since the transcendental critique intends to examine the rational foundation of the claim to objective truth, absolute assent to the intrinsic reality of the objects thus represented is withheld, and the object is thus to be understood, at this stage, in its precise sense, that is, as *the phenomenal object (realitas-phaenomenon)*, which 'as phenomenal, or phenomenological, is only an object insofar as it affects consciousness, and therefore, with respect to the subject, is also called the *immanent object*.²⁹⁴ Muck writes,

'We can conceive of the starting point of the transcendental method as the object in the precise phenomenological sense, viz., as a bracketing of all conceptions with regard to the intended object which goes beyond a determination of the function of the object of the intentional act, which

²⁹⁰ O Muck, *The Transcendental Method*, p.25

²⁹¹ K Rahner, *Thomas Aquinas on Truth*, p.25

²⁹² Cf. O Muck, *op. cit.*, p.107

²⁹³ J Maréchal, *Le point*, V, p.516

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*

is an act that must be distinguished from other intentional acts. The object is considered only insofar as it is a component of the intentional act through which the act is distinguished from other intentional acts.²⁹⁵

The transcendental method thus operates phenomenologically. It 'grasps the phenomenological analysis and function as a phenomenological method by representing the content of what is given in the act.'²⁹⁶ Thereafter, the transcendental procedure will involve a reflective *analysis* of the elements and relations within the object as present in consciousness, while suspending any assertions regarding its ontological status. Only subsequently will the logical implications of this position need to be questioned. Such an analysis yields as its first result the absolute value of the necessary object of affirmation as a *practical postulate*. The subject must act *as if* the object were a real object with an objective value. Thus, the value of the affirmed object, though treated as absolute, remains still indirect and subjective, grounded in the *a priori* necessity of a volitional act by an active subject. This is the position beyond which Kantianism fails to venture. In order to free ourselves from Kant at this point, the absolute objective value of the affirmed object, from which the ontological ("noumenal") affirmation as a *theoretical* or *speculative necessity* is derived needs to be affirmed; in other words, the practical and external necessity of a "transcendental order," admitted by Kant, is itself grounded in an absolute necessity which extends intrinsically to every immanent object in its very constitution in consciousness, and this condition logically contains the affirmation of a transcendent object, not merely as a practical "postulate", but as the theoretical necessity of what is speculatively evident. In other words, 'the "transcendental deduction" of the ontological affirmation.'²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ O Muck, *op.cit.* p.312

²⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.311

²⁹⁷ J Maréchal, *Le point*, V, p.518ff

Rahner writes, 'For Aquinas a judgement does not consist merely in a synthesis between two concepts so as to form a single concrete idea. In Thomas' eyes a concretising synthesis of this kind - Heidegger would call it a predicative synthesis - would still be an *incompletum* of the type, for instance, to which definition belongs. In order for judgement and truth in the true sense to be present, the concretising synthesis must be further related to the reality itself, there must be a *comparatio vel applicatio ad rem per affirmationem vel negationem*. An affirmative or objectifying synthesis of this kind (and it is only through this kind of synthesis that a *complexio* or judgement is arrived at) is therefore a constitutive element of judgement and so too of truth (with Heidegger we might also call it a veritative synthesis), though admittedly only provided that this affirmative synthesis is also in fact a valid one'(K Rahner, *Thomas Aquinas on*

Now, in this transcendental deduction, it is the *operative* moment of the act of knowledge - '*the principle of operative analysis*'²⁹⁸ - which is key, for the transcendental method tries to determine the meaning of the object of noetic activity through an analysis of this activity, fixing a tight correlation between the conditions of this act (subjective conditions of possibility) and the structural elements of the object (objective conditions of possibility). The analysis of the conditions of noetic activity undertaken by Maréchal shows that this activity must be such that its object, in order to be knowable, must be related to the absolute order of being.

For Maréchal, the logical truth required to affirm the ontological value of an object present to consciousness is a quality of judgement. The objectivity of the object, in an absolute sense, results formally from an affirmation and not merely from sensible or conceptual representation. To affirm the absolute value of the object, affirmation goes beyond the object as represented.

'The power to think objects, therefore, surpasses the power of directly representing an object through its proper form. The realm of knowable objects thus does not necessarily coincide with the realm of directly representable objects. In knowledge, more can be *meant* than can be *represented* through the structure of a concept directly related to an object.'²⁹⁹

That knowledge does not coincide entirely with representation can be appreciated from the fact that, although initially empirically grounded, conceptual differentiation continues beyond the quantitative. The synthesis produced within consciousness, however, demands a further *concretive synthesis*, whereby the intellect relates what is receptively given and conceptualised to a *suppositum*, transcendent with respect to consciousness. This is an *objective synthesis* which, in judgement, relates the order of representation to the order of reality, and posits its absolute existence with respect to the subject, and thereby situates it within the teleology of the subjective drive towards the Absolute, 'the orientation of knowing.'³⁰⁰ Subjective interiority, in other words, refers itself in judgement to the exteriority of being.

Truth, TI, XIII, p.17)

²⁹⁸ O Muck, *op.cit.* p.315

One can note this operative element in Levinas' movement from a descriptive to a performative phenomenology.

²⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.110-111

³⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.113

1.63 *Levinas' Diachronic Transcendentalism*

Now, like Maréchal, Levinas is responding to the questions raised by Kant's transcendental approach to the possibility of knowledge and the principles regulating moral action. Is his own approach 'transcendental'? Throughout his own writings he makes frequent and critical reference to the transcendental subject which underpins Kant's own philosophical framework. In Otherwise than Being, he criticises critical philosophy's tendency towards a cognitional intentionality emanating from a centralised and centralising transcendental subject which projects meaning onto its own world. The proper signification of subjectivity is not the nominative 'I' of the transcendental ego, but the accusative (and accused) 'me' of proximity. The subject finds itself already and always incarnate in the world, and with others, but neither is this incarnation 'a transcendental operation of a subject'³⁰¹ nor is the world a world which arises as a result of a representational act of a subject. While there is an apprehensive movement on the part of the subject, there is, says Levinas, also an *obsession*. 'Intentionality, the noesis which the philosophy of consciousness distinguished in sensing, and which it wanted, in a regressive movement, to take hold of again as the origin of the sense ascribed, the sensible intuition, is already in the mode of apprehension and obsession, assailed by the sensed which undoes its noematic appearing in order to command, with a non-thematisable alterity, the very noesis which at the origin should have given it a sense.'³⁰² Later, pointing out that the incarnation of the subject is 'hardly intelligible' if the transcendental ego is viewed in so much 'indeclinable straightforwardness,' he writes that 'subjectivity is not called, in its primary vocation, to take the role and place of the indeclinable transcendental consciousness, which effects syntheses straightaway before itself, but is itself excluded from these syntheses.'³⁰³ Like Rahner's transcendental deduction of the necessary conversion of the finite spirit to the world, Levinas notes that the transcendental subject is 'implicated in [these syntheses] only through the detour of incarnation'.³⁰⁴ However, in God and Philosophy, Levinas will criticise transcendental

³⁰¹ E Levinas, OB,76

³⁰² *ibid.*, pp.76-77

³⁰³ *ibid.*, p.85

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*

subjectivity as a model of the universal doctrine of presence in which '[p]hilosophy is not merely the knowledge of immanence [but] is immanence itself,³⁰⁵ saying that in such a model '[n]othing can happen and nothing could have happened without presenting itself, nothing could be smuggled by without being declared, without being shown, without letting its truth be inspected. Transcendental subjectivity is the figure of this presence; no signification precedes that which I give to myself.³⁰⁶ In such a criticism, Rahner would be implicated insofar as the incarnation of the finite subject is understood as being demanded in order to achieve a degree of self-presence. However, we would want to argue that, insofar as the Rahner's finite spirit's turning to the world is driven by its implicit relation with transcendent exteriority - which for him is the horizon of being - incarnation is not simply part of the accident of a return to self, but a response and a possibility of commitment to alterity.

Levinas, in Totality and Infinity, acknowledges that, insofar as there is the experience of exteriority or of transcendence, which he terms *infinity*, and insofar as this *experience* is the point of departure for his philosophy, then his method is similar to the transcendental method. He writes, 'the way we are describing to work back and remain this side of objective certitude resembles what has come to be called the transcendental method (in which the technical procedures of transcendental idealism need not necessarily be comprised.)³⁰⁷ However, unlike the premature halting of the reduction in Husserl and in Rahner, Levinas argues that subjectivity 'is not, in the last analysis, the "I think" (which it is at first) or the unity of "transcendental apperception" [but] is, as a responsibility for the other, a subjection to the other.³⁰⁸ Philosophy's failure is that '[i]n the description which has been pursued up to now there has been no question of the transcendental condition for some sort of ethical experience.³⁰⁹ Yet this is essential to philosophy's task, for '[e]thics... breaks up the unity of transcendental apperception, condition for all Being and all experience.³¹⁰ Like Kant, who, as Yovel claims, sought to safeguard reason's 'essential interest' by opening the possibility of it being realised in

³⁰⁵ idem, GP, p.131

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*

³⁰⁷ idem, TI, p.25

³⁰⁸ idem., GP, p.136

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.141

³¹⁰ *ibid.*

the field of moral praxis, Levinas locates the true origin of philosophy, not in the immanence of a transcendental subjectivity, but 'in a cry of ethical revolt, a testimony of responsibility.... in prophecy.'³¹¹ But this is to recognise that reason's essential interest is satisfied beyond the purely speculative or epistemological. It is '[t]o recognise with philosophy - or to recognise philosophically - that the Real is rational and that the Rational is alone real, and not to be able to smother or cover the cry of those who, the morrow after this recognition, mean to transform the world, is already to move in a domain of meaning which inclusion cannot comprehend and among reasons that "reason" does not know, and which have not begun in philosophy.'³¹² It is, in other words, to recognise that ethics is first philosophy.

How then is Levinas transcendentalism to be understood? Levinas operates from a phenomenological starting point and employs a transcendental method, yet these need to be clarified. In the preface to the German edition of Totality and Infinity, he writes that the 'phenomenological inspiration' of the work 'proceeds from a long acquaintance with Husserlian texts, and an incessant attention to *Sein und Zeit*.'³¹³ Yet, the point of departure which the Husserlian phenomenology of consciousness provides, namely that 'all consciousness is consciousness of something', needs to be surmounted. In an essay on Hermeneutics and Beyond, he writes of Husserlian phenomenology that '[i]ts essential principle... announces that being commands its ways of *being given*, that being ordains the forms of knowledge which apprehend it, that an essential necessity links being to its ways of appearing to consciousness.'³¹⁴ This *a priori* state of affairs which Husserl formulates has to be thought 'beyond their formulations' for the event of being (*essance*)³¹⁵ subverts or positions itself (*ex-position*) diachronically outwith the synchronic ontology of presence and identity which phenomenology requires. The event of being is always in excess of, or beyond, the representative power of consciousness. Charles Reed, as already indicated, identifies

³¹¹ ibid., p.143

³¹² ibid.

³¹³ idem, Totalité et Infini, Préface à l'édition allemande, in EN p.249

³¹⁴ idem, Herméneutique et Au-Delà, p.81

³¹⁵ Levinas writes *essance* with an *a* to indicate the event or the *processus* of being, the act of the verb 'to be,' its 'verbal sonority,' rather than the static conception of being which the usual 'essence' indicates.

this 'rejection of the phenomenological conception of evidence as the presence of consciousness to its object' as one of the key elements which founds Levinas' method of philosophy, for the 'time of the subject' is always diachronic with respect to that to which he relates. Husserl may well have suspended the 'natural attitude,' 'withholding his assent to the apparently conclusive results of everyday experience,'³¹⁶ but, Levinas would argue, the so-called natural attitude is not really natural at all, for 'experience is questionable and strange before it settles into everydayness.'³¹⁷ The 'time of the subject' may be thought to be originally an ecstasis, yet one looks to it to regulate one's relationship with the other - for working, for meeting, for catching the train - and these facts of everyday life are far from frivolous but are the stuff of human salvation. Secularity has a salvific significance. Everyday living contains within itself an inherent meaning. Levinas points out that '[e]veryday life is a preoccupation with salvation,'³¹⁸ and, as such, its natural concerns are far from frivolous. 'However much the entirety of pre-occupations that fill our days and tear us away from solitude to throw us into contact with our peers are called "fall," "everyday life," "animality," "degradation," or "base materialism," these pre-occupations are in any case no way frivolous. One can think that authentic time is originally an ecstasis, yet one still buys a watch....'³¹⁹ That everyday time is significant would seem to be common sense, for no matter how much one may reflect philosophically on the nature of time, its reality, relativity and unreality, nonetheless, one still buys a watch to regulate one's days and relations. Now, these, as Levinas says, 'may seem like facile objections to the seriousness of philosophical thought, 'recalling the ones certain realists address to idealists when they reproach them for eating and breathing in an illusory world.'³²⁰ On the contrary however, it is simply to recognise that, prior to the interpretation of human experience, prior to reason understood as *discursus mentalis*, '[t]here is something other than naïvety in the flat denial the masses oppose to the elites when they are worried more about bread than

³¹⁶ C W Reed, op.cit., p.v

³¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.vi

³¹⁸ E Levinas, TO, p.58

³¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 59

³²⁰ *ibid.*, p.60

about existence.³²¹ This 'natural' base of everyday living and human encounter provides the ground and evidence for philosophical discourse, or rather for philosophy *as* dialogue and discourse.

One might say that Levinas is sceptical with regard to the phenomenological inadequacy of that *serious* philosophical thought which overlooks the natural base for everyday living and human encounter, and in this regard he parallels the Common Sense Philosophy espoused by Thomas Reid. For Reid, the cure for the scepticism of sceptical and idealist philosophies is the scepticism which Common Sense brings to bear on philosophical systems; in other words, the adoption of a 'general posture of skepticism toward skepticism.'³²² Philosophy, constructing itself on the basis of a narrow rationality, invites scepticism, and does so precisely on account of its forgetfulness of the rationality inherent in the virtue of Common Sense. With regard to the methodic doubt of Descartes and the placing in question of the propositions, 'I think; I am conscious; Everything that thinks, exists; I exist,' Reid ventures to ask, 'would not every sober man form the same opinion of the man who seriously doubted any one of them? And if he was his friend, would he not hope for his cure from physic and good regimen, rather than from metaphysic and logic?'³²³ He continues, 'Poor untaught mortals believe undoubtedly that there is a sun, moon and stars; an earth which we inhabit; country, friends, and relations, which we enjoy, land houses and moveables, which we possess. But philosophers, pitying the credulity of the vulgar, resolve to have no faith but what

³²¹ *ibid.*

By stressing the salvific significance of secularity, Levinas opposes both Heidegger's understanding of *in-der-Welt-Sein*, and Husserl's refusal of the natural attitude. Heidegger had interpreted the subject's being-in-the-world as '*proximally and for the most part* - in its average everydayness (*in seiner durchschnittlichen Alltäglichkeit*) (*Being and Time*, p.37-38). "Everydayness" is that way of existing in which *Dasein* maintains itself "every day" (BT, 422), a 'definite "*how*" of existence' (BT, 422) which permeates *Dasein* 'as a rule' for life, even though, existentially, it may have been "surmounted". Levinas' objection is that the ontic familiarity of "average everydayness" is not a way of Being which *Dasein* must surmount in order to possess as its own (*eigen*) its existence as authentic (*eigentlich*); rather, the seemingly facile moments of everyday living 'in and out of time' - the very buying of a watch - are the salvific moments of being-in-the-world.

³²² M Sorri & J H Gill, *A Post-Modern Epistemology: Language Truth and Body*, (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), p.105

³²³ Thomas Reid, *Inquiry I*, in *Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays* R E Beanblossom & K Lehrer (eds.), (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), pp.4-5

is founded upon reason.¹³²⁴ D C Holy comments that Reid 'must assume that a philosophy of sorts is contained in the ordinary transactions of life, in the things we ordinarily, unreflectively, do and say. This philosophy is expressed in propositions of which we should not be aware except for philosophical pronouncements to the contrary and which is implied, because assumed in our everyday behaviour.'¹³²⁵ Levinas expresses this in terms of the sincerity of intentions and the salvific (and philosophical) significance of secularity. 'Life is a sincerity,'¹³²⁶ he writes, and it is this sincerity which characterises our relationship with the world and our ethical interaction with people, 'with whom,' as Reid might put it, 'we can transact business, or call to account for their conduct.'¹³²⁷ 'The world,' writes Levinas, '... is what we inhabit, where we take walks, lunch and dine, visit, go to school, argue, carry out experiments and investigations, write and read books....'¹³²⁸ The structure of sincerity accords with the directness of its intentions, whether it be the sincerity of a desire sincerely intending its object, with no further intentions behind it 'which would be like thoughts,' and finding complete correspondence between desire and satisfaction, or the sincerity and immediacy of enjoyment in which 'the act nourishes itself with its own activity' and where 'the contents of life are its *direct* objects.'¹³²⁹ 'To be in the world is... to go sincerely to the

³²⁴ *ibid.*, p.5 Reason is to be understood here as *discursus mentalis*.

³²⁵ Dennis Charles Holy, The Defence of Common Sense in Reid and Moore, in M Dalgarno & E Matthews (eds.), The Philosophy of Thomas Reid, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp.145-146

Reid himself writes, 'I have only this further to observe, that the province of common sense is more extensive in refutation than in confirmation' (Intellectual Powers, VI, ii, p.301).

³²⁶ E Levinas, Existence and Existents, (The Hague: Martinus, Nijhoff, 1978), p.44

³²⁷ Thomas Reid, Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man, (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1865) VI, ii, p.296.

T J Sutton argues the close connection between common sense and ethics, or 'transacting business', which is evident, he says, in Reid's warning against the hypotheses of philosophers which 'lead to conclusions which contradict the principles on which all men of common sense must act in common life' (T J Sutton, The Scottish Kant: A Reassessment of Reid's Epistemology, in M Dalgarno & E Matthews (eds.), The Philosophy of Thomas Reid, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), p.169, quoting Intellectual Powers of Man, II, xii.)

³²⁸ E Levinas, EE, p.44

³²⁹ *idem*, TI, p.111

desirable and take it for what it is. It is the very possibility of desire and sincerity.¹³³⁰ With regard to the ethical encounter with the other person, the primordial sincerity of the relation reveals itself, before anything is uttered or thematised, in the standing before the other in order to speak or to say (*le Dire*).

'It is by saying that sincerity - exposedness without reserve - is first possible. Saying makes signs to the other, but in this sign signifies the giving of the sign itself. Saying opens me to the Other before saying what is said, before the said uttered in this sincerity forms a screen between me and the other. This saying without a said is thus like silence.¹³³¹

The proto-experience of the other is an experience of sincerity, 'the one-for-the-other' which, as 'the formal structure of signification, signifyingness or the rationality of signification... does not begin by being exposed in a theme, but is my openness to the other, my sincerity or my *veracity*.'¹³³² In standing before the other person in order to speak, to say, I expose myself to the other person, I am rendered vulnerable. Such a coming together in a face-to-face encounter is pre-reflexive, sincere.¹³³³ Before I have time to think, I am there. Before the subject-object, signifier-signified, saying-said correlation has emerged, I am first there before the other person in the sincerity and veracity of a saying, which, only afterwards, becomes defaced and distorted.¹³³⁴

Now, the presence of an interlocutor points to the discursive nature - other than *discursus mentalis* - of Levinas transcendental approach to philosophy and instates diachrony at the core of any philosophical method. His method, therefore, says Reed, can best be termed a 'diachronic transcendental method', but, as previously indicated, this lacks transparency and, as *essentially* discursive, has 'no ultimate transcendental perspective from which it may be viewed.'¹³³⁵ The major transcendental systems of philosophy find their basis in the principle of evidence which 'provides both a ground for the structures of consciousness and a ground for its own performance; evidence is self-evidence, its application to itself is self-validating.'¹³³⁶ The systematic function of

³³⁰ idem, EE, p.44

³³¹ idem, GP, p.141

³³² ibid., p.145, n.24

³³³ cf. idem, HAH, p.54

³³⁴ cf. idem, OB, p.148

³³⁵ C W Reed, op.cit., p.vi

³³⁶ ibid., p.254

evidence is twofold; firstly, by providing a material basis for thought, it renders an object present to consciousness; secondly, since it is self-validating, it halts the infinite regress to which transcendental thought is prone, Kant's dialectical illusion. According to Reed,

'[t]ranscendental philosophy, as an exploration of the conditions of possibility of experience in general, is necessarily anchored to the experience from which it begins and it ends in the unity of self-presence. Methodology as it is traditionally understood is concerned with the clarification of evidence by means of a reflection on the conditions of experience, the statement of the structural principles of experience, and the explanation of future experiences in terms of those principles.'³³⁷

More generally, it implies the temporal synchronicity of the system, by which the originary unity of experience and the continuity of framework can be established. 'Evidence conceived as a unifying presence produces a methodological synchrony.'³³⁸ How, then, is Levinas' approach to be termed 'transcendental? Reed's answer is that it is 'diachronically transcendental since it 'is produced on the basis of exposure rather than evidence... [and] ... operates within a new notion of temporality'³³⁹ understood as time opened up by and for the 'ethical adventure' of the relationship to the unassimilable, incomprehensible other person.³⁴⁰ Time is 'accomplished in the face-to-face with the Other.' Its condition 'lies in the relationship between humans.'³⁴¹ The Other who gives this time to me cannot be comprehended in a synchronic system; any relation to him is 'absolutely outside of every experience.... There is no present in which the Other or the relation to him appears; the relation to the Other is based on an absolute difference.'³⁴² The transcendental ego's vain attempts at representation always fail for there remains something 'irrecuperable, refractory to the simultaneity of the present, something unrepresentable, immemorial, prehistorical.'³⁴³

Rejecting both the Kantian and Husserlian understandings of transcendental philosophy as too narrow and exclusive of many aspects of human existence, Levinas

³³⁷ *ibid.*

³³⁸ *ibid.*, p.255

³³⁹ *ibid.*, pp.255-256

³⁴⁰ cf. E Levinas, *TO*, Preface, p.32

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.79

³⁴² C W Reed, *op.cit.*, p.263

³⁴³ E Levinas, *OB*, p.38

tries phenomenologically to deepen human experience of subjectivity and signification through a re-appraisal of the other of transcendence and the meaning which inheres in it, and by showing how the transcendental structures erected by both Kant and Husserl, when exposed to the complex of human experience, "the overloading (*surtendre*) of traditional concepts" and the "overdetermination of ontological categories" break down, open onto a new transcendence, and are "transformed into ethical terms".³⁴⁴ Reed writes,

'At the very point where Kant and Husserl believe transcendental philosophy culminates - the subject as transcendental ego or transcendental apperception, and presence as the temporal unity of experience - Levinas turns to "conjunctions of elements" in which these transcendental structures break up, or perhaps break down might be a more appropriate image. There is a source of signification for Levinas which transcends the transcendental, even understood in Husserl's "broadest sense".³⁴⁵

Levinas philosophy, then, 'is transcendental insofar as he inquires back into the conditions of experience and the sources of its signification. However, insofar as he considers transcendence to be an event which no transcendental structure can comprehend with perfect clarity, his thought must be distinguished from every previous transcendental philosophy by its character as diachronic.'³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, p.115

In a footnote to God and Philosophy, Levinas criticises the accepted philosophical understanding of experience and signification as too restricted, linked as it is to the notion of 'presence'. He writes, '[t]he notion of experience is inseparable from the unity of presence or simultaneity, and consequently refers to the unity of apperception which does not come from the outside to "become conscious" of simultaneity.... But all signification does not derive from experience, does not resolve into a manifestation.... Suffering-for-another, for example, has a meaning in which knowing is adventitious. The adventure of knowledge which is characteristic of Being, ontological from the first, is not the only mode, nor the preliminary mode, of intelligibility or meaning. Experience as the source of meaning has to be put into question. It is possible to show that meaning qua knowing has its motivation in a meaning that at the start is not a knowing at all. This is not to deny that philosophy is itself knowledge. But the possibility for knowing to take in all meaning does not require a reduction of all meaning to the structures that its exhibition impose. This then suggests the idea of a dia-chrony of truth in which the said has to be unsaid, and the unsaid unsaid in its turn. In this sense the sceptical essence of philosophy can be taken seriously: scepticism is not an arbitrary contestation; it is a doctrine of inspection and testing, of a kind irreducible to the scientific kind of testing' (GP, p.144).

³⁴⁵ C W Reed, *op.cit.*, p.257

³⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.258

1.7 Summary

Methodology stands under the *aegis* of alterity. If, as Levinas says, 'philosophy is the work of love in the service of love,' then it will always be summoned to go beyond its current confinement and extend its endeavours to render an account of the relationship with the Other to the Other. That the text of philosophy arises, not primarily in solitary wonder, but in the dialogic context of the relationship with the Other, of and about whom questions are asked, and to whom answers are offered renders methodological transparency difficult. The Other is a question, the answer to which is always inadequate. Methodology is thus subverted in two ways: it can only proceed dialogically, as Rahner might term it, and diachronically, as Levinas indicates. Because the subject matter of philosophy is a relationship between the self and the Other who is excessive with regard to the self, but whose very excess will sustain the relationship, the Same and the Other can neither be said in the same time or the same place. Thus, methodology finds itself robbed of a stable ground which would provide a sure footing for its quest for transparency. Jacques Pohier was certainly correct when he indicated that 'transparency is only a quality for window panes' not of human beings.³⁴⁷

Now, the excess of the Other means that the articulation of the relationship proceeds, not simply by a *via negativa* which would demand a constant unsaying of what is said with regard to the Other, but by a *via eminentiae* in which the Other is spoken of in an eminent and superlative way, descriptive language pushed to the limit by the glory of the other to whom such language is inadequate.

This failure of thought to grasp or comprehend the Other needs to be stressed. It is a failure which arises because, aiming at being critically grounded, it maintains a forgetfulness of difference and is blind to its own situatedness. The text of philosophy is always and already contextualised, and is none other than an attempt at understanding which is always and already grounded beforehand in a relationship with alterity. For Levinas, this context is the proximity of the Other in the ethical encounter; for Rahner, it is the theological reality of the supernatural existential, and both in their own ways will link the theological and the ethical. Thought, then, is challenged by the Other who calls all our concepts into question and so insinuates himself into the apparatus of understanding as to undo the categories in which that understanding is expressed and in which the world is framed. Like Banquo's ghost who returns to undo Macbeth's well-

³⁴⁷

See J Pohier, *God in Fragments*, (London: SCM Press, 1985), p.267

laid plans and projects, the ethical encounter with the Other constitutes an ultimate situation of ultimate ab-solution with respect to thought and returns to haunt and disturb the best-laid schemes of subjectivity.

Now, while this is clearly the thought which animates Levinas' own thinking, it is also to be found in Rahner, though in a less developed way. Rahner's philosophy advances itself in response to an alterity, initially affirmed as Being in its comprehensibility, but ultimately understood as the proximity of incomprehensible mystery. Both Rahner and Levinas proceed phenomenologically: the contents of consciousness - the phantasmata of Aquinas - provide a point of departure for their reduction. Both employ a transcendental method, seeking to expose the transcendental conditions of possibility of thought, and find the ultimate transcendental condition in an alterity which is excessive to the subject. Rahner, responding to the Kantian problematic regarding the question of the possibility of metaphysics, discovers this alterity as the source and goal of the dynamic tendency of the finite intellect, yet acknowledges the weakness of a purely intellectual approach which fails to do justice to the personal and inter-subjective character of subjectivity. Levinas straightaway acknowledges that metaphysics can only be undertaken as ethics. Rahner is anthropocentric in his approach without being egocentric. At the core of his subject, and constitutive of the subject, is a revelation of and a receptivity to alterity. The anthropological reflection, transcendently pursued, opens onto and ontologically affirms alterity. Thus, as Levinas expresses it, subjectivity finds its defence and its inviolability in terms of its relationship to an incomprehensibility excessive to the subject, and which is ultimately to be reduced as mystery. If one, at this stage, might point out a difference. Rahner understands alterity within the ontological framework, and has difficulty, within the strict confines of critical philosophy, in attributing philosophical significance to the material or the interpersonal world. Ultimately, alterity, otherness, is absolute being, which is identified with God. Levinas, on the other hand, disavowing the ontological, finds true alterity in the other person, and only in terms of the relationship with the other person is God to be discovered.

In the following chapter, the transcendental reflection upon which both embark will be examined. Rahner, following Maréchal, goes beyond the static formalism of the Kantian Critique and demonstrates the dynamic activity of the intellect. Levinas, too, will pursue a transcendental reduction but, recognising the inadequacy of intellection, will pursue it beyond the subjective to the inter-subjective, begun but not completed by

Husserl, and nascent but not developed in Rahner.

2.

Philosophical Origins

Towards the end of the end of the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant indicates that all the interests of reason, speculative and practical, combine in the questions:

1. What can I know?
2. What ought I to do?
3. What may I hope?

The first question, which 'is merely speculative' (A805/B833), has already been answered in the Critique. Another line of inquiry can be pursued, however: 'whether pure reason may not also be met with in the practical sphere' (A804/B832), and 'whether, therefore, reason may not be able to supply to us from the standpoint of its practical interest what it altogether refuses to supply us in respect of its speculative interest' (A804/B832). The responses to the second and third questions, opening as they do onto the practical domain, take us beyond the limits imposed on reason by its speculative interest, and to answer them constitutes a response to the Kantian problematic other than that offered by the transcendental dynamism of the intellect advanced by Rahner and Transcendental Thomism. Levinas provides such a response. Towards the beginning of Totality and Infinity, Levinas echoes the Kantian problematic: "'The true life is absent." But we are in the world.'¹ Such an affirmation is, says Levinas, the alibi which has, in the history of thought, maintained and sustained metaphysics, which has always been presented 'as a movement going forth from a world that is familiar to us, whatever be the yet unknown lands that bound it or that hide it from view.'² Since Kant's limitation of the power of pure reason to the categories, this uncharted beyond cannot be known - or cannot be known categorially. Yet, like Kant who maintains the regulative function of a beyond, Levinas recognises the need for metaphysics and human transcendence to be grounded, and this can only be elsewhere than in the power of speculative reason. In Dieu, la Mort et le Temps,³ he recognises that the transcendental approach of the First Critique is a radical exposition of the finitude of being, a point also maintained by Benton who recognises in transcendental philosophy 'the finitude of the human intellect - which is itself one of the most fundamental principles of transcendental philosophy.'⁴ But, of the questions which,

¹ E Levinas, *TI*, p.33

² *ibid.*

³ E Levinas, *Dieu, la Mort et le Temps*, Paris, 1993, (Hereafter DMT)

⁴ Robert J Benton, *op. cit.*, p.19

according to Kant, are asked in philosophy, and which he raises in A805/B833, namely, What can I know? What must I do? What may I hope? it is the second, says Levinas, which exceeds the first, for the first reduces itself to the question of the possibility of the comprehension of being, while the others address the obligations (*devoir*) and salvation (*salut*) of the human person. 'The question *what can I know?* leads to finitude, but *what must I do?* and *what am I in terms of hope?* go further, and in any case somewhere other than towards finitude?'⁵

The purpose of this chapter will be to demonstrate two responses to the Kantian Critique, namely, that of the dynamism of the intellect in the transcendental Thomism which Rahner inherits from Rousellot and Maréchal, and that of the ethical response developed by Levinas.

2.1 *The Dynamism of the Intellect, or, What can I know?:*

The fixed and static view, or the invariant form, presented by Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason is contested in Transcendental Thomism. Maréchal, who profoundly influenced Rahner's thinking,⁶ asked whether 'the agnosticism of Kant can be overcome by means of the Kantian transcendental method.'⁷ In *Le point de départ, V*,

⁵ E Levinas, DMT, p.71

⁶ Responding to a question by Patrick Granfield in an interview of October 1965 (*Karl Rahner in Dialogue*) regarding his philosophical influences, Rahner mentions Maréchal 'who exercised a great influence on my philosophy' (p.13). '[T]he initial, truly philosophical insight was given by Maréchal. His book, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, especially *Cahier V*, influenced me greatly when I was younger' (p.14). Were it not for his study of Heidegger and Maréchal, he acknowledges, in an interview with Albert Raffelt in 1974, that he 'would not have done philosophy in a transcendental manner' (p.132). As to whether it was Heidegger or Maréchal who provided the decisive direction for his thinking, in an interview with Leo O'Donovan in 1979, Rahner, at 75 years old, reflected, 'if I ask myself whether Heidegger exercised a great influence on me, then I would say I am not exactly sure. Naturally I am grateful that I was able to sit in his seminar with a few others for two years. Certainly, I learned a variety of things from him, even if I have to say that I owe my most basic, decisive, philosophical direction, insofar as it comes from someone else, more, in fact, to the Belgian philosopher and Jesuit, Joseph Maréchal. His philosophy already moved beyond the traditional neoscholasticism. I brought that direction from Maréchal to my studies with Heidegger and it was not superseded by him' (p.190).

⁷ J Maréchal, *L'aspect dynamique de la méthode transcendentale chez Kant*, in *La revue néoscholastique de philosophie*, 42 (1939), p.343. (Hereafter, *L'aspect dynamique*)

he responds by saying that 'Kantian agnosticism *demands* being overcome,⁸ but that this is only possible if there is a 'recognition of the speculative role of dynamic finality'.⁹ Maréchal will, therefore, seek to show the dynamic character of human knowledge which is the logical development and the fulfilment of the critique initiated by Kant and further elaborated by Fichte. To fail to recognise the dynamism inherent in the act of knowledge is to fail to attain the object in itself, and to remain locked within the subject. He writes, '*nous demeurons, de droit confinés à l'intérieur du sujet comme tel, nous sommes emmurés dans le "relatif", et aucun artifice de démonstration ne nous permettra de "jeter un pont" vers l'extérieur et l'absolu,*'¹⁰ a point which Coreth puts when he writes that, '[t]ranscendental reflection, precisely because it goes together with oblivion of being, has not reached its ultimate basis, the last unconditioned condition of the human act of thinking: being. It has stopped at the penultimate condition: the subject.'¹¹ Levinas, too, will point to the penultimacy of the subject when he writes that 'Totality and Infinity' will 'present itself as a defence of subjectivity,'¹² by recognising subjectivity '*as founded* in the idea of infinity.'¹³

Maréchal seeks, then, to go beyond Kant so as to attain 'the possibility of the metaphysical affirmation,' uncritically accepted in the pre-Kantian metaphysical critique, by considering the dynamism inherent in Kant's own schema. The metaphysical critique had recognised the objective reality of the object as the necessary term of the intellect's dynamic tendency. However, the *epoché* effected by the transcendental

⁸ idem, *Le point*, V, p.39

⁹ ibid.

More recently, the dynamism inherent in Kant's own schema is recognised by Gerd Buchdahl in *Kant and the Dynamics of Reason, Essays on the Structure of Kant's Philosophy*, (London, 1992). Buchdahl notes that 'Kant's transcendental ontology aims at giving us only the passivity of cognition of an object's existence' (p.5), but goes on to show 'the dynamical version of Kant's transcendental method.' In his *Preface*, he writes that his work attempts 'a fresh over-all view of the general strategy of Kant's transcendental approach... [employing]... as a hermeneutical tool, the notion of "dynamical" process of "reduction and realisation" in order thereby to yield an entirely fresh explication of Kant's transcendental structure' (p.ix). For a detailed elaboration of the movement within Kant's transcendental process, see pp.41-52

¹⁰ J Maréchal, *Le Point*, I, p.12; V, p.14

¹¹ E Coreth, *Problem and Method*, p.411

¹² E Levinas, TI, p.26

¹³ ibid., *Italics added*.

critique had removed the term of the intellect's dynamism from consideration. Maréchal's task, then, is the re-establishment, through reflective analysis, of the relation of logical truth between the ontological object and the knowing subject such that the implicit dynamism within the act of knowledge had its goal restored. As Aquinas says,

'Truth is not known by the intellect except inasmuch as the intellect reflects upon its act; inasmuch, namely, as the intellect knows the relationship of its act to the thing, which relationship cannot be known unless the nature of the act be known, and hence the very nature of the intellect itself, insofar as it is in the very nature of the intellect that it be conformed to things. Hence, the intellect knows truth inasmuch as it reflects upon itself.'¹⁴

The affirmation of the ontological reality of the object, a true relationship with exteriority,¹⁵ is essential for Maréchal's realism, for it is the a priori which conditions all acts of affirmation, preceding thought and action, although known only a posteriori through reflective analysis. Maréchal himself, in *Le Sentiment de Présence*, writes,

'The human mind is not simply a mirror passively reflecting objects which come within its reach, but an activity, oriented in its most intimate depths towards an end term, in which alone it could completely absorb itself, towards absolute Being, absolute Truth and Good. The Absolute has placed its mark on the basic tendency of our mind; further, this tendency constantly goes beyond particular intellections, which are always relative in as much as they are particular.'¹⁶

To account for this dynamism inherent in the intellect, Maréchal maintains the need for an affirmation of being as absolute, 'the objective necessity of Being, in general'¹⁷ yet it must be deduced transcendently for Kant's criticism of the metaphysical method holds.

For Maréchal, Kant's transcendental reflection had uncovered the a priori conditions formally determining the appearance of the intentional object within

¹⁴ Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.1, a.9, quoted by G Isaye, *Scheuer: an interior and rigorous metaphysic*, in *Continuum*, 2, No.1, (Spring, 1964), p.32

¹⁵ Levinas writes, 'The ethical relation, opposed to first philosophy which identifies freedom and power, is not contrary to truth; *it goes unto being in its absolute exteriority*, and accomplishes the very intention that animates the movement unto truth' (TI, p.47, *italics added*).

¹⁶ J Maréchal, *A propos du sentiment de présence chez les profanes et chez les mystiques*, in *Etudes sur la psychologie des mystiques*, Tome Ier, Paris and Bruges, 1924, p.120

¹⁷ idem, *Le Point*, V, p.84

consciousness. However, Kant had restricted the synthesis achieved in apperception by the transcendental subject to the purely categorial,¹⁸ whereas, says Maréchal, any categorial synthesis demands a horizon of *absolute* unity to which a judgment can be referred, and which is constitutive of the contents of consciousness rather than merely regulative.¹⁹ He writes, 'Since an absolute reality... was known objectively by theoretical reason, it is necessary that this reality intervenes, as internal condition of possibility, in the same constitution of the object necessary to our knowledge.'²⁰ Kant's categorial synthesis presupposed the unifying synthesis effected in the transcendental of unity of apperception, taken as a priori, but this results in the object being the result of a static analysis which is merely a 'more attentive noting of the opposition of unity and diversity present to our consciousness in every apprehension of an object.'²¹ From this stasis, the dilemma arises, namely, '[h]ow, in effect, with purely formal and static representations - the phenomena - and with the aid only of the analytical principle understood in a purely normative sense, can one, without recourse to any other source of information, discover a necessary *beyond*, and more, an *absolute* beyond opposed to the subject as a reality in itself?'²² To begin with the phenomenal is to remain within the phenomenal, a confinement which arises from the Kantian view of judgement as synthesis to the neglect of judgment as affirmation and relation to an absolute. Kant's failure lay in disregarding, 'by a strange lack of logic,'²³ the active finality of the subject in the constitution of objects, a failure which Maréchal will exploit and develop.

Kant's agnosticism with regard to the absolute reality needs to be countered, but from within the Kantian critique itself. Using the same point of departure and a

¹⁸ For a fuller discussion, see J Maréchal, *Jugement 'scolastique' concernant la racine de l'agnosticisme kantien* in *Mélanges Joseph Maréchal Tome Ier: Oeuvres*, Brussels, 1950

¹⁹ E Mascal regards this as the central point of disagreement between Kant and Maréchal. Whereas Kant views the absolute as having a regulative role, Maréchal holds it to be constitutive. See *The Openness of Being*, London, 1971, p.69

²⁰ J Maréchal, *Le Point*, III, p.306; Cf. *Le jugement*, p.281

²¹ idem, *Le Point*, V, p.56

²² ibid., p.476

²³ G Van Riet, *Thomistic Epistemology: Studies concerning the Problem of Cognition in the Contemporary Thomistic School*, Vo. I, G Franks (tr.), London, 1963, p.247

transcendental reflection, Maréchal intends to 'go beyond the negative conclusions of Kantian Idealism and restore beneath the phenomenological object the metaphysical object.'²⁴ 'The agnostic conclusions rest, in the final analysis, on a strictly static and formal conception of objective knowledge,'²⁵ and, by neglecting the *act* of knowledge, remain definitively within that formal conception. In fact, says Maréchal, '[t]he history of the problem of the object, in Kantian criticism, is one of a latent conflict between the formal viewpoint and the actual viewpoint (*entre le point de vue de la forme et le point de vue de l'acte*).'²⁶ Yet, Kant's formalism is already overcome by Kant himself, for he goes beyond himself in his use of a dynamic language to describe the structural inter-relationships between condition and conditioned.²⁷ B Jansens writes, 'Kant himself, from the first edition of the Critique (1781) ... then, anew, and much more clearly, in the transcendental Deduction of the second edition, goes beyond the exclusively formal point of view to be exposed.'²⁸ In the B edition of the Critique, Kant indicates the dependence of the analytic unity of apperception on the synthetic unity of apperception (B,133; Cf. A,77-78), writing, '[t]he synthetic unity of apperception is therefore that highest point, to which we must ascribe all employment of the understanding, even the whole of logic, and conformably therewith, transcendental philosophy. Indeed this faculty of apperception is the understanding itself (B,134, note a.). Thus Maréchal can say that, '[i]n effect, from the first to the second edition of the Critique the dominant point of view in the theory of transcendental apperception passed from the idea of a subsuming of phenomena under formal a priori conditions, the highest of which was apperceptive unity, to the idea of a synthesis of phenomena by the original apperceptive activity, namely the categories. Judgement, forby formal representation of the effected subsumption, becomes the very act of categorial synthesis and its spontaneous reference to the supreme unity of consciousness.'²⁹

²⁴ J Maréchal, *Le Point*, V, p.570

²⁵ idem, *L'aspect dynamique*, p.343

²⁶ idem, *Le Point*, IV, p.112

²⁷ See *ibid.*, V, p.75

²⁸ B Jansen, *La philosophie religieuse de Kant*, p.355

²⁹ J Maréchal, *L'aspect dynamique*, p.357

Maréchal notes, however; the danger of an absolute idealism implicit in a subjective act of synthesis in which the subject is the sole source of being and knowing,

The implicit dynamism of the intellect which the transcendental reduction uncovers enables Maréchal to move towards a transcendental deduction of the ontological affirmation formerly achieved in the metaphysical critique. He does so in a threefold movement: firstly, he performs a phenomenological *epoché*, setting aside any ontological consideration of the object, and seeks to clarify the inherent elements and relations within the phenomenological object through reflective analysis; secondly, he concludes the affirmation of the absolute value of the object as a *practical postulate*, which finds its basis in the volitional activity of the subject - the stage at which Kant halts; thirdly, he proposes the absolute value of the affirmed object as a *theoretical and speculative* necessity, by showing that the practical and extrinsic necessity of a 'transcendent order,' Kant's transcendental ideal, is founded on an absolute order. Hence, the transcendental deduction of the ontological affirmation. Maréchal presents this deduction polysyllogistically as a transcendental proof, which can be summarised thus:

Human intelligence, being non-intuitive, reveals itself as a movement in which what is potentially knowable becomes actually known. However, all movement points towards an end, yet to be attained though implicitly grasped. Now, since this dynamism does not cease with any particular end, an absolute end, coextensive with absolute being, must be posited for this alone will satisfy the dynamism of the intellect. Although this end is absolute being, however, the discursive nature of the human intellect can only attain it through discourse with the particular ends known in sensibility, which must display receptivity to sense objects and which is to be understood as a moment in the intellect's drive towards the absolute. As simply received in sensibility, the sensible object is not an object for consciousness, but requires a *concretive synthesis*, whereby

a danger which becomes reality in the post-Kantian developments in Fichte, whereby, in the dynamic act, the subject becomes absolute in the constitution of the object. For Fichte, the Ego is creative of its reality; yet, stresses Maréchal, the passivity of the subject needs also to be recognised. 'A theory of knowledge can neither neglect the passive aspect or the active aspect of the intellectual act: to exaggerate the passive aspect is to slide towards empiricism; to exaggerate the active aspect is to be on the verge of ontologism or idealism' (*Le Point*, V, p.19). He notes that '[t]he reservations which we should perhaps oppose to Fichte bear less on the intuition of an activity of the Ego than on the nature of this activity and of this Ego.... From the fundamental principle of the pure activity of the Ego, Fichte, conforming to the idealist postulate, had to 'deduce,' not only the particularities of the theoretical Ego, but the boundaries of the practical Ego; and in the theoretical Ego, not only the synthetic form of concepts, but the forms of sensibility and even including the sensible 'given', the first material of knowledge' (*Le Point*, IV, p.352). Rather than being creative of its object, the dynamism of the intellect discovers the object, absolute and other than itself.

it becomes concept for the intellect. However, as this concreative synthesis is unable to yield an object distinct from the knowing subject, a further *objective synthesis* which relates the object to an absolute, ontological horizon is required. This is none other than the ontological affirmation. Now, if the ultimate end to which the intellect is striving, namely, absolute being, is actually constitutive of the objectivity of the object, then some knowledge of this absolute must enter implicitly and absolutely into our immediate consciousness of every object as such; and since such a necessity has been derived solely from a reflective analysis upon the phenomenal object in response to the demands of critical philosophy, it can be concluded that the affirmation of absolute being is not simply a practical necessity but, above all, a theoretical necessity of reason.³⁰

³⁰ cf. J Maréchal, *Le Point*, V, p.554

2.2 *Rahner's Metaphysics of Knowledge:*

2.21 *Presentation of the problematic in Thomas:*

Rahner intends a metaphysics of knowledge.³¹ In his doctoral thesis, presented and rejected in 1936, yet published in 1939, he addresses the question posed by Aquinas in ST, I, q. 84, a 7:

³¹ Whether or not Rahner's project is best described as 'a metaphysics of knowledge' or, as V Brannick refers to it, as 'an ontology of understanding' (*An Ontology of Understanding: Karl Rahner's Metaphysics of Knowledge in the context of Modern German Hermeneutics*, St. Louis, 1974) will need to be made clear in the light of Emmanuel Levinas' criticism of the Western Tradition as an ontological confinement which, in reality, is a reduction of the meaning of metaphysics. The unwitting ease with which such a confinement arises is witnessed in the way that the philosophical foundation of Rahner's thought is commonly referred to as an 'ontological epistemology.' (See, P Burke, *Conceptual Thought in Karl Rahner*, in *Gregorianum*, 75, 1 (1994), p.79). Levinas, however, would distinguish ontology and metaphysics. Ontology is 'a reduction of the other to the same by the interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being,' whereas metaphysics is 'transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same... the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge' (TI, p.42). Metaphysics fails as comprehension and systematic incorporation through what Derrida terms the 'logic of parergonality' (See J Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, G Bennington & I McLeod (trs.), Chicago, 1987) for the other is maintained in its alterity and absoluteness. Derrida terms this the *différance*, which prevents any system from encompassing what is its other or what is in excess of it, for any system includes what is other to it as part of its definition. We would want to say, with Levinas, that the object which is metaphysics' lure is always and remains always in excess of and resistant to the force of ontology. '[A]s critique precedes dogmatism, metaphysics precedes ontology (Levinas, TI, p.43)'; further, 'ontology presupposes metaphysics' (TI, p.48).

Druscilla Cornell perhaps shows the import of this in a practical way when she describes the deconstructive endeavour as a *philosophy of the limit* (*The Philosophy of Limit*, New York & London, 1992) which has juridical and legal significations; justice is 'an aporia that inevitably serves as the limit to any attempt to collapse justice into positive law' (p.2).

With regard to Rahner, insofar as his epistemology is framed within the comprehension of being, he attempts an ontology; insofar as he interprets the human spirit as a dynamism for an absolutely other, he can be said to be undertaking metaphysics, as Levinas understands it. However, Rahner risks collapsing metaphysics into ontology; the language and the categories of being are not entirely adequate or appropriate to his theological and anthropological endeavour. By demanding that the meaning of Being be thought once again so as to go beyond the limitation which its framework imposes and by introducing the notion of metaphysics as ethics, a metaphysics which respects absolute alterity, Levinas helps us to understand afresh Rahner's project. Further, re-thinking Rahner in the light of Levinas will also challenge Levinas to clarify the meaning of Being which he rejects, since, as Rahner's Thomism reminds us, Being is not a univocal but analogical concept.

Utrum intellectus possit actu intelligere per species intelligibiles quas penes se habet, non convertendo se ad phantasmata.

Aquinas, answering the various objections, says:

Respondeo dicendum quod impossibile est intellectum nostrum, secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori conjungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata.

For Thomas, the human person is both intellect and sense, or as Rahner terms it, Spirit and World. More precisely, the human person is Spirit in World; intellect and sense are so inextricably linked, 'united in the *one* human knowledge,'³² that the Thomistic epistemological problem is not the modern philosophical problem of how the intellect escapes from the interiority of subjectivity to encounter the otherness of the world, but rather how the subject, as already and always immersed in the world, manages to extricate itself from the world of sensibility so as to possess himself in knowledge. This problem, which Thomas had already addressed, is taken up by Rahner: as always and already in the world as sensibility, the medium wherein the sensing subject encounters the sensible other, a confusion arises between subject and object; this necessitates a subsequent differentiating act whereby, through an abstractive return to self (*reditio in seipsum*), the subject distinguishes itself from the object and so possesses both itself and the object in knowledge. If the unitary phenomenon of Spirit-in-World (*Geist in Welt*) is the initial epistemological moment, how is the subsequent distinction between Spirit and World effected? If the subject is already confused exteriority, how does a clarified interiority distanced from a clarified exteriority arise? In short, with regard to the World, the question is not, to borrow an image from Levinas, one of the Abrahamic egress into the strange land of sensibility - 'how do we get there' - but the Ulysssean problem of returning to a homeland - 'how do we get back'? Rahner addresses the problem in *Geist in Welt* thus:

'[F]or the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge the problem does not lie

³² K Rahner, SW p.238

Thomas Sheehan in Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations, (Ohio University Press, Athens, 1987), opts to speak of the "unified bivalence" of human nature to avoid any dualist interpretation in Rahnerian epistemology. Spirit and World are not two poles or two moments in knowing 'but a substantially unified human being exercising one act of knowledge' (p.160). The 'hermeneutics of human bivalence' adopted by Rahner 'stands in the tradition that would save and protect man's dynamic unity against all Platonic forms of dualism' ... [for] ... 'there are not two knowledges, one of the universal predicate, the other of its possible instantiation, which then collaborate.... There is only the experience of having something present by holding it at arm's length' (pp.189-190).

in bridging the gap between knowing and object by a "bridge" of some gap: such a "gap" is merely a pseudo-problem. Rather the problem is how the known, which is identical with the knower, can stand over against the knower as other, and how there can be a knowledge which receives another as such. It is not a question of "bridging" a gap, but of understanding how the gap is possible at all.¹³³

2.2 *The Convertibility of Being and Knowing*

Now, the context for the Thomistic problematic is the doctrine of the convertibility of being and knowing. The proper object of the intellect is being as knowable, since '*whatever can be, can be known*.'¹³⁴ As power to know, the intellect, or Spirit, transcends itself towards being as the horizon of its activity in order knowingly to possess being, since '[t]he concept of a being unknowable in principle is rejected as a contradiction.'¹³⁵ As Rahner says, 'the first metaphysical question, the most universal question about being, is already the affirmation of the fundamental intelligibility of all beings.'¹³⁶ 'Being itself is the original, *unifying* unity of being and knowing in their *unification* in being-known.'¹³⁷ It is 'the one ground which lets known and being-known spring out of itself as its own characteristics, and thus grounds the intrinsic possibility of an antecedent, essential, intrinsic relation of both of them to each other.'¹³⁸ Rahner, discussing truth in Aquinas, writes,

'Pure being and pure knowing are the same reality, and we call it God. A finite being is endowed with knowledge, and in fact with knowledge of itself, in that it is, in a certain measure and according to a certain "analogy", being.... If being and knowledge (pure being in the absolute and *a* being in the measure that it is being) constitute an original unity, then knowledge cannot at its ultimate basis consist in a state of having something intentionally "over against" one as an object; the only way still open to us to conceive of it is as a state in which the being concerned is "with" or "beside" itself, in which being is inwardly illumined to itself, in which knowing and the state of what is truly to be

³³ K Rahner, SW, p.75.

³⁴ Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, II, 98

³⁵ K Rahner, SW, p.68

³⁶ idem, *Experience of the Spirit*, pp.28-29

³⁷ idem, *Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace*, p.37

³⁸ *ibid.* p.39

known are identical, in which the knower in the true sense and the known in the true sense are one and identical in being. At its metaphysical roots, then, true knowledge consists in the unquestioning "being with itself" of being.³⁹

If, then, being and knowing are convertible such that to be is to know and to be able to be known in an original unity, and to know is to know being, then, what prevents the knowing subject, always and already in the presence of being, from possessing that being as always and already known? If knowing is the 'being-present-to-itself of Being'⁴⁰ in an original relation, why is being not completely possessed in knowledge? Why the *question*? Rahner writes, '[i]f being signifies the original unity of knowing and being known, if it is fundamental to the conception of being that it be present-to-self, then it would appear that there can be no existent thing which is not an *a priori* identity of knowing and being known.'⁴¹ So, '[t]he question becomes in fact how there could be a not-knowing at all?'⁴² The felicitous reason for this lack of transparency between being and knowing in human being and human knowing is the finitude of the human intellect. The coincidence of being and knowing only occurs in an original unity in a being which is without limitation. 'Only the pure act of being is the absolute identity of being and knowing, and perfectly realises what is meant by the concept of being.'⁴³ For a finite being there is not only the experience of self-presence, but also of self-absence, - a bivalence which Sheehan somewhat clumsily prefers to term '*pres-ab-sence*'⁴⁴ - and it is from this position of being-away-from-self, or not at one with oneself, that the

³⁹ K Rahner, Thomas Aquinas on Truth, in Theological Investigations, XIII, (1975), p.29

Blanchot, interestingly, makes the point that God is an unquestioning being when he writes of the questioning of time. 'Every question,' he writes, 'refers back to someone who questions, that is to say, to the being we are and for whom alone exists the possibility of questioning, or of coming into question. A being like God (for example) could not put himself in question - he would not question; the word of God needs man to become the question of man. When after the Fall Jahweh asks Adam "Where are you?" this question signifies that henceforth man can no longer be found or situated except in the place of the question. Man is from now on a question for God himself, who does not question' (M Blanchot, IC, p.14).

⁴⁰ K Rahner, SW, p.75

⁴¹ idem, HW, p.45

⁴² idem, SW, p.75

⁴³ idem, HW, p.13

⁴⁴ T Sheehan, op. cit., p.167

finite subject relates to being, which impinges upon the subject not as known but as yet-to-be-known, and as yet-to-be-known, as questionable. An infinite intellect would grasp being in an intellectual intuition and thereby achieve total self-luminosity in a complete coincidence of knowing, being known, and being; finite being, however, lacking total self-presence and incapable of intellectual intuition can only achieve presence-to-self from its position of being-away-from-self and being-with-the-other in sensible intuition.⁴⁵ In other words, human knowing implies a commitment to the world, and positively so, since, for Rahner the human subject is not to be considered as finite on account of sensibility or world, but as sensibility or world on account of its finitude. As Aquinas puts it, knowledge of the world is always *per sensum et imaginationem*, and for the intellect to understand its proper object it is necessary *quod convertat se ad phantasmata*, that is, to the 'content of the one human consciousness to which thought also belongs.'⁴⁶ For the finite intellect to know, it is necessary that it turn towards the phantasm, for its knowledge is mediated. In other words, finite spirit, as a power to know, cannot remain spirit, but must become world⁴⁷ and in fact already and always finds itself, not in a Heideggerian fallenness in the world, but in a felicitous state of being declined as world, a declension which opens the subject, or renders it vulnerable to the advent of the Other, a declension which, for Levinas translates the nominative of the ego subject both grammatically and ontologically into the accusative. Intellectual intuition being excluded, finite knowing cannot be the result of an immediate relation between a subject in itself and an object in itself, but requires a power of receptivity, open to exteriority, and a reciprocity between received exteriority and the intellect as receptive interiority.⁴⁸ Thus, in terms of the subject's acquisition of its own subjectivity,

⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that the model of knowledge, however, remains the same: knowledge involves a coincidence of subject and object; in intellectual intuition, an identity is forged between the knower and the known in that the external object is assimilated in an immediate act of knowing; in sensation, knower and known, epistemologically undifferentiated, coincide first of all in the exteriority of sensibility since the act of the sense object takes place in the matter of the sensing subject, thereby becoming simultaneously the act of the knower and the known, and thereafter and differentiated, in the interiority of the intellect itself.

⁴⁶ K Rahner, SW, p.238

⁴⁷ In a logical sense, for the finite subject is not otherwise than always and already in the world.

⁴⁸ Kant makes this point when he distinguishes between an 'original' and a 'derivative' intuition. Primordial being knows through an original intuition for it originates what it intuits. Human intuition, however, 'is dependent upon the existence

the world assumes what one might term a 'salvific significance'. It is the *felix culpa*, the necessary sin of Adam.

2.3 *The Subject as the Point of Departure for the Metaphysical Question:*

Now, 'the unquestioning "being with itself" of being' is a mark of that being in which there is utter coincidence of being and knowing. For finite being it is otherwise, and so Rahner places the performance of raising questions at the beginning of the metaphysical enquiry, and, as Sheehan points out, 'move[s] from a consideration of *man's nature as an implicit metaphysics* to a discussion of *explicit metaphysics as transcendental questioning*'.⁴⁹

'Man questions. This is something final and irreducible. For in human existence the question is that fact which absolutely refuses to be replaced by another fact and thus to be unmasked once again as being itself derivative and provisional. For every placing-in-question of the question is itself again asking a question, and thereby a new instance of the question itself. So the question is the only "must", the only necessity, the only thing beyond question to which questioning is bound.'⁵⁰

The human spirit, as finite, is an inquisitive tendency towards being, and, within Rahner's transcendental framework, that inquisition of being - (and do not the very terms *inquisition* and *interrogation* conjure up a violence towards what is being questioned rather than the gentle pursuit of knowledge) - shows itself primarily in the quest for knowledge, whereby inquisition becomes acquisition, for '[t]he original meaning of knowing is self-possession, and being possesses itself to the extent that it is knowing.'⁵¹ In fact, it is the capacity for knowledge which marks the subject as a

of the object, and is therefore possible only if the subject's faculty of representation is affected by the object' (Critique of Pure Reason, B,72). Again, 'intuition takes place only insofar as the object is given to us. This again is only possible, to man at least, insofar as the mind is affected in a certain way. The capacity (receptivity) for receiving representations through the mode in which they are affected by objects is entitled sensibility' (Critique of Pure Reason, A,19; B,33).

⁴⁹ T Sheehan, *op. cit.*, p.157

⁵⁰ K Rahner, SW, p.57

⁵¹ *idem*, Religious Enthusiasm, p.41

subject, for knowing is essentially subjectivity,⁵² and subjectivity is the original self-possession of being.⁵³ However, although questioning directs itself to some particular being or entity, no particular being or entity seems able to satisfy the inquisitive impulse. In theory, it might be possible to interrogate the sum total of beings and so seemingly exhaust the scope of questioning. Yet there would still remain the question about the question itself - *why the why* - and about its proper object, for ultimately the question is not about being in its particularity, but about being as such.

'The movement of the mind or spirit towards the individual object with which he is concerned always aims at the particular object by passing beyond it. The individually and specifically and objectively known thing is always grasped in a broader, unnamed, implicitly present horizon of possible freedom, even if the reflective mind only with difficulty and only subsequently succeeds in making this implicitly present fragment or aspect of consciousness a really specific object of consciousness, and objectively verbalises it.'⁵⁴

Now this kind of question is the metaphysical question, and it is, for Rahner, this question which holds the key to an understanding of the human subject, for this is the question which no one may refuse for, 'even when he pauses or even deliberately declines to carry on enquiring, he still produces an answer to the question.'⁵⁵ The question may be thought irrelevant or meaningless, or be confined to a mere region of being, yet, in so thinking, the subject implicitly affirms his own understanding of being as irrelevant or meaningless, or limited. However the question is framed or confined, it still remains a question about being and its meaning, and the subject's relation to being as such, for, ultimately, the subject himself is the question which must be asked. '[A]ll metaphysical enquiry into Being in general is an enquiry into the Being of that existent thing which must necessarily ask this question, that is, it is an enquiry about man. Human metaphysics is thus always an analytic of man.'⁵⁶

This anthropological starting point of human spirit as the power to know being

⁵² K Rahner, Experience of Transcendence, p.177

⁵³ ibid., p.176

⁵⁴ idem, The Spirit in the Church, Burns & Oates, London, 1979, pp.12-13

⁵⁵ idem, HW, p.33

⁵⁶ ibid., p.36

and its meaning echoes Heidegger⁵⁷ who, in Being and Time, takes as his point of departure for the formal structure of the question of being (*Seinsfrage*) and the meaning of being (*Sinn von Sein*) that being who, 'in its very Being has that Being [as] an *issue* for it,⁵⁸ and who is 'ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological,⁵⁹ incorporating into its own ontic structure 'a pre-ontological understanding of Being... as a definite characteristic.'⁶⁰ Dasein is 'the primary entity to be interrogated.'⁶¹ Heidegger writes that,

⁵⁷ The question of the relatedness and indebtedness of Rahner to Heidegger is difficult to assess. He attended lectures delivered by Heidegger from 1934 - 1936, and many of the themes which Heidegger addresses are implicit in his writings. He notes that it was 'a style of thinking and of investigating' which he adopted from Heidegger rather than specific doctrines (See P Granfield, An Interview: Karl Rahner, Theologian at Work, in Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982, (New York: Crossroads, 1986). He acknowledges that, were it not for Maréchal and Heidegger, he 'would not have done philosophy in a transcendental manner' (Approaches to Theological Thinking, 1974, in Karl Rahner in Dialogue, p.132). In the introduction to Spirit in the World, he admits that the work is limited in its scope and 'does not permit an *explicit*, detailed, confrontation of modern philosophy from Kant to Heidegger with Thomas', but that there are points of contact which can be inferred by the reader. Perhaps the most direct admission by Rahner himself on the contribution of Heidegger to his own philosophical development is in an article written in *Martin Heidegger im Gespräch* (R Wisser (ed.), Freiburg & Munich, 1970, pp.48-49) and reprinted in translation as a Preface to Sheehan's work, Karl Rahner, The Philosophical Foundations. Rahner refers to Heidegger as his 'master' and his only '*teacher*,' though the relationship with him has been quiet and inner. However, ten years later, in a radio interview with Peter Pawlowsky (11 July, 1980), although he acknowledges the contribution of the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit* 'with whom [he] learned to think a little bit,' he is able to say that '[i]nsofar as it is philosophical, my theology does not really show the systematic and thematic influence of Heidegger. What he communicated was the desire to think, the ability to think... I would say that Martin Heidegger was the only teacher for whom I developed the respect that a disciple has for a great master...[but]... I would say that Heidegger had little influence on my philosophy or even my theology, although I am really extremely grateful to him' (On Becoming a Theologian, in Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982, p.257).

Perhaps specifically, and of note for this present work, Rahner says of Heidegger, 'surely he has taught us *one thing*: that everywhere and in everything we can and must seek out that *unutterable mystery* which *disposes* over us, even though we can hardly name it with words.' Although Heidegger himself refrains from *speech* about this mystery, it is a 'speech which the theologian must *utter*.'

For a comprehensive exposition of a Rahnerian reading of Heidegger, see T Sheehan, Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987).

⁵⁸ M Heidegger, BT., p.32

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.33

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.35

'If the question about Being is to be explicitly formulated and carried through in such a manner as to be completely transparent to itself, then any treatment of it... requires us to explain how Being is to be looked at, how its meaning is to be understood and conceptually grasped; it requires us to prepare the way for choosing the right entity for example, and to work out the genuine way of access to it. Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it - all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we, as inquirers, are ourselves. Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity - the inquirer - transparent in its own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about - namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term "*dasein*". If we are to formulate our question explicitly and transparently, we must first give a proper explicitation of an entity (*Dasein*), with regard to its Being.¹⁶²

For Heidegger, *Dasein* can be adopted as the starting point for the metaphysical enquiry because, in its own being, it already has, at the pre-conceptual level, a relationship with its being. When it comports itself towards other ontic entities 'within-the-world', being as such is always present as a presupposition and horizon in the light of which individual entities can be articulated and expressed. The task of Heidegger's phenomenological analytic of *Dasein* is to lay bare this implicit grasp of being, so as to enable being to disclose itself.

Commenting upon Heidegger's existential approach to the problem of the meaning of being, Rahner points out that, with Heidegger, the study of being 'assumes a transcendental form,¹⁶³ and seeks 'to establish the a priori conditions under which man can raise that question [of being].¹⁶⁴ In his own approach, Rahner, too, stresses the transcendental nature of his enquiry. The question about being is a transcendental question, turning upon itself so as to make clear its own presuppositions. It is *the* 'transcendental question, which does not merely place something asked about in question, but the one questioning and the question itself, and thereby absolutely everything.¹⁶⁵ Rahner thereby privileges the question as the proper starting point of

⁶² *ibid.*, pp.26-27

⁶³ K Rahner, The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger, p.129

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ idem, SW, p.14. In other words, the subject is '*quodammodo omnia*' (Aquinas, Contra Gentiles, III,112)

metaphysics; and since the question is the question of the human subject - subjectively and objectively genitively understood - as that being who must ask questions, and who, in asking questions, interrogates not simply beings in their particularity *ad infinitum* but being at its most fundamental, namely, being *as* and *insofar as it is* being, then the human subject is the privileged access to being; since the question about being includes, as part of its own questioning, the being of the one who questions, then the question about being also becomes the question about the question of being, that is, the *question of the question*. Rahner, speaking of the transcendental method at the heart of his own enquiries, writes that '[e]verything which already reaffirms itself with implicit necessity in the very *question about* the nature of man and in the very way many put this question.... belongs to the metaphysically necessary nature of man...',⁶⁶ and that '[t]he point of departure for the answer to the general question about being can be nothing other than the question itself,⁶⁷ which is the subject. Thus, the question about being has become the question about the question itself, and metaphysics can be said to take 'the "whence and whither" of its asking about being in its totality precisely from this very asking as that original pervasive "must" which questioning man himself is.'⁶⁸

⁶⁶ idem, The Dignity and Freedom of Man, p.237

⁶⁷ idem, HW, p.34

⁶⁸ idem, SW, p.60

2.4 *Transcendental Subjectivity as Self-Presence⁶⁹ in Knowledge and Freedom:*

For Rahner, the subject realises itself not only in knowledge but as freedom. 'Man is the being who possesses unlimited transcendence of knowledge and freedom. The inner dynamism of his spirit is directed to absolute being . . . and then to God (or whatever one calls the goal of human transcendence) which goes beyond all that can be grasped in objective categories.'⁷⁰ However, this transcendence, in which the process of self-realisation or self-actualisation is effected, occurs at the juncture of Spirit and World.

2.41 *Human Knowledge*

For Rahner, the subject is the unitary phenomenon, 'Spirit in World,' which are 'moments of the one man, moments in which the primordially unitary essence of man necessarily displays and unfolds itself.'⁷¹ *Spirit* characterises the power of the subject to transcend itself towards an absolute horizon; *World* is the name of that 'reality which is accessible to the immediate experience of man.'⁷² As Spirit, the subject is dynamic orientation towards Being; as World, that dynamism is always by way of conversion to the world. 'Spirit grasps at the incomprehensible, in as much as it presses beyond the actual object of comprehension to an anticipatory grasp of the absolute . . . the primordial and fundamental which is the ultimate transcendental condition of the

⁶⁹ In *Spirit, Matter, Becoming: Karl Rahner's Spirit in the World (Geist in Welt)* (*Modern Schoolman*, 48 (1971), p.152), Andrew Tallon notes, '*Beisichsein* and *Bei-dem-andern-Sein* (or: *Bei-einem-andern-Sein*). Presence-to-self (self-presence) and presence-to-other (or: another) (self-absence) are less literal than being-with-oneself and being-with-the-other (or: with-another). As nouns the first set serves better; as verbs the second has advantages. Self-absence also renders *Weg-von-sich-selbst-beim-andern-Sein*, when sensation is meant. The *basic* concepts are of spirit as self-presence and matter as self-absence; the being composed of both principles achieves its presence to others (and ultimately to itself) by being away from itself through materiality.' Sheehan notes that knowledge as self-presence is '*the presupposition of Western metaphysics*' (*Karl Rahner*, p.164), a presupposition to be challenged by Levinas.

⁷⁰ K Rahner, *Anonymous and Explicit Faith*, p.55

⁷¹ idem, *Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World*, p.162

⁷² idem, SW, p.liii

possibility of knowledge.⁷³ A reference to absolute being inheres in every act of the subject as knower, for '[this] intramundane spirituality already includes the transcendental and conscious relation to that ultimate ground which bears all being in its own which we call God.'⁷⁴ Further, it is this relation to a transcendent ground which is the goal of transcendence and the transcendental condition of knowing which constitutes the subject in his subjectivity, for the subject only returns to himself in an 'absolute having-been-given-to-self (*ein Sichselbstgegebensein*),'⁷⁵ the counterpart of which is his being referred to an absolute reality. In other words, subjective knowledge is reflexive, arising in the concomitant return which accompanies being always away-from-self towards the otherness of reality, absolutely considered. Co-experience of self accompanies experience of an object. In explicitly theistic terms, Rahner writes, '[e]xperience of God and experience of self . . . in a real and fundamental sense stand for the totality of human experience and human knowledge.'⁷⁶

Now, if human experience and human knowledge relate to the experience of God, as absolute, and the concomitant experience of self, then one must revise the understanding of knowledge as the subjective power of appropriation, which Levinas will criticise in the western philosophical tradition. Knowledge may be a *reditio in seipsum*, but whether that return to one's own native land of interiority is a return laden with the booty of exteriority, as Levinas would understand the return, needs to be questioned. Rahner seemingly embraces such a comprehensive understanding. The ultimate mutual perichoresis of Being and Knowing which constitutes the Thomistic framework would seem to support the comprehension of Being as the ultimate goal of

⁷³ idem, The Concept of Mystery, p.42

⁷⁴ idem, The Unity of Spirit and Matter in Christian Faith, in TI, VI, p.156
 P Burke (Conceptual Thought in Karl Rahner, Gregorianum 75, 1 (1994)) notes a change in the term of the *excessus* of the human spirit from Spirit in the World to Hearers of the Word (p.74, n.33). In Spirit the term of intellectual dynamism is *esse commune* not God who is *esse absolutum*, whereas in Hearers reference to *esse commune* is abandoned in favour of a dynamism towards the 'pure infinity of God'. The jump from Being as such (*esse commune*) to God is a problem within the transcendental schema. See J M McDermott, The Christologies of Karl Rahner, in Gregorianum, 67 (1987), pp.92ff.

⁷⁵ K Rahner, Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World, pp.162-63

⁷⁶ idem, Experience of Self, p.122

knowledge. But such a situation of total transparency, as already indicated, only pertains to absolute being. For finite being it is otherwise, and *analogical*, a point which Levinas in his refusal of analogy seems to neglect. Comprehension ultimately fails before the Mystery. If the relation to Being can only be understood analogically, so too the knowing relationship needs to be analogically considered. For Rahner, the possibility (*Fragbarkeit*) and the necessity (*Fraglichkeit*) of the metaphysical question indicate the enigmatic relationship of the finite spirit to absolute being. The human subject knows being, hence the possibility of the question, yet Being is not comprehensively grasped in knowledge, hence the necessity of the question.⁷⁷ Questioning, then, is a paradoxical knowing not-knowing. It is a transcendence beyond the limit of our present knowledge towards a knowledge which is not yet present, but which is already anticipated, and which can be termed 'pre-knowledge' (*Vorgriff*). Such a pre-knowledge is implicit in any question as the horizon towards which the question tends. 'It is a knowledge which transcends itself into non-knowledge,⁷⁸ 'the movement of pure surpassing and pure anticipation,' 'the *constitutive condition of the possibility of any question whatsoever*.⁷⁹ Particular questions are not the stepping stone towards a more complete possession of Being; rather, the particular question, the question in its ontic manifestation, is only possible in the light of an anticipation of an absolute, ontological horizon, which Rahner terms absolute Being, and ultimately God, and which constitutes the framework within which questions are raised, the horizon against which questioning takes place. 'Every question is evoked by an antecedent summons from what is questioned, which as conscious (although not *reflexively* known, or although not even knowable reflexively) and as known (although not *explicitly* known, or although not even knowable explicitly) is present in the question itself.⁸⁰ The virtually infinite pursuit of the particular is transcended in the question about everything that is, *insofar as it is*. It is a question about *being*, which brings together and unites every particular into a questionable whole, and the unthematic pre-knowledge of which forms the anticipated horizon of

⁷⁷ Rahner writes, 'Possible: that which we enquire about must, in principle, be knowable. Necessary: that about which we enquire is not so obvious that allows no further questions.' (HW, in A Rahner Reader, p.11)

⁷⁸ E Coreth, Metaphysics, p.54

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.57

⁸⁰ K Rahner, Experience of the Spirit, p.28

questioning. 'The possibility of inquiring about being as such and in its totality is the condition of the possibility of every single question.'⁸¹ The question, then, is 'unrestricted desire for being', a pure anticipation of being as such.

Rahner, then, indicating that what he means by 'knowledge' is *transcendental* knowledge, goes on to say that this 'should be enough to indicate from the outset that what we are treating of is that kind of knowledge which is present in every man as belonging essentially to the roots of cognition in him, and as constituting the starting point and prior condition for all reflexive knowledge.'⁸² The experience of God and the experience of self constitute an ultimate and all-embracing unity, for in every act of knowledge, the subject co-experiences at the same time both himself as knower and God as absolute horizon to which this knowledge is ultimately directed; the experience, however, is never directly or explicitly given, but rather remains implicit within any objective experience as its transcendental or 'enabling' condition.⁸³ This original unity of the subject with its transcendent and transcendental ground is far more original than the unity which exists between experience of an object within-the-world and subjective co-experience, for the implicit experience of God is the horizon within which any possible experience whatever occurs. However, such transcendental experience only arises in the knowing encounter with objects within-the-world. Even when the subject makes of itself its own object in an act of knowledge, its own transcendental continues to be implicitly co-presented. Writing later in life in *Foundations*, outlining his epistemology, Rahner writes,

'Even if this knower in an act of reflection explicitly makes the co-known self-presence of the subject and his knowing the object of a new act of knowledge, the same thing happens again. The new act itself, which makes the subjective co-consciousness the object of the subsequent act in a conceptual way, also includes once again such an original self-presence of the subject and his knowledge of this second,

⁸¹ ibid.

⁸² idem, Experience of Self, p.123

⁸³ See ibid., p.125

Maréchal had written in similar vein, speaking of the latent dynamism in Aquinas' own thought, '... perception of 'intelligible objects' does not happen without a certain reflexive perception of the action of the intellect upon them, or to express it better, *in them*: "Manifestum est quod [intellectus] ex eo quod cognoscit intelligibile, intelligit ipsum suum intelligere, et per actum cognoscit potentiam intellectivam" (ST, I, 14,2, ad 3)' (Le point, V, p.377).

reflexive act, as the condition of its possibility, as its subjective pole.¹⁸⁴

Thus, knowledge is not the reflection of an object in consciousness nor is it primarily contact with an object, nor the intentional going beyond itself of the subject; knowledge is a 'being-with-self' (*Beisichsein*). 'In its original concept knowledge is self-possession, and anything which is, possesses itself in the measure in which it is being.'¹⁸⁵ Essentially, then, knowing is *subjectivity*, the 'being-present-to-self of being' which 'being-present-to-self is the being of the existent.'¹⁸⁶

A further consideration presents itself. To what extent is that being-present-to-self in Rahner to be equated with knowledge understood as comprehension, for it is precisely this understanding of knowledge that Levinas criticises. Rahner himself indicates that knowledge is self-presence, but this self-presence, as an original relationship to Being, precedes conceptual elaboration. Knowledge is originally *proximity*, and only thereafter and inadequately concept.

For Levinas the knowing relation compromises the alterity of the Other, bringing it within the dominion of the Same. Much of Levinas' criticism of the ontological tradition is directed against Heidegger, yet, for Heidegger, the original relationship with the world is not a relationship in which Dasein knows or comprehends its world. Rather, knowledge is a reduced manner of being-in the world. Primally, Dasein has a *care* (*Sorgen*) for the world, and it is as *care* that the Being of Dasein is to be made visible.¹⁸⁷ But this original *care* has to be realised in a categorial way as *concern* (*Besorgen*), as a 'having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving up something and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining.... All these ways of Being-in have *concern* (*Besorgen*) as their kind of Being.'¹⁸⁸ The antonymic and deficient description of concern is 'leaving undone, neglecting, renouncing, taking a rest.' The difficulty of viewing the relationship with the world in terms of a comprehensive knowledge is that the founded character of

⁸⁴ K Rahner, Foundations, p.18

⁸⁵ idem, HW, p. 39

⁸⁶ idem, SW, p.69

⁸⁷ M Heidegger, BT, p.83

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

knowledge is neglected. Heidegger does acknowledge that 'in knowing, Dasein achieves a new *status of Being* [*Seinsstand*] towards a world'⁸⁹ which can develop *autonomously* as a task to be accomplished or as a scientific knowledge with the role of a guide for Being-in-the-world, but such knowledge is always derived and is itself found on the *primordial Being-in*. He writes, 'a "*commercium*" of the subject with a world does not get *created* for the first time by knowing, nor does it *arise* from some way in which the world acts upon a subject. Knowing is a mode of Dasein founded upon Being-in-the-world.'⁹⁰ Being-in-the-world is experienced ontically as knowing the world, but this knowing relation to the world is often interpreted superficially 'as a "relation between subject and Object."⁹¹ 'But subject and Object do not coincide with Dasein and the world.'⁹²

Levinas' criticism of 'knowing the world' seems to presume a polar relationship between the knowing subject and an object which is to be apprehended and comprehended such that the heteronomy of alterity is sacrificed for the autonomy of the subject. Alterity is reduced to presence-to hand (*Vorhandenheit*) and assumes significance as ready-to-hand (*Zuhanden*) in relation to Dasein. But such a schema presents Dasein as an interiorised *cogito* which forges links with an outside world and then comprehends it. Dasein, however, is not an interiorised *cogito*. 'When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated, but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always "outside" alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered.'⁹³ Dasein is proximally and for the most part already and always the unitary phenomenon of Being-in-the-world. It is always and already alongside the objects which it knows. Knowing, then, is not the relationship which establishes a relationship with the world. 'Knowing is a mode of Being of Dasein as Being-in-the-world, and is founded ontically on this state of Being.... *knowing is a*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.90

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.87

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.89

*kind of Being which belongs to Being-in-the-world.*⁹⁴ The relationship with the world is already and always part of what it means to be Dasein. Dasein is already alongside the objects which it knows; '[K]nowing is grounded beforehand in a Being-already-alongside-the world,⁹⁵ and to be alongside the world is not be situated as one present-at-hand to another present-at-hand; rather 'Being-in-the-world, as concern, is *fascinated by the world with which it is concerned.*⁹⁶ But, is to be fascinated by the world not to be taken into the thrall of an alterity, which rather than being grasped by comprehension, has already 'grasped' our attention? As with Heidegger, so too with Rahner. Knowledge is not to be understood primarily as comprehension, for ultimately knowledge's comprehensive mastery of alterity fails before the mystery of the Other. Further, knowledge is not to be understood superficially as a relationship with an object to be introduced into interiorised consciousness. Proximally and for the most part, knowledge is a reduced manner of relating to that which pre-dates subjectivity and is experienced proximally as proximity.

2.42 *Human Freedom*

Now, the transcendence towards the Absolute which is manifest in the desire to know is also recognised in human freedom which perfects and completes the self-transcendence of knowledge, *for the subject is more than knowledge.* Rahner develops his understanding of human freedom and its transcendental significance in his later writings, noting that the emphasis on the experience of and desire for human freedom rather than the quest for human knowledge better reflects the shift in the experience of Transcendence 'from the world to existence.'⁹⁷ In *Über die Einheit von Nächsten- und Gottesliebe*, in 1965, he writes that

'it seems that, in some mysterious and profound sense, we are already questioning again the transcendental philosophy of the pure subject, with its openness to the absolute.... Sociology is making an attempt to replace metaphysics or to convert philosophy into an ontology of intercommunication...; knowledge is seen as the event of self-

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.88

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ K Rahner, *The Experience of God Today*, TI, XI, p.162

consciousness which dwells only in action itself.⁹⁸

The epistemic subject, ordered towards an intellectual cognition of being, is an inadequate model for understanding the human person, a point, as we noted earlier, Rahner himself makes when, as if writing against himself, he speaks of the dynamic reality which is the human person only being fully realised in a loving turn to another person. When he writes of love and freedom this point becomes more apparent. Knowledge may be prior to love and freedom but it has to be understood as only being 'realised in its *true* sense when and insofar as the subject is more than knowledge, when in fact it is a freely given love.'⁹⁹ It is in freedom that the question of *existence* is worked out, for, in freedom, one makes of oneself an issue for oneself. '[F]reedom is primordially not the ability to choose a particular way of relating oneself to this or that, but is the freedom of self-understanding, the possibility of saying yes or no to oneself, the possibility of decision for or against oneself.'¹⁰⁰ In freedom the subject returns again to self for the free act is 'not so much the positing of another, something that is alien, a work that stands over against the act itself in otherness, but is the fulfilling of [the subject's] own essence, a taking possession of itself, a taking possession of the reality of its own creative power over itself.'¹⁰¹ Although knower, the subject, in the existentiality of his existence, is called, precisely on account of his concern for that Being which is in each case *mine*, to assume ultimate responsibility for who he is and what he does. He is 'the being which always has a relationship to itself, which is a subject and never merely a nature, which is always already a person, never simply there

⁹⁸ idem, *Schriften Zur Theologie, VI*, Zurich & Cologne, 1965; English Translation, Love of God and Love of Neighbour, in TI, VI, p.232

⁹⁹ idem, The Concept of Mystery, p.43

¹⁰⁰ idem, Theology of Freedom, p.185

The resonance with Heidegger is apparent. Outlining the theme of the analytic of Dasein in terms of its existence (*Existenz*) as mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*), Heidegger writes, 'Dasein has always made some sort of decision as to the way in which it is in each case mine... [B]ecause Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it *can*, in its very Being, "choose" itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only "seem" to do so' (BT, p.68).

¹⁰¹ K Rahner, The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia, p.361

(*vorfindlich*), but always already personally existent (*befindlich*).¹⁰² Such a personal relationship is effected in the dialogic encounter which takes place with another person in love.

This priority of love over knowledge which Rahner addresses in The Concept of Mystery will be significant when we consider Levinas' criticism of ontology's comprehensive grasp of Being and will open a way beyond his criticism of thought's entrapment within a philosophy of presence by affirming the 'excess' which is at the heart of human subjectivity. Mystery is not beyond the world in which the subject finds himself, but is the beyond of the world to which the subject already and always relates within the world. Having spoken of knowledge's true realisation in free love, Rahner indicates that this is made possible only 'if knowledge is ultimately a faculty ordained to an object attainable only because the object is greater than the faculty'.¹⁰³ Insofar as reason is 'a potentiality to be actuated in love, then it must indeed be the faculty which welcomes the greater sight unseen, the faculty of simple rapture, of submissive dedication, or loving ecstasy'; its proper object is a reality which is 'sovereign and all-embracing exigence which cannot be mastered, comprehended or challenged'. Rahner's unmastered mystery will become Levinas' incomprehensible *infinity* in the presence of whose demands the subject is called to response and responsibility. In the light of this, we will wish to revise Rahner's articulation of subjectivity as knowledge and freedom, and affirm it as proximity and responsibility.

2.5 *The Place of the World*

A consequence of stressing the transcendental dynamism of the intellect is that the significance and role of the world gets passed over and is undervalued. To begin with the intentional object within consciousness, and thereafter transcendently reduce, without any recourse to external reality, the necessary conditions of possibility of knowledge is to make of the intellect its own object. To take the act of knowing itself as a point of departure and therein discover an a priori grasp of Being as such as its absolute horizon, and only thereafter encounter the world, is to reduce the reality of

¹⁰² idem, Guilt - Responsibility - Punishment within the View of Catholic Theology, p.202

¹⁰³ idem, Concept of Mystery, p.43

being-in-the-world to a secondary and accidental mark of human subjectivity rather part of the human *existentiale*. J Reichman describes such a *psychogenesis of being*, saying that 'for Rahner the unlimited horizon of being is realised before the particular form is grasped, for it is only, it seems, in and through the transcending, dynamic potentiality of the intellect that the particular form can be referred to and known as being; not indeed as being as such but as this limited participation in being.'¹⁰⁴ This point is also made by K Baker: 'we can only surpass the boundaries of experience if they are already surpassed. Thought can only know particular being if it is already open to being as such, and metaphysics is only possible if we already have an openness to being as such in our daily experience.'¹⁰⁵ The consequence of this is the material, sensible world is undervalued, for, although Rahner often speaks of the importance of the world for a metaphysics of knowledge, nowhere does he accord it its proper significance. Noel O'Donoghue recognises, in Rahner, an identity being forged between being and spirit, yet, although the material dimension is acknowledged in human existence, Rahner's transcendental approach, he says, 'nowhere provides an ontology of the material principle; he [Rahner] has much to say about its role or function as receptive, but nothing at all about its constitutive function as combining with form as an intrinsic cause of the concrete thing.'¹⁰⁶ It is not so much, then, that the world is neglected in the

¹⁰⁴ J Reichman, *The Psychogenesis of Being*, in *The Thomist*, (1968), p.467.

Taking the intellect's own activity as the starting point is criticised by J Reichman, for, if the intellect is aware of its dynamism prior to engaging with the world in sensibility, 'there is no need for the intellect to wait upon an abstraction of intelligibility from the phantasm to thematise its full awareness of itself' (ibid. p.503). Such a stress on the *a priori* grasp of being fails to recognise that 'the intellect can come to a thematic knowledge of the unlimited and unrestricted nature of Being only through a reflection simultaneously mediated by limited and restricted beings which we progressively experience sensible as well as intellectually' (op.cit., p.472).

J Vande Wiele, too, comments, '*le rapport entre le sujet et l'Être absolu possède une certaine priorité sur le rapport du sujet humain à son monde fini d'existence*' (*Métaphysique et pensée contemporaine: Etude critique* in *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 61 (1963), p.104).

¹⁰⁵ K Baker, *Rahner: The Transcendental Method*, in *Continuum*, 2, (1964), p.56

¹⁰⁶ N.D. O'Donoghue, *Rahner: Early Philosophical Philosophy*, in *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, 37 (1970), p.323.

More recently, the undervaluing of the material base of history by 'classic' modern theologians, including Rahner, has been criticised by the liberation theologians. Clodovis Boff, in *Theology and Praxis, Epistemological Foundations*, Maryknoll, 1987 (Originally, *Teologia e pratica: teologia do politico e suas mediações*, Petropolis, 1978)

cognitive process, for '[w]orld is the name of the reality which is accessible to the immediate experience of man,¹⁰⁷ but that the world is not appreciated as being foundational for human knowledge and experience; in its secondarity, the relationship with the world lacks, as Levinas might say, *sincerity*. Rahner's world is a very much impoverished world, being a staging post on the way to spirit. It is not the world wherein one reads books, takes walks or meets friends. Since the foundation is that '[k]nowing is the being-present-to-self of being, and this being-present-to-self is the being of the existent,¹⁰⁸ knowledge is from the outset a purely spiritual faculty which 'put into colourful terms . . . amounts to saying that every entity (every material entity too) is a more or less deficient angel.'¹⁰⁹

The undervaluing of embodiment finds its contemporary critics also in Sorri and Gill who use the Common Sense approach of Thomas Reid to criticise the Kantian epistemology based on 'the passive and static structures of the mind.'¹¹⁰ Since rationality functions formally as an organising structure, knowledge is spoken of in terms of the structuring of "'objects of thought" through "intellectual judgements" 'much the way one might speak of furniture being arranged and rearranged in a room.'¹¹¹ Further, although the categories of space and time are acquired by way of the body, Kant abandoned reference to the cognitive role of the body, seeing it 'as essentially secondary, as a passive means to an intellectual end..., as a conveyor of sensations to the mind, rather than as an active participant in the process of perception.'¹¹² Such a scepticism towards

criticises theologies of history as 'examples of theoretical syntheses, or totalising discourses' whose 'general characteristic... is surely their speculative or contemplative aspect' (p.48). An analysis of their theories shows that 'history pretty much hovers in the abstract' (p.256, n. 46). A proper theology of history which acknowledges the materiality of human life in the world might recognise that within that history there is de facto 'a transcendence of pure facticity' (p.48), that 'history has meaning, and that this meaning pertains to Mystery' (p.49).

¹⁰⁷ K Rahner, SW, p.liii

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.69

¹⁰⁹ C. Ernst, Introduction in K Rahner, TI, I, p.xiii, n.1

¹¹⁰ Mari Sorri & Jerry H Gill, A Post-Modern Epistemology : Language, Truth and Body, Lampeter, Wales, 1989, p.110

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p.13

¹¹² *ibid.*, pp.13-14

the world displayed by modern (philosophically speaking) rationalism in general finds its critic in Thomas Reid, who criticises modern epistemology for reasons which can equally well be addressed to Rahner's epistemological approach, holding that thought cannot be confined to 'passive redemption of "sensations"' but is interactive with a world of things, people and values rather than "ideas". Further, this interaction with and knowledge of the world is by virtue of bodily participation and an immediate or direct experience of objects within the world.¹¹³

Reid laments the lack of Common Sense in philosophy when it addresses the reality and significance of the world, a lack which issues from the 'new method' of Cartesianism which is the source, he says, of all idealist and sceptical philosophies. In language reminiscent of the opening remarks in the Critique of Pure Reason (A, x) which Kant applied to metaphysics, Reid bemoans 'the very low state' of 'our philosophy concerning the mind and its faculties,' which, unlike the sciences, has not yet had the good fortune to find universally applicable principles which would apply to the mind, 'the phaenomena of human thoughts, opinions and perceptions,' but, is surrounded by 'darkness and perplexity,' and, were it not for the stubbornness of common sense, 'it is also odds but we end up in absolute scepticism.'¹¹⁴ The blame for this scepticism is laid squarely at the door of 'the ideal system' of Descartes which 'hath the same original defect; that this scepticism is inlaid in it, and reared along with it.'¹¹⁵ 'I observe, That modern scepticism is the natural issue of the new system; and that, although it did not bring forth this monster until the year 1739, it may be said to have carried it in its womb from the beginning.'¹¹⁶ By embarking upon 'these profound disquisitions into the first principles of human nature' a person is 'naturally and necessarily' plunged into 'this abyss of scepticism'¹¹⁷ which, 'with regard to the mind and its operations, derives not

¹¹³ For a summary of Reid's attack on modern epistemology, and the importance of the embodiment of knowledge, see *ibid.*, pp.103-110

¹¹⁴ Thomas Reid, Inquiry I, in Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays R E Beanblossom & K Lehrer (eds.), (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p.3

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp.10-11

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.112. 1739 - the year in which Hume's Treatise of Human Nature appeared.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.10

only its spirit from Des Cartes, but its fundamental principles...¹¹⁸ Reid locates the general spirit and tendency of Descartes' new method in its attempt to build a new system upon new foundations 'with a resolution to admit nothing but what was absolutely certain and evident.'¹¹⁹ Consequently, Descartes was naturally led 'to attend more to the operations of the mind by accurate reflection... than any philosopher had done before him.'¹²⁰ The operations of his own mind - thought, doubt, deliberation - were the first of all truths, 'the first firm ground upon which he set foot, after being tossed in the ocean of scepticism.'¹²¹ However, this attention to the operations of the mind led, says Reid, to a spiritualisation of the body and its qualities and a devaluation of sense objects which were to be deduced by strict argumentation from consciousness. 'As the attributes of the thinking substance are things of which we are conscious, we may have a more certain and immediate knowledge of them by reflection, than we can have of external objects by our senses.'¹²² The existence of the body is no longer to be taken as a first principle, and nothing is to be admitted in respect of it other than what can be deduced, 'by just reasoning,' from sensations which are no longer to be taken as secondary qualities corresponding to bodily qualities, but as pertaining to the mind. Sound, taste, smell, colour are sensations, not to be associated as 'the vulgar' do, with the body, but are to be taken as 'mere sensations of the mind.'¹²³

Now, the problem with the 'new system' which issues from Descartes and ends up in scepticism is that, whereas '[t]he old system admitted all the principles of common sense as first principles, and without requiring any proof of them' and was therefore 'built upon a broad foundation and had no tendency to scepticism,' the 'new system admits only one of the principles of common sense as a first principle; and pretends, by strict argumentation, to deduce all the rest from it. That our thoughts, our sensations, and every thing of which we are conscious, hath a real existence, is admitted in this system as a first principle; but everything else must be made evident by the light of

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.108

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.109

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² *ibid.*, p.110

¹²³ *ibid.*, p.111

reason. Reason must rear the whole fabric of knowledge upon this single principle of consciousness,¹²⁴ namely, the 'one axiom, expressed in one word, *cogito*.'¹²⁵ Thus, scepticism is the natural issue of this system, with regard to everything except the existence of our ideas.

This Cartesian element, inherent in Rahner's starting point, which leads to the disembodiment of thought has its consequences, for not only is the material world rendered inconsequential, but the personal world of intersubjectivity, too, is overlooked. From a Heideggerian perspective which affirms the world as Dasein's existential, Vande Wiele asks whether 'being-outside-of-oneself, being-in-the-world, in a word "transcendence", does not constitute the feature of the finite spirit as such.'¹²⁶ Such an understanding of the human subject which would recognise the intersubjective, relational and finite nature of human existence would be more in-keeping with the thrust of a contemporary philosophy which stresses 'being-with-others,' where 'the other' is appreciated as a 'personal other', as the defining and 'totally original structure of man's essence.'¹²⁷ Vande Wiele continues, 'it is preferable to look for the Absolute through the mediation of a complete and meticulous description of the human spirit in its total density and in its relationships with the world and other people.'¹²⁸

Now, although Rahner does adopt knowing as a power of spirit towards absolute being as his point of departure, and stresses the original unity of being and knowing which directs this dynamic tendency, there is apparent within his thinking a tension which lends itself to a re-appraisal of his theological enterprise and facilitates a shift to another framework which takes account of the *différance*, in Cornell's sense of the 'excess to the system', which resists Rahner's schema. Two particular areas are worth looking at: firstly, the force of being-in-the-world, whose interpretation as self-absence can be positively interpreted as a relationship with alterity which founds subjectivity, a relationship which is *ethical* as Levinas will argue; and secondly, a reading of alterity, especially the alterity of the personal other (*l'autrui*), in terms of mystery so as to recognise the mysterious as that excess in the presence of which the subject always and already lives.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.112

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ J Vande Wiele, *op. cit.*, p.107

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p.106

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p.104

With regard to the world, although Rahner begins from the premiss of an original unity of Being and Knowing and then transcendently deduces the need for the incarnation of the finite spirit in the materiality of sensibility, there is also an *original unity of subject and object in sensibility*. It is this problematic which initiates the project of Spirit, as previously indicated: the problem for a Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge is not the pseudo-problem of 'bridging the gap' between subject and object, but the problem of the return to self given the initial confusion of sensibility, the problem 'of understanding how a gap is possible at all.'¹²⁹ Rather than focussing on the transcendental deduction of the finite spirit's need for world, one should subject the initial phenomenological datum of sensibility to further reduction so as to demonstrate the 'salvific significance' of the world, as exteriority, for subjectivity; and more significantly, the salvific significance of a world which is primarily to be understood in terms of the relationship with the Other person. In other words, the framework of intelligibility founded on the doctrine of the convertibility of being and knowing is to be translated to the framework of sensibility. Sensibility, not intelligibility, is the key and the guide, and its significance, as Levinas indicates, needs to be subjected to phenomenological reflection. The human existiale is in-the-world; in Heideggerian terms, being-in-the-world is part of the ontological constitution - an existiale - of *Dasein*. Whether authentic (*eigentlich*) or inauthentic (*uneigentlich*), human existence is 'in-the-world.' Rahner indicates this when he notes that, ordinarily, it is 'being-away-from-self', or self-absence, rather than self-presence, which characterises human existence. The subject is usually 'with-the-other' and not 'with-self' and this 'being-with-the-other' is not a contingency, but an ontological necessity for a finite spirit. Despite this, however, Rahner attempts to place the Heideggerian existential of '*in-der-Welt-Sein*' within the (Cartesian) framework - lacking in Heidegger - of the *ego cogito*, such that the subject 'is receptive knowledge in such a way that his self-knowledge, his cognitive self-subsistence derives always and necessarily from *a stepping out into the world*, from the grasping of something other distinct from him, that constitutes the first object of human knowledge.'¹³⁰ Subjectivity becomes an epistemological journey in which finite spirit moves in circular fashion through sensibility to selfhood. But, unlike Coreth, for whom materiality is 'the principle on account of which a being is non-

¹²⁹ K Rahner, SW, p.75.

¹³⁰ idem, HW, in A Rahner Reader, pp.48-49. *Italics added.*

spiritual, unable to be really self-present . . . that which causes a being to be outside of itself,¹³¹ Rahner, more positively, deduces materiality from the requirement of a finite spirit to know Being. Sensibility is not so much the limit and restriction of spirit, but is demanded by spirit's own finitude which requires engagement in world. In other words, spirit is not finite because it is worldly; it is worldly because it is finite. 'Man is spirit in such a way that, in order to become spirit, he enters and has ontically always and already entered into otherness, into matter, and so into world.'¹³² The intentionality of the finite spirit is beyond the world towards the metaphysical,¹³³ yet that movement is frustrated through the limitations which finitude places upon it. 'By itself it cannot give itself immediately to itself; it comes to itself only insofar as it receptively allows another to encounter it, and without this receptive letting-self-be-encountered by another it is itself not present to itself.'¹³⁴ And this '[r]eceptive knowledge is essentially conceivable only as the being of something material, it is sensibility.'¹³⁵ Receptivity demands materiality; it requires that the subject is such that it is 'essentially and ontologically being-away-from-itself-with-the-other (*Weg-von-sich-beim-andern-Sein*).'¹³⁶

It would seem that, to begin the deduction of sensibility from the intentional

¹³¹ E Coreth, *Metaphysics*, pp.102-3

¹³² K Rahner, HW, in *A Rahner Reader*, p.51

The priority accorded to the material world is acknowledged by Rahner in his essay, *Christology within an evolutionary view of the world*: 'As matter, man comprehends himself and the environment that belongs necessarily to him such that the act of returning to himself in the experience of being referred to the mystery that must be accepted in love, always and primarily occurs in the encounter with that which is individual, with that which manifests itself, with that which is concrete and cannot be disposed of, and with that which is finite, even though it is unfailingly given.... Matter is the condition of possibility of that which is objectively other; the condition of that which we experience immediately...; the condition of the otherness that alienates man from himself and in so doing brings him to himself; and the condition of the possibility of an immediate intercommunication with other spiritual subjects in space and time which constitutes history. Matter is the ground of the prior givenness of the other as the material of freedom' (p.163).

¹³³ See idem, SW, p.liii

¹³⁴ idem, *The Spirit in the Church*, pp.12-13

¹³⁵ idem, SW, p.80

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p.81

cogito, and to overlook the a priori situation of the subject in the world, opens onto the undervaluing of the world itself and of the subject's commitment to the world which always seems *per accidens*. Yet, constantly, Rahner speaks of the *ontological* necessity of the *conversio*, the essential nature of receptivity, and a subject 'essentially and ontologically' absent from self with the other.

The importance of this *essential* being-with-the-other had already been recognised by Rahner's philosophical mentor, Maréchal, when, following some misrepresentations of *Cahier V* of *Le point de départ de la Métaphysique*, he identified certain lacunae in his own work, which, had it been completed, would have been covered in *Cahier VI*, namely, the 'metaconceptual' and 'irrepresentable' aspects of human experience, and also the personal dimension of life. *Cahier V*, writes Maréchal, underlined the 'metaconceptual' and 'irrepresentable' character of God and pure matter in Thomas and Cajetan, and indicated that the dialectical explanation of this meta-rational life (*ce métarationnel vécu*), which is the basis of metaphysical analogy, constitutes 'a first stage towards a metaphysics "of existence"'.¹³⁷ Further, and on a fundamental (*capital*) point, "[t]he intellectual being is a 'person' and cannot be satisfied with a supreme End which would only be a 'Thing' to possess: if God is our ultimate End, it seems he must be such as 'personal.' But, between persons, the only relationship capable of fulfilling profound aspirations is the free and reciprocal gift of friendship."¹³⁸ Rahner acknowledges this when, throughout his theological writings, he speaks of the centrality of the personal other in human development. Human nature is 'a multidimensional, dynamic reality, realising itself only when turning lovingly to another

¹³⁷ J Maréchal, *Le point, V*, p.608

These pages (599 - 608) first appeared in the *Revue néo-scholastique de Philosophie*, XLI, (1938), pp.253-261 as '*A propos du point de départ de la métaphysique*' in order to address some inexact interpretations of *Cahier V*, and have been editorially added.

One should note here the importance of analogy. Maréchal, following Thomas, sees the doctrine of analogy as the explanation of relationships which defy the logic of reason, that is, existential relations of one person to another. Levinas dismisses analogy as an appropriate vehicle for articulating the relationship between one person and other since, at root, the analogical understanding of being is founded on a univocal substantialist understanding of being (as *ousia*). See below.

¹³⁸ J Marechal, *Le Point, V*, p.608

Maréchal recognises in 'this enlarged perspective open to the dynamism of the spirit, the problem of supernatural destiny' (p.608), only outlined in *Cahier V*, which theology was at that time beginning to address in a renewed way. See Rahner's debate with and criticism of *la théologie nouvelle* below.

person,¹³⁹ and again, speaking in a voice other than Cartesian, he writes, '*a priori* openness to the other human being belongs essentially to man's transcendentality.'¹⁴⁰ The world and intersubjectivity within the world are not incidental and *existentiell*, but are constitutive of the *existential* which is the human person.

Perhaps this lacuna opens on to the most general criticism of Rahner's transcendence, and acts as the scotoma which, when illumined, casts its shadow over the the luminosity of being, providing a hole within the whole, yielding the thither side of being and knowledge, and presence which is their conjunction. Within Rahner's transcendental framework, the subject has been understood to be spirit, dynamically oriented towards the Absolute, and this is taken to be the point of departure for metaphysics. It is a starting point which, as we have indicated, can be subjected to criticism, and one which Levinas himself with succinct comprehensivity criticises when he writes in Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence,

'Here the subject is origin, initiative, freedom, present. To move oneself or have self-consciousness is in effect to refer oneself to oneself, to be an origin. Then a subject-origin which is also a subject of flesh and blood becomes problematic. The effort is made to understand it on the basis of an incarnation as an avatar of the representation of oneself, as a deficiency of this representation, the occultation of a translucent and spontaneous consciousness into receptivity and finitude. Whence the necessity of going back to the beginning, or to consciousness, appears as the proper task of philosophy: return to an island to be shut up there in the simultaneity of the eternal instant, approaching the *mens instantanea* of God.¹⁴¹

For Levinas, the relationship with a personal other, which Maréchal acknowledges as the only relationship capable of fulfilling a person, situates itself in a time outwith 'the ontological horizon of the *being of a being* [*l''être de l'étant*]', that is, in 'the *beyond of being* [*l'au-delà de l'être*].'¹⁴² The relationship to the Absolute is 'a relation or

¹³⁹ K Rahner, The Commandment of Love in relation to the Other Commandments, p.441

¹⁴⁰ idem, Love of Neighbour and the Love of God, p.237

Such a *a priori* openness to human alterity would, for Levinas, constitute the proto-ethical situation in which the subjects always and already finds itself. The transcendental framework is already pre-dated by the ethical givenness of human intersubjectivity. Rahner, however, pays little regard in his theological enterprise for ethics as foundational.

¹⁴¹ E Levinas, OB, p.78

¹⁴² idem, Preface (1979), to TO, p.30

religion that is not structured like knowing - that is, an intentionality. Knowledge conceals re-presentation and reduces the *other* to presence and co-presence.¹⁴³ The absolute of the relationship frustrates com-prehension, and defies the illumination and vision of the intellect, where sight is understood as 'contact at a distance'. The absolute is in-visible with respect to the subject, 'where invisibility results not from some incapacity of human knowledge, but from the inaptitude of knowledge as such - from its in-adequation - to the Infinity of the absolutely other, and from the absurdity that an event such as coincidence [in time and consciousness] would have here.'¹⁴⁴ In other words, the '*in-*' of in-finity is not a negative indicator indicating a lack, but a positive determination of the subject: in the relationship with infinity, the infinite is in some way *in* the subject, and it is this meta-conceptual and irrepresentable dimension of the relationship which constitutes the relationship. Rahner had identified the Thomistic epistemological concern of one of the coincidence of the subject with itself in the return to self in knowing self-possession. Positioned in the presence of Being, spirit directs itself towards Being as its horizon, and in this transcending moment, gains itself. Levinas' approach is not a positioning within Being, but an ex-positioning of the relationship with the other, which calls into question the subject's 'position in Being'.¹⁴⁵ Marking the initial outline of his own philosophy of existence in Existence and Existents, and recognising the renewed understanding of ontology offered by Heidegger, he nonetheless recognises the 'profound need to leave the climate of that philosophy'.¹⁴⁶ In Totality and Infinity, he writes that,

'Between a philosophy of transcendence that situates elsewhere the true life to which man, escaping from here, would gain access in the privileged moments of liturgical, mystical elevation, or in dying - and a philosophy of immanence in which we would truly come into possession of being when every "other" (cause for war), encompassed by the same, would vanish at the end of history - we propose to describe, within the unfolding of terrestrial existence, of economic existence (as we shall call it), a relationship with the other that does not result in a divine or human totality, that is not a totalisation of history but the idea of infinity. Such a relationship is metaphysics itself.'¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.31

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.32

¹⁴⁵ *idem*, EE, p.15

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.19

¹⁴⁷ *idem*, TI, p.52

In place of a subjectively-centred transcendence, Levinas proposes an 'ex-cendence', 'a departure from Being and the categories which describe it,'¹⁴⁸ not to deny ontology, but to recognise that beyond the categorial is an ethics which, though having 'a foothold in Being',¹⁴⁹ is ultimately ordered beyond Being towards the absolutely other.

2.51 *Sensibility*

The difficulty with Rahner's transcendental deduction of sensibility from the finitude of the human spirit is that the receptive capacity of the subject flows from the prior activity of the subject in the *Vorgriff*. Sensibility as receptive openness to the material other derives from spiritual dynamism. Passivity is necessitated by activity. Rahner notes that 'for Thomas the receptive knowledge of an object is essentially sensibility.'¹⁵⁰ The Agent Intellect (*intellectus agens*) - the intellect in act - is 'this transcending apprehension of further possibilities,'¹⁵¹ it has its counterpart in the Possible Intellect which is the potentiality to actually know what is inherently knowable, that is, Being. Rahner explains that the intellect *qua* possible 'is being, that is to say, being-present-to-oneself, complete return, but it is not of itself always and already present to itself. By itself it cannot give itself immediately to itself; it comes to itself only insofar as it receptively allows another to encounter it, and without this receptive letting-self-be-encountered by another it is not present to self.'¹⁵² Again, '[t]he (possible) intellect is a spirit which of itself exists in potency to be actually present to itself. . . . Insofar as this essentially does not happen by the fact that it is already of itself always present to itself, this coming to self (*Zu-sich-selber-Kommen*) is possible only by the fact that it comes to itself in the receptive letting-self-be-encountered (*hinnehmenden Sichbegegnenlassen*) by another as what is immediately and first apprehended.'¹⁵³ In short, passivity as vulnerability and openness to otherness is logically pre-dated in Rahner's transcendental schema by a more original active drive of the intellect towards

¹⁴⁸ idem, EE, p.15

¹⁴⁹ ibid.

¹⁵⁰ K Rahner, SW, p.344

¹⁵¹ ibid., p.142

¹⁵² ibid., pp.243-244

¹⁵³ ibid., p.247

presence-to-self.

The distinction between the intellect as active (*agens*) and the intellect as passive allows another criticism which Levinas makes of the tradition. Writing in the introduction to *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, he notes that being-in-act is the primary attribute of consciousness which aims at the complete and actual presence of being to itself, devoid of any alterity. "The original unity of apperception" expresses superlatively nothing other than *being-in-act*.¹⁵⁴ The intellect, as agent, is being-in-act and aims at rendering being actually intelligible through an actualised presence. In place of this, Levinas proposes a consideration of the 'inactuality' of being, not as a present ignorance yet to be overcome, nor as a negation of what is actual, but as the other of the actual. If the actual is 'being-in-act', the inactual is the other of being in act, the other of being, of the *esse* of being, which has the power to interrupt the synthesis of the all-inclusive present. The point of departure is not being in its actuality, but being in its passivity, a 'passivity more passive than the passivity conjoined to act',¹⁵⁵ and which is to be appreciated as a proximity to the inactuality of alterity which, through its irreducibility to any system, contests the intellect's project of effecting a total presence. This 'other of being' which resists and contests the active assimilative power of the intellect is the primary human experience and the first, original meaning and sense (*sens*). He writes,

*'Il s'agit plutôt de la mise en question de l'EXPÉRIENCE comme source de sens, de la limite de l'apperception transcendentale, de la fin de la synchronie et des termes réversibles; il s'agit de la non-priorité du Même, et à travers toutes ces limitations, de la fin de l'actualité, comme si l'intempestif venait déranger les concordances de la re-présentation. Comme si une étrange faiblesse secouait de frissons et ébranlait la présence ou l'être en acte.'*¹⁵⁶

Although the passivity of the intellect is not lacking in Rahner, the active drive of the intellect towards the absolute overwhelms it. Rather than sensibility and its passivity being a moment in the quest for self-presence, Levinas stresses that passivity and receptivity are the key to understanding subjectivity. In sensibility and the immediacy of its associated sensations, subject and object become proximate to the point of confusion, as Rahner, following Thomas, has already indicated. The

¹⁵⁴ E Levinas, HAH, p.8

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.135

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.11

phenomenological reflection following this should not so much be a concern with the problem of the return, but a recognition of the inherent meaning contained in sensibility. Levinas writes, '[t]he signification proper to the sensible has to be described in terms of enjoyment and wounding, which are, we will see, the terms of proximity,¹⁵⁷ which is accessibility to other beings, and more particularly, a non-indifference towards one's neighbour. The passivity of sensibility and the 'musicality' or immediacy associated with it reveals the subject as radically and originally open to what is other. Levinas recognises that 'sensibility can become "sensible intuition" and enter into the adventure into the adventure of cognition,¹⁵⁸ but this role is secondary; 'the dominant signification of sensibility is already caught sight of in vulnerability, and it will be shown in the responsibility characteristic of proximity.¹⁵⁹ The gnoseological understanding of sensibility and its ontological structure is one of the hallmarks of Western philosophy, and permeates Rahner's own ontology of understanding. This, however, marks a break with the immediate which is already the experience of enjoyment and wounding, an immediacy 'which is not reducible to the gnoseological role assumed by sensation.'¹⁶⁰ This stress on the immediacy of sensibility is part of Levinas' project of contesting the dominance of philosophy as thematised presence. Phenomenology aimed at disclosing a 'pre-original signification,' prior to manifestation, but constrained this to the present moment and to representation. For Husserl, he maintains, sensation is meaningful 'only inasmuch as it is *animated* by intentionality,¹⁶¹ but such an intentionality remains bound to the structure of thought or comprehension. Heidegger, too, maintains, 'the founding primacy of cognition'¹⁶² and assigns significance to each object insofar as it is enabled to be disclosed by Dasein, 'freed' to be. The intentionality of affectivity and desire remains neglected, being 'packed into the logos of being.'¹⁶³ But, Levinas asks, '[d]oes the fact of showing oneself exhaust the *sense* of what does indeed show itself, but, being

¹⁵⁷ idem, OB, pp.62-63

¹⁵⁸ ibid., p.63

¹⁵⁹ ibid.

¹⁶⁰ ibid., p.64

¹⁶¹ ibid., p.65

¹⁶² ibid., p.66

¹⁶³ ibid.

non-theoretical, does not function, does not signify as a monstration?'¹⁶⁴ 'Is it certain that manifestation *founds* all that manifests itself?'¹⁶⁵ Meaning is not exhausted by representation, and any attempt at thematising is already founded on the immediacy of experience which is always in excess of thought; 'signification is sensibility.'¹⁶⁶

Using the language of language rather than the *logos* of Being, he agrees that the possibility of philosophising cannot take place before monstration, or before something becomes a theme in 'a said' (*dit*), as opposed to 'a saying' (*dire*), but one cannot then say that 'being' is the source of such a manifestation and signification, 'or that monstration would be the foundation of everything that manifests itself.'¹⁶⁷ The ontological framework makes of manifestation 'the privileged and ultimate sense of the subjective . . . [but] . . . '[t]he notion of access to being, representation, and thematisation of a said presupposes sensibility, and thus proximity, vulnerability and signifyingness.'¹⁶⁸

In other words, to affirm the immediacy of sensibility as prior, yet nonetheless as signifying, and to say that in sensibility the gnoseological structure is secondary, is 'to reach the subjectivity of the subject complacent in itself and positing itself for itself and to 'recognise a sense somewhere else than in ontology. It is even to subordinate ontology to this signification beyond essence.'¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.67

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.68

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 64

2.6 *What must I do? What have I the right to hope for?*

The true life may be absent while we are in the world;¹⁷⁰ nonetheless, Levinas recognises the need to satisfy reason's essential metaphysical interest by grounding metaphysics and human transcendency in the exteriority of a beyond. In two courses taught by him at the Sorbonne, between 1975-76, and published as *Dieu, la Mort et le Temps*, he addresses the Kantian question of the possibility of metaphysics, not by way of a response to the first of Kant's questions towards the end of the Critique of Pure Reason, *What can I know?*, which only leads to the 'humiliation of reason' in 'that it achieves nothing in its pure employment' (Cf.A795/B832) but remains bound within the limits of experience; rather, Levinas takes as his own point of departure for metaphysics Kant's subsequent questions, *What must I do?* and *What may I hope for?* to show that if the role of reason can be clarified in its *practical*, ultra-speculative employment, then perhaps the Ideas might be properly established.

2.61 *Kant's Ethical Project*

At the end of the First Critique, Kant brings all rational enquiry back to these three questions: *What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?* The first, as previously noted, is purely theoretical and is addressed in the First Critique. The enquiries raised by the other two subsequent questions, however, are yet to begin. As a purely practical and first-order question, *What ought I to do?* falls outwith the scope of a *transcendental* enquiry and so does not belong to the Critique. *What may I hope for?*, however, is not only practical but also second-order and theoretical 'in such fashion that the practical serves only as a clue that leads us to the answer to the theoretical question, and when this is followed out, to the speculative question' (A805/B833). Both questions are essentially linked though, for, although the first addresses duty and the second, happiness, one needs to consider whether and by what I am compelled to do what I ought, and whether, having done this, I attain happiness. Is duty linked to happiness a real or a futile hope?

Our hope, says Kant, is for happiness, and happiness lies in the fulfilment of desire. Prudence may advise us what we ought to do so as to be happy but moral laws advise us how to deserve happiness. The answer to the second question may be '*Do that*

¹⁷⁰ cf. idem, TI, p.33

through which thou becomest worthy to be happy' (A809/B837), but, having done or failed to do what I ought to do, am I therefore entitled to hope to have merited happiness or not? Such a question must find its basis in a necessary and not simply fortuitous link between practical action in the world of experience and the principles governing the moral world. Benton made this point when, as quoted earlier, he spoke of the 'a priori connection between the rule of reason and the faculty of desire'¹⁷¹ which makes theoretical knowledge 'a presupposition not only of a priori synthetic *judgements* but also of *experience*'.¹⁷² Kant links the hope for happiness and dutiful action in the world when he notes that, although moral laws can have absolute application without any reference to empirical motives, they nonetheless act as possibility conditions of experience where experience is taken in the sense of actions conforming to the moral law and actually happening in history. To put it otherwise, just as the formal unity of consciousness, the original synthetic unity of apperception, is the supreme principle for the possibility of understanding, so the moral law also constitutes a transcendental heuristic structure which also regulates experience.¹⁷³ Further, moral law, as a structure for experience, is itself only realised in its application within experience. As Kant writes,

Pure reason, then, contains, not indeed in its speculative employment, but in that practical employment which is also moral, principles of the *possibility of experience*, namely, of such actions as, in accordance with moral precepts *might* be met with in the *history* of mankind (A807/B835).

But as such actions are commanded by reason, they must be possible, and, further, a context within which they take place must also be possible. Such a context, which provides 'a special kind of systematic unity' is the *moral world*. '[I]t is in their practical, meaning thereby their moral, employment, that the principles of pure reason have objective reality' (A808/B836). The Kantian insight contained towards the end of the Critique is that the hithertofore accepted way of understanding the relation between morality and intelligibility in which the world is perceived as being moral on account of it being intelligible is to be reversed. The world is not moral because intelligible; it is intelligible because moral. He writes,

¹⁷¹ See Benton, *op.cit.*, p.11

¹⁷² *ibid.*

¹⁷³ See Crawford, *art. cit.*, p.266

I entitle the world a *moral world*, in so far as it may be in accordance with all moral laws; and this is what by means of the freedom of the rational being it *can be*, and what according to the necessary laws of morality it *ought to be*. Owing to our here leaving out of account all conditions (ends) and even all the special difficulties to which morality is exposed (weakness or depravity of human nature), this world is so far thought of as intelligible only. To this extent, therefore, it is a mere idea though at the same time a practical idea, which really can have, as it also ought to have, an influence upon the sensible world, to bring that world, so far as may be possible, into conformity with the idea. The idea of a moral world has, therefore, objective reality, not as referring to an object of intelligible intuition (we are quite unable to think any such object), but as referring to the sensible world, viewed, however, as being an object of pure reason in its practical employment, that is, as a *corpus mysticum* of the rational beings in it... (A808/B836).

In other words, the objective reality of the world arises in the domain of intersubjectivity, the *mystic body* of all rational beings encountered in sensibility. Here again, we encounter the idea of the salvific significance of the world stressed by Levinas, the incompleteness of the relation to the world understood solely in terms of intelligibility, and the submission of intelligibility to the ethico-moral context within which it gains its significance, and which Levinas expresses in terms of the antecedence of responsibility to freedom. 'Responsibility is what first enables one to catch sight of and conceive of value.'¹⁷⁴

The question arises, then, of the possibility of satisfying both the metaphysical and critical interests of reason by going beyond the limits imposed on reason in the First Critique through a transcendental reflection on moral activity, or ethics, and thereby assigning to ethics its place, as Levinas would say, as first philosophy and the basis for the possibility of metaphysics. This is the project upon which Levinas sets out, but it is a project which is in-keeping with the programme outlined by Kant in his own work.

What then is the essential interest of reason? In a reconsideration of Kant's practical philosophy Yirmiyahu Yovel queries the 'interests of reason' which underlie both the theoretical and practical aspects of Kant's philosophy.¹⁷⁵ Yovel identifies Kant's project as an 'architectonic of reason' which presents a meta-philosophical theory in which reason is to be conceived as a system of ends or objective rational interests, and

¹⁷⁴ E Levinas, OB, p.123

¹⁷⁵ See Yirmiyahu YOVEL: 'The Interests of Reason: From Metaphysics to Moral History' (pp.135-148) in Yirmiyahu YOVEL (ed): Kant's Practical Philosophy Reconsidered, Papers presented at the seventh Jerusalem Philosophical encounter, December 1986, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London., 1989

which Kant refers to as the "essential ends" of reason (Kant's term, A839/B867).¹⁷⁶ Reason seeks an architectonic and rational-teleological unifying goal. For Kant, however, that unity is provided by reason itself since ~~it~~ pursues rationality as an end in itself in the speculative and practical domains. Thus, not only is the freedom and autonomy of reason (*Vernunft*) safeguarded from any reduction to understanding (*Verstand*), but becomes the foundation for moral action and decision. Significantly, however, for Kant, 'interested reason' actually also contains the *inactual*, in that it is a goal yet-to-be-realised. 'Human rationality, as inherently limited, is thus the pursuit of its own realization.'¹⁷⁷ In the context of Kant's *critical renewal of metaphysics*, the *Critique* can be understood as a response to the antinomy arising between reason's metaphysical interest and a critical interest which the Enlightenment made acute.

Now, Kant reconciles the critical and metaphysical interests principally by limiting the speculative interest within the cognitive domain, and diverts the extra-scientific surplus which remains to the realm of morality and praxis. The way is thus opened for the development of a *metaphysics of practice*, which takes as its point of departure the subject's moral experience of the *corpus mysticum* of other rational beings. Such an approach realises a number of goals. First of all, the transcendent focus of traditional, dogmatic metaphysics is replaced by a critical, scientific, transcendental metaphysics, freed from a concern with the existence of what is supernatural, and interested rather with the *existence conditions* of natural entities.¹⁷⁸ Such a critical approach, however, confines metaphysics to the phenomenal world, and fails to attain the absolute. It would seem, then, that the essential, metaphysical interest of reason is thwarted by its critical interest and reason's dynamism towards a transcendent object is re-directed so as to produce nothing other than 'a *heuristic methodology of the natural*

¹⁷⁶ ibid., p.136

¹⁷⁷ ibid.

¹⁷⁸ This continuing interest in the possibility conditions of existence demonstrates, says Yovel, the fact that in the *Transcendental Analytic*, Kant displays an ontological as well as an epistemological concern 'which states that the epistemological conditions for knowing real entities in nature are the same as the ontological conditions for these entities to actually be what they are' (ibid., p141). By exposing the necessary structure of knowing the world, the fundamental structure of the world itself is transcendently brought to light. In fact, the epistemological force of the *Transcendental Analytic* flows from its ontological significance. Knowledge conforms to the essential structure of the world. But, as indicated, this world achieves its objective reality as a *moral* world.

*sciences*¹⁷⁹ to replace dogmatic metaphysics. Yet reason's essential interest, its drive towards the absolute, remains. But, secondly, it realises itself not purely cognitively but as 'a metaphysics of ethical practice (*Metaphysik der Sitten*).¹⁸⁰ 'If reason, in its cognitive interest, cannot know the absolute and the total, then in its practical use it can engender and shape them.'¹⁸¹

It is this transformation of the metaphysical interest into a metaphysics of ethical practice which is the Critique's 'major enterprise'; reason's former and abortive epistemological confinement gives birth to metaphysics as ethics.¹⁸²

Now, this, says Yovel, is not without religious significance for, in its pursuit of morality, reason opens up an access to the beyond or what, as such, may be termed the 'divine'. The religiosity of reason critically transforms religion because '[i]t transfers to the ethics of human reason all the divine attributes and exalted emotions that were traditionally associated with the historical religions and with the will of God expressed in their commands.'¹⁸³ For example, the kingdom of God on earth is now a metaphor for

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.142

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.143

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

¹⁸² This involves a transformation of the totality and unconditionality which were sought by traditional, pre-critical metaphysics in God or the universe. Now *practically* transformed, the interest of unconditionality becomes the categorical imperative, and the interest of totality becomes the moral ideal of the Highest Good, co-operatively realised by humanity. With regard to unconditionality, Kant assigns an absolute value, produced by reason itself, to every moral act, and since moral acts derive exclusively from reason's categorical imperative, they provide a means whereby reason can continue its quest for the absolute. By seeking a practical realisation of its essential interest, rather than speculatively pursuing 'the spurious attempt to know the absolute' (*ibid.*, p.144), reason is able to realise its fundamental structure. In other words, reason creates itself as moral value. 'Hence, in transforming the ultimate metaphysical concerns of the human mind with their halo of sublimity and infinity, the critique does not merely put forward an abstract philosophical principle but, thereby, performs an act of profound cultural and existential implications' (*ibid.*). With regard to the interest of comprehensivity or totalisation, the ethical idea and empirical reality are brought together in the doctrine of the Highest Good. By working to achieve the Highest Good, humankind orientates its actions towards the creation of a new human and moral all-embracing reality and meaning. Thus, moral acts directed towards the Highest Good not only have absolute value, but are ordered towards the ultimate and comprehensive fulfilment of human history.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, p.145

the Highest Good, which is to be won through human action and effort, the morality of which is rooted in the authority of the rational human will. Such a religion provides no metaphysical, historical, or para-scientific truth, but recasts the metaphysical interest into a moral-historical ideal of the "kingdom of God on earth" (the Highest Good).

By reflecting on reason in its *practical* application, Kant's redeploys reasons critical interest and returns to it the universal and absolute nature frustrated in the First Critique. No longer is reason's essential interest 'the futile effort to know the world as one totality',¹⁸⁴ but is, because moral actions now have significance beyond their individuality, 'the task of reshaping it as a moral totality.'¹⁸⁵ The ontological question, which Heidegger would later cast as the question of the 'meaning of being', has already been answered in ethics: 'the world exists for the sake of the moral world it can and should eventually become through human action in history.'¹⁸⁶ 'In consequence, the ultimate objective of metaphysics is no longer Truth or Being as such but the Good, more precisely, the Highest Good, taken as a historical ideal.'¹⁸⁷ 'Critical metaphysics thus begins as theory and ends as praxis; it starts by explicating the a priori structure of nature and ends by projecting a semi-messianic ideal, for which it also provides the drive to act and the grounds for hoping it can be achieved.'¹⁸⁸

However, Yovel has reservations about ~~the~~ success of Kant's programme. Kant pursues the 'interests of reason.' The metaphysical interest of reason may be a *sui generis* interest which is 'unassailable to those of action and morality,' but equally may also be irrational, 'a form of self-deception in which a genuine interest of reason is repressed, masked under the guise of another interest and silenced by the humdrum of daily social action and endeavour.' Yovel, however, identifies a 'deeper significance of the primacy of the practical interest in Kant.. [which] ... infringe[s] upon the autonomy of a genuine rational interest and subordinates it to another. The cognitive metaphysical interest cannot be obliterated without distorting human rationality.'¹⁸⁹ The metaphysical

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.147

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

interest may have no critical answer, yet may be affirmed as having a salutary philosophical value in itself. It should not be dismissed as meaningless, but neither should it be claimed that it is answered, for 'both alternatives are equally irrational.' Yovel concludes that Kant's own position and 'meaning of his critical move' is that '[t]here must necessarily remain a gap, a tension, between the queries and their impossible answer and this ~~a~~ gap is the genuine and authentic feature of the human situation.' But, if this is the case, 'the alleged "sublimation" of the ultimate cognitive queries by transporting them into another domain,' should have been refused for this only serves to distort 'a genuine metaphysical interest and must end up in its repression and illusory satisfaction.'¹⁹⁰

Yovel's criticism raises a number of points. First of all there arises the question of the transparency of reason to itself and the claim that reason must be entirely and solely reasonable. That reason can ever be wholly transparent to itself such that its genuine interest is accessible to itself is not only called into question by its own transcendental nature which maintains the rational subject inaccessible to its own probings, but has perhaps been contested by more recent writings of Foucault and others who ascribe to knowledge and the rationality which drives it its own archaeology and genealogy. One can think also of the work of Habermas when he outlines the various forms of rationality which need to be laid bare in the complex of modern society.

This leads on to a further question regarding the autonomy of reason, which, Yovel fears, is compromised in its submission to another moral, practical interest. If the assignation of primacy to practical reason impinges on the autonomy of a genuine rational interest, which it seems to do by wresting the domain of praxis from the sole control of the subject, then perhaps this does not so much point to a crisis of moral freedom and autonomy, as to the call for a more phenomenologically appropriate and adequate description of reason's essential interest which takes account of its incarnate, inter-subjective or social form. It is not a case of obliterating the cognitive metaphysical interest with a resulting distortion of human rationality, but rather a question of deepening the concept of human rationality such that it is not simply rational but also human and pays heed to a practical and moral interest. This is really to seek an answer to the question of the critical grounding of morality and ethics. While there may always be a gap between human questioning and its adequate answer and while this gap may

be may be 'a genuine and authentic feature of the human situation,' reason, nevertheless, in its drive to understand, cannot simply accept the gap and be silent about that which it cannot speak. Kant may have affirmed the gap, and Yovel may be correct in recognising this. But Kant himself, in recognising the gap opened between reason's metaphysical and critical interests, did try to go beyond the strictures of the First Critique, seeking in ethics the essential interest of reason. Whether this is sublimation, distortion and an ultimate repression and illusory satisfaction of reason's genuine interest needs to be addressed. Perhaps Levinas provides a way and a method to reconcile the critical and essential interests of reason through an understanding of metaphysics as primarily ethics.

2.62 *Kant's Ethical Project in Levinas*

The strategy of knowledge for Kant in the First Critique consisted in the known object being present to the knowing subject according to the heuristic structure of consciousness. But this meant a limitation of experience to the phenomenal world. What Levinas will seek to do, in order to go beyond the limitations imposed on consciousness by the First Critique, is to contest an understanding of knowledge as a content possessed in consciousness, and to go beyond experience as purely phenomenal. Key to his approach will be a re-appraisal of the philosophical doctrine of being as presence.

In his class of Friday, February 6th, 1976, Levinas confronts Heidegger with Kant's radical question. Heidegger attributes a priority to Being, yet that priority is contested by death and time, for their meaning (*sens*) lies elsewhere than in Being. Levinas asks, 'Is meaning always an event of Being?'¹⁹¹ Heidegger may have accustomed us to view philosophy in the Western tradition as a history of Being, whether recollected or forgotten, but that same history shows that ontology does not exhaust meaning (*signification*). Levinas asks, 'whatever may be the situation of being's move (*la geste d'être*), doesn't the history of philosophy designate an other disquiet (*inquiétude*)? Does the beyond of being (*l'au-delà de l'être*) inscribe itself in being's move (*la geste d'être*)?'¹⁹² The fact of transcendence invites a deeper reflection. For example, the philosophical disquiet before the God-question finds its significance

¹⁹¹ E Levinas, DMT, p.69

¹⁹² *ibid.*, p.70

somewhere other than in the forgetfulness of being and the ontotheological wanderings (*errance*) of philosophy. The God of ontotheology may be dead, but this is not the only God. Levinas writes in a note at the beginning of *Otherwise than Being and Beyond Essence*,¹⁹³ that 'to hear a God not contaminated by Being is a human possibility no less important and no less precarious than to bring Being out of the oblivion in which it is said to have fallen in metaphysics and in onto-theology.' Heidegger may have reduced Kant's philosophy to a first radical exposition of the finitude of being, as Benton has noted,¹⁹⁴ but, as previously indicated, of the questions which Kant identifies as philosophy's agenda at the end of the First Critique, it is not *What can I know?* which is principal, but *What must I do?* and *What have I the right to hope for?*, for whereas the first leads to an understanding of the subject in terms of knowledge and finitude, the other two answer the question of the human in terms of obligation (*devoir*) and salvation (*salut*), beyond being and comprehension.

¹⁹³ E Levinas, OB, p. xlii

¹⁹⁴ Benton stresses that finitude of the human intellect is at the core of Kant's transcendental argument, and is the reason for his concern with the a priori synthesis. See op.cit, p.24

2.63 *The Thanatological Undoing of Being*¹⁹⁵

For Levinas, death indicates an egress from being. The radical significance of death lies outwith ontology. For Heidegger, death and time are always thought of as modalities of being in so far as being. Thanatology speaks the language of ontology. Subjectivity, formerly snuffed out in death, now appropriates, as integral to its own life, death, and reasserts its mastery, authentically and resolutely appropriating what otherwise we would rather forget. But to answer the question of the meaning of being thus is to forget the meaning of death. As Blanchot says, we have lost death.¹⁹⁶

For Heidegger, Dasein's Being is a Being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*). Death marks the end of *Dasein*.¹⁹⁷ In death, *Dasein* becomes 'no-longer *Dasein*.'¹⁹⁸ However, just as Dasein realises itself either authentically or inauthentically, so the death which Dasein undergoes can be either authentic or inauthentic. Inauthentic death is the death which others undergo, the death other than my own death. Death might certainly come, but it always afflicts others first; *Dasein's* own death is something so much in the distance that it is an affair with which *Dasein* should not be concerned. This lack of concern with one's own death is, however, an evasion. 'In accordance with the tendency to falling, which is essential to everydayness, Being-towards-death has turned out to be

¹⁹⁵ For a fuller exposition of the relationship between being and death proposed here, see my article [The Mystery of Death: Alterity and Affectivity in Levinas](#), in [New Blackfriars](#), 76, December, 1995, pp.524-34.

¹⁹⁶ Maurice Blanchot writes in his essay, [The Great Refusal](#), ([The Infinite Conversation](#)), 'We have lost death' (p.34). Referring to the 'already decomposing remains of Lazarus,' Blanchot notes that the confrontation of Lazarus in death by 'he who... is able to name it, "comprehend" it, and by this understanding, pronounce the *Lazare veni foras*' (p.35) is a confrontation in which death is deprived of its true significance. In an implicit criticism of Heidegger, Blanchot writes that the restoration of Lazarus is 'death comprehended, deprived of itself, become pure privative essence, pure negation' (p.36); it is a 'death that... affirms itself as a power of being, and as that through which everything is determined, everything unfolds as a possibility' (p.36). But, then, he goes on to ask, 'But how can one not sense that in this veritable death, the death without truth has entirely slipped away: what in death is irreducible to the true, to all disclosure, what never reveals itself, hides, or appears?' (p.36).

¹⁹⁷ Heidegger writes, 'If "death" is defined as the 'end' of Dasein - that is to say, of Being-in-the-world - this does not imply any ontical decision whether 'after death' still another Being is possible, either higher or lower, or whether *Dasein* 'lives on' or even 'outlasts' itself and is 'immortal' (BT, p.292).

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.286

an evasion in the face of death - an evasion which conceals.¹¹⁹⁹ Further, insofar as death is something undergone by others, Dasein's '[e]veryday Being-towards-death' is associated with the idle talk of the They which, though it concedes the certainty of death, conceals this certainty by covering up dying in order to 'alleviate [*Dasein's*] own thrownness into death.'¹²⁰⁰ *They* say, "One dies too, sometime, but not right away."¹²⁰¹ *They* say, "It is certain that 'Death' is coming."¹²⁰² The death of others with which Dasein concerns itself in its everyday dealings is, however, an empirical death, without an ontological significance for Dasein's ownmost possibilities. 'For the most part, everyday *Dasein* covers up the ownmost possibility of its Being - that possibility which is non-relational and not to be outstripped.'¹²⁰³ Thus they "they" covers up what is peculiar in death's certainty - *that it is possible at any moment*. Along with the certainty of death goes the *indefiniteness* of its when. Everyday Being-towards-death evades this indefiniteness by conferring definiteness upon it.¹²⁰⁴

Such a consideration of inauthentic death enables Heidegger to arrive at the full existential-ontological conception of death: '*death, as the end of Dasein, is Dasein's ownmost possibility - non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped. Death is, as Dasein's end, in the Being of this entity towards its end.*'¹²⁰⁵ As Richard Cohen notes, for Heidegger, 'deathboundedness constitutes the existing totality of that being which is Dasein, and it constitutes *Dasein* as a totality.'¹²⁰⁶ Robert Manning summarises four characteristics of an authentic interpretation of death: firstly, death is one of *Dasein's* own possibilities; it has the character of 'mineness' (*Jemeinigkeit*): 'By

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.299

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.300

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.299

²⁰² *ibid.*, p.301; '*Man sagt: es ist gewiss, dass "der" Tod kommt.*'

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.302

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.303

²⁰⁶ R. Cohen, Time in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Ph.D. Dissertation, State University of New York, 1979, p.128

its very essence, death is in every case mine, in so far as it "is" at all;²⁰⁷ secondly, death is a possibility towards which *Dasein* is oriented. *Dasein* is 'being-towards-death,' who becomes authentic when it faces up to the possibility of its own demise, when it resolutely accepts its own being as being-towards-death; thirdly, in accepting death as its own, *Dasein* takes distance from the inauthenticity of the 'they' and affirms itself as a separate and unique individual. 'Death individualises *Dasein* by calling it back from its lostness in the *they* to realise itself as a solitary being;²⁰⁸ 'all its relations to any other *Dasein* have been undone;²⁰⁹ fourthly, death is appropriated as that about which one can be certain. Death is *Dasein's* ownmost certainty.

Now, what this means is that death confers a future upon authentic *Dasein*, revealing its temporality. 'It is only when authentic *Dasein* receives death as its ownmost, non-relational, not to be outstripped, and most certain possibility that it becomes aware that it has a future of its own to anticipate and to which it may project itself to actualise its own authentic possibilities.'²¹⁰ Manning quotes Lingis, 'The sense of my imminent impotence is a Power. It brings me forth into all the potentiality for Being that I am [and] is the very basis of all power in me.'²¹¹ Death, the impossibility of possibility, delimits *Dasein* as finite, but, as such, defines the arena wherein authentic *Dasein* can realise itself. Authentic acceptance of one's own death enables *Dasein* to authentically comport itself towards the actual possibilities of its own Being. Blanchot recognises the same: all our relationships *within the world* are relationships of that *puissance* which possibility contains. Man is possibility. '*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence - in terms of a possibility of itself.'²¹² Death would thus offer the final impossibility to my possibility; however, 'even death,' says Blanchot,

'is a power, a capacity. It is not a simple event that will happen to me, an objective and observable fact; here my power to be will cease, here I will

²⁰⁷ M Heidegger, op. cit., p.284

²⁰⁸ R J Sheffler Manning, Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1993), p.69

²⁰⁹ M Heidegger, op.cit., p.294

²¹⁰ R J S Manning, op.cit., pp.68-69

²¹¹ ibid., p.70, quoting A Lingis, Introduction to Collected Papers, , p.x, n.7

²¹² See M Heidegger, op.cit., p.33

no longer be able to be here. But death, insofar as it belongs to me alone, since no one else can die my death in my stead or in my place, makes of this non-possibility, this impending future of mine, this relation to myself always open until my end, yet another power (*pouvoir*).²¹³

In other words, I am able to die; I can appropriate to myself my death as my power (*pouvoir*), a solitary resolution.²¹⁴

Thus, death is drawn into the realm of the ontological and is appropriated by the subject as its final possibility. To quote Heidegger, 'Being-towards-death, as anticipation of possibility, is what first *makes* this possibility *possible*, and sets it free as possibility.... Death is Dasein's *ownmost* possibility.'²¹⁵

Now, Levinas, wants to disassociate ontology and thanatology in order to recover the meaning of death outwith ontology. The priority which Heidegger assigns to Being is contested by death, for its meaning (*sens*) lies elsewhere than in Being.

²¹³ M Blanchot, IC, p.42, *Entretien*, pp.59-60

²¹⁴ Cf. M Heidegger, op.cit., p.311. Heidegger, speaking of the existential constitution of Dasein which is yet to be addressed in the face of being-unto-death, asks '*whether the anticipation of [zum] death, which we have hitherto projected only in its ontological possibility, has an essential connection with that authentic potentiality-for-Being which has been attested*' (p.311). For Heidegger's understanding and definition of 'resolution' (*Entschluss*), see SZ, 270, 296, 298, 301, 305, 329, 382, 391f.

This Heideggerian thanatology is theologically appropriated. Ladislaus Boros, in '*The Moment of Truth: Mysterium Mortis*,' (London: Search Press, 1973) proposes the thesis that '*[d]eath gives man the opportunity of posing his first completely personal act; death is, therefore, by reason of its very being, the moment above all others for the awakening of consciousness, for freedom, for the encounter with God, for the final decision about his eternal destiny*' (ibid., p. ix; see also, pp. 84, 165). Death is '*a fundamental modality of living, concrete existence*' (ibid., p.8), the picture of which must be sought '*in the inner structure of living human existence*' (ibid., p.25). The human person is constitutively ordered towards death from the beginning of existence (ibid., p.9). Further, since '*death is the unreflexive, uncoordinated factor in our existence, one of those primitive metaphysical data that precede immediate experience,*' its reality can be disclosed by a transcendental reflection on human existence. '*[D]eath is essentially present in the structure of every living existence, and can, therefore, be grasped in the existent being itself at the point of intersection of the various pointers to death*' (ibid., p.23). Rahner, too, would seemingly assume the same existential thanatology, when he speaks of the knowledge of the inescapability of the experience of death as being the distinguishing factor between a human ~~and~~ being and an animal. '*[O]nly man exists always and inescapably confronted with his end, with the totality of his existence, with its temporal end. Only man possesses his existence unto this end*' (*Foundations*, p.270).

²¹⁵ M Heidegger, op.cit., p.307

Meaning is not always an event of Being. With respect to Being, death presents itself as an excess. For example, the death of Socrates recorded by Plato in the *Phaedo* offers an approach to the meaning of death as an experience of incomprehensible alterity which reveals itself in the affectivity demonstrated by Appolodorus' tears. Socrates is the one who authentically and resolutely faces death, 'a man who has really devoted his life to philosophy [and is] confident in the face of death.'²¹⁶ His friends, however, are perplexed at the prospect of his untimely death. Hence, Socrates' admonition to Crito not to confuse Socrates and the mortal body which remains, nor to lament at the funeral 'that it is Socrates whom he is laying out or carrying to the grave or burying.'²¹⁷ Such is the idle talk which surrounds inauthentic dying, and which, says Levinas, associates life and movement. Death, in its 'empirical facticity,' brings this to an end, affecting 'the autonomy or the expressivity of movement.'²¹⁸ 'Death is the *sans-réponse*.'²¹⁹ From the point of view of language and the observation of the death of the other man, death is an immobilisation, and the beginning of decomposition. It is not a transformation, but an annihilation, 'the passage from being to no-longer-being understood as the result of a logical operation: negation.'²²⁰ Hence the description of the death of Socrates who, after drinking the hemlock, experiences a gradual and spreading numbness creeping into his limbs, depriving him of the power to move.²²¹ But death is not simply, inauthentically, an empirical fact. But nor does its authenticity lie in the individualisation of Dasein in its solitary being, all relations with others having been undone. 'Is death separable from the relation with others (*autrui*)?'²²² Levinas argues that the negativity of death is not simply the negation of being but the sense of 'departure towards the unknown,' a departure without return, a departure 'without leaving an address'²²³ and this gives rise

²¹⁶ *Phaedo*, 63e, H Tredennick & H Tarrant (trs.), (London: Penguin Classics, 1993)

²¹⁷ *Phaedo*, 115e

²¹⁸ E Levinas, DMT, p.17

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

²²⁰ *ibid.*, p.18

²²¹ *Phaedo*, 117e-118a

²²² E Levinas, DMT, p.17

²²³ *ibid.*

to great emotion. Death is emotion par excellence; it is affectivity. Upon the death of Socrates, 'Appolodorus, who had never stopped crying even before, now broke into such a storm of passionate weeping that he made everyone in the room break down.'²²⁴ Levinas notes that, for some, the death of Socrates may be a reason for hope insofar as the good life, or theory, triumphs over the negativity of death; but there are also those who, like Appolodorus, 'weep more than necessary, weep without measure: as if humanity were not exhausted by the measure, as if there were an excess in death.'²²⁵ And so, Levinas asks, 'What is the sense of this affectivity and of these tears?'²²⁶

Whereas for Heidegger, death's significance lies in its certainty and the resolute manner in which *Dasein* comports itself to its own demise and the future opened by its own being-towards-death, for Levinas, the significance of death is otherwise: not so much the fact of its certainty, but rather the fact of its unknowability. But this aspect of death has been overlooked. Levinas asks,

'I even ask myself how the principal trait of our relation with death has been able to escape the attention of philosophers. It is not from the nothingness of death of which we know nothing precisely that the analysis must proceed, but from a situation in which something absolutely unknowable appears; absolutely unknowable, that is to say, foreign to all light, making impossible all assumption of possibility, but in which we are seized.'²²⁷

Death, for Levinas, is supremely uncertain and mysterious. It evades our attempts to grasp and understand it.

'The fact that we can only conceive of death *via* the deaths of others does not say something about our inauthentic stance towards a death from which we would take flight; rather, it says something about death itself: "The fact that it deserts every present is not due to our evasion of death and to an unpardonable dispersion at the supreme hour, but to the fact that death is ungraspable..."'²²⁸

It is 'absolutely unknowable,' 'foreign to all light.' Against Heidegger who viewed the anguish one experiences in the face of death as ultimately assimilable in the knowledge

²²⁴ *Phaedo*, 117d

²²⁵ E Levinas, DMT, p.18

²²⁶ *ibid.*, p.27

²²⁷ *ibid.*, p.58

²²⁸ R J S Manning, *op. cit.*, p.70, quoting E Levinas, *Le Temps et l'Autre*,

of one's being as being-towards-death, Levinas stresses that death cannot be possessed. This means that mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) cannot express the reality of death; death is not something that will be mine, but only some day; it is that which can never be mine because it has its own reality. It is other than myself. It comes to me, not as a reality which I encounter in a welcoming embrace or in Stoical acceptance, but as an opposing force in relation to which there is combat and struggle. *Mors et vita duello*. To be conscious of death brings with it not power but vulnerability. 'The will to oppose death is mine, but the power that seizes me in my death is supremely other than mine, is quintessentially a power external to me.'²²⁹

Now, if death approaches with the alterity of an opposing force which marks the end of my power, then there is a source of meaning other than myself. Death's meaning is found in the fact that the subject, 'locked in itself and in its present,' is encountered by what is other than the subject, and what the subject can never be nor understand. 'In death, the subject meets the other, absolute alterity. By being always already in relation to death, the subject is in relation to something other than itself and its present.'²³⁰ This other contests the power of the subject and marks, not the possibility of impossibility, as in Heidegger's Being-towards-death, but rather the impossibility of possibility. In death, *I* am brought to an end, and not simply in the empirical facticity of existence, but, radically, in my very subjectivity. 'Death announces an event in which the subject is not the master, an event in relation to which the subject is no longer subject.'²³¹ This means, says Levinas, commenting upon Blanchot, that 'Death... is not the pathos (*le pathétique*) of the ultimate human possibility, possibility of impossibility, but the incessant re-possessing of that which cannot be grasped, before which the "je" loses its ipseity. Impossibility of possibility.'²³²

²²⁹ *ibid.*, p.71

²³⁰ *ibid.*

²³¹ E Levinas, *Le Temps et L'Autre*, p.57

²³² E Levinas, *Sur Maurice Blanchot*,(Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1975), p.16

Cohen argues this point in *Time in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. When death is the possibility of impossibility, as in Heidegger, then it is 'intrinsic and essential to Dasein' since it enables Dasein to project itself towards the future and the possibilities for Dasein available therein. However, if death is the 'impossibility of possibility,' then it is 'extrinsic or external to subjectivity' (See pp.138-139).

Now, since death does not provide the backdrop against which possibilities temporally unfold, but extinguishes possibility, the future it reveals is a future excessive to my present, a future other than the future filled with expectation and projection which Heidegger proposes for authentic Dasein. Since death is absolutely other, I can have no projections or expectations with regard to it, for I can only project from myself and my present. Projected and expected future is not a pure future, but the 'future of the present' or the 'present in the future'. Death, as absolute alterity, refractory to all anticipation and projection, opens on to a 'strange' or 'foreign' future, an 'absolute future' which I cannot overcome or make my own. 'There is an abyss between the present and death, between the ego and the alterity of mystery.'²³³ Or again, 'The distance between life and death is infinite.'²³⁴

What, then, is the significance of Appolodorus' tears? Levinas notes that, although Heidegger presented authentic existence as an existence in which one resolutely embraces one's own death, the reality is that the knowledge one has of death is overwhelmed by the sense of loss and departure, the affection and the weeping, and this raises the question of the nature of our relationship with death. The disquiet which one feels in the proximity of death - 'emotion as deference to death'²³⁵ - is the very question which needs to be asked, but emotion is a *question* which does not hold within itself the elements of a response. In other words, affectivity is a response to alterity.

The affectivity which one experiences in the face of death lies beyond intentionality and thematisation, refractory to all phenomenal appearance, 'as if emotion, in the question, without encountering any quiddity, were going towards the acuteness of death and were instituting the unknown, not as purely negative, but in a proximity without knowledge.'²³⁶ Heidegger attempted to understand the emotion experienced in the face of death by reducing it to the anguish felt at the prospect of nothingness. The

²³³ E Levinas, *Le Temps et L'Autre*, p.73

See also, J Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, (Peggy Kamuf (tr.), (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.28 where he criticises temporality founded on the notion of presence, and indicates that time involves a relationship with is 'without being [sans être], that is not what it is and that is what it is not, which is to be it without being (it) [qui est de l'être sans l'être].'

²³⁴ E Levinas, SMB, p.16

²³⁵ E Levinas, DMT, p.26

²³⁶ *ibid.*, p.27

Phaedo sought to affirm that theory - the good or authentic death - is stronger than the anguish of death. Nevertheless, Appolodorus still cries more than the others, excessively, and beyond measure. Emotion is excessive, and points to death's excess. What Levinas wishes to argue is that Heidegger's cognitive stance with regard to death - the ontological reduction of death - fails to recognise death as an opposing force which is not known but undergone. Death happens to us; hence the truism of the impossibility of experiencing death, of a non-contact between life and death, which signifies the passivity of affectivity. One does not experience death. Death affects us without there being any intentionality on our part; it is neither a seeing nor an intending, but an 'affectivity without intentionality',²³⁷ an emotion which does not have representation as its basis, a movement of anxiety into the *unknown*.

Now, it is this break with the ontological which Levinas recognises as the great contribution of Kant's *First Critique*. Formally, the question, *What must I do?* has no reference to being, which means that, apart from Being and its comprehension, meaning and signification persist. Kant's practical philosophy, answering his second and third questions contests the reductive power of Being. The Heideggerian reduction is not obligatory; finitude is not final.

'If one had the right to retain one trait from a philosophical system and neglect all the details of its architecture.., we would think here of Kantism, which finds a meaning to the human without measuring it by ontology and outside of the question "What is there here...?" that one would like to take to be a preliminary, outside of the immortality and death which ontologies run up against. The fact that immortality and theology could not determine the categorical imperative signifies the novelty of the Copernican revolution: a sense that is not measured by being or not being; but being on the contrary is determined on the basis of sense.'²³⁸

While the transcendental conditions for the appearance of the phenomenal object operate within the domain of Being, the synthetic activity of the understanding according to the categories makes appeal to the *whole* of reality, which is given in the transcendental ideal, which, significantly, never receives the predicates of being. Yet it is by relation to this that given objects of experience are thought as entirely determined. While the transcendental ideal is a *sensed* notion, it is postulated outwith Being, and as such, can be termed *aberrant*, wandering from the path of the tradition.

²³⁷ *ibid.*, p.26

²³⁸ E Levinas, OB, p.129

Levinas notes that the transcendental ideal is thought *in concreto*, but Kant refuses being to it, for being's prototype is the phenomenon. In other words, reason has ideas which go beyond being. This understanding of the transcendental ideal as otherwise than being is first mentioned in Existence and Existents, where, in the context of the intentional comprehension of the world by a knowing subject, Levinas notes that the idea of a synthetic and exterior whole 'is already adjusted to and refers to what is interior,'²³⁹ and that '[t]he very idea of totality or of a whole is only intelligible where there is a being that can embrace it.'²⁴⁰ While this synthetic whole falls within the realm of being, knowing itself 'is essentially a way of being on the hither side of being..., a way of relating to events while still being able not to be caught up in them.'²⁴¹ It is this transcendentalism of the knowing subject with respect to the known object, the 'power of unending withdrawal,'²⁴² 'the power to withdraw infinitely,'²⁴³ which, for Levinas, is the insight of Kantian philosophy. 'Kant's thesis that inner sense gives us only a subject transformed by the conditions for all objectivity enables us to grasp just what is essential in a subject':²⁴⁴ it is an *epochè*. The subject remains transcendental, always diachronically out of step with and inadequate to the idea it can have of itself. It is this *epochè* which defines the 'I'. But, more significantly, the suspension from involvement with objects is a positioning outwith being. 'The I is a being that is always outside of being and even outside of itself.'²⁴⁵

²³⁹ E Levinas, EE, p.47

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp.48-49

²⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.49

²⁴² *ibid.*

²⁴³ *ibid.*, p.50

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.49

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.50

2.64 *Hoping Beyond Being*

The speculative question about the limits of knowledge addressed in the First Critique finds its 'essential interest' pursued by practical reason, which deals with life in the natural world before it has settled into 'average everydayness,' 'the humdrum of daily social action and endeavour,'²⁴⁶ of which Yovel speaks. Meaning is found in the practical sphere, in areas where access is denied to speculation. Heidegger's attempt to situate meaning within Being is foiled by death, which lies outwith the cognitive domain in the realm of the affective and the practical. In the 'epic of being' in which existence is determined by temporality and death, there are things which cannot be incorporated into this epic. Although the human adventure is reduced by Heidegger 'to the epic of being insofar as being which is being-unto-death,'²⁴⁷ there are nonetheless significations irreducible to being. The regulative force of the reality of God and the immortality of the soul, which reason demands in order to maintain a reasoned accord between virtue and goodness, is applied independently of the ontological adventure and *against* all that ontology teaches us; it constitutes an *after (après)* which actually derails the claims of a comprehensive ontology, and finds its significance in the phenomenon of hope, which is a power of signifying beyond the theoretical. Hope may be a temporal reality, but its significance goes beyond time.²⁴⁸ The finitude which is at the heart of both Kant's *First Critique* and Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* must still be recognised, but one must also show that, at the core of *finite* being, there is a rational hope, an *a priori* hope, which is not simply a will to survive, but another conjunction of meaning. To affirm hope as an *a priori* is to recognise it *within* finite reason, and, as such, to affirm it as *rational*. This is not to deny being-unto-death as finitude's very presupposition, but, as in Kant's practical philosophy, to gain 'the possibility of thinking a beyond of time (*un au-delà du temps*) by hope,'²⁴⁹ a beyond which has a meaning other than that of finite or infinite time. Rational hope is a manner of relating *otherwise*; it is situated in 'a temporality

²⁴⁶ Y Yovel, *op.cit.*, p.147

²⁴⁷ E Levinas, DMT, p.74

²⁴⁸ See J Derrida, *Given Time*, cc.1 & 2, where he deals with the question of how to give time.

²⁴⁹ E Levinas, DMT, p.75

other than that of being-unto-death,²⁵⁰ and is 'refractory to all knowledge, to all gnosis.'²⁵¹ Because hope is rational yet outwith the ontological orb within which Heidegger locates meaning, it inaugurates 'a relation by relation to which time and death have an other sense,'²⁵² not dictated by a relation to being, but with reference to morality; 'it is not by accident that this way of thinking a meaning beyond being is the corollary of ethics.'²⁵³

Knowledge, as the convertible counterpart of being, projects itself to the limits of the phenomenal and is there bounded. Thus, Heidegger can speak of the finite subject ultimately confronting the annihilation of all possibility in death. Hope, however, projects itself beyond the confines of being into the domain of the good, 'for the supreme Good can only be hoped.'²⁵⁴ For Kant, the categories of space and time allow and yet limit theoretical access to the phenomenon, yet the noumenal can be accessed in the rationality of human moral action, guided by its universal maxim, for the subject is *interiorly* bound by the moral obligation of duty. To act morally, one must necessarily comport oneself *as if* the soul were immortal and as if God existed. Such hope-motivated action is a hope against all knowledge, and yet is a hope which is rational.

The important point here is that hope is outwith the temporal ecstases which provide the interpretative key to Being for Heidegger; it is neither a backward and nostalgic glance *à la recherche du temps perdu*, nor a present positioning, waiting for a future knowledge to be comprehended in time, unless that waiting is understood as a relation '*with what cannot come*, not because the waiting would be in vain but *because the awaited is too great for the waiting* and the length of time is a relation which holds more than it holds. Hope become waiting and temporal length is already a relation (in a non-negative sense) and welcome of a surplus.'²⁵⁵ It is often recognised as more than a human comportment yet less than being. But here, says Levinas, the question arises: 'is hope - as more than a human comportment and less than being - not *more* than

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.76

²⁵¹ *ibid.*

²⁵² *ibid.*

²⁵³ *ibid.*, p.78

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.77

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.80

being?²⁵⁶ It is as if human rationality were not exhausted in maintaining its own being, not even in serving being.²⁵⁷ One says that knowledge is in the measure of what it knows, but what is hoped for is always in excess of what knowledge can conceive. Whereas in cognitive intentionality, there is a correlation between noema and noesis, hope seems to be outwith intentionality; it has no identifiable object. It is a relation with something unmeasured (*demesure*) by knowledge. It is a relation with more than being, with that which can never be affirmed as an existent or signified as a correlative of knowledge. And this opens on to a subjectivity related to the unrealisable, not in its romantic sense, though, but as an order above or beyond being (*un ordre au-dessus ou au-delà de l'être*).

The possibility of such a rational hope which lies beyond being is addressed by Levinas in a lecture entitled, 'How to think nothingness' (*Comment penser le néant*) (20 Feb, 1976). If hope (*espérance*) is an emptiness awaiting fulfilment, rational hope (*espoir*) does not anticipate a future. For Husserl, says Levinas, intuition fills the emptiness with its own significations in view of future knowledge,²⁵⁸ but for Kant this

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.77

Maurice Blanchot's reflection on the poetic character of hope is illustrative here. Quoting René Char, '*Le poème est l'amour réalisé du désir demeuré désir*' (*L'Entretien Infini*, p.56), he recognises the association of hope and desire, neither of which are manufactured by the subject, but find their drive in the obscurity of an objective and excessive exteriority. This obscurity can be discovered in hope. Blanchot identifies the function of poetic hope, like poetry itself, as providing the means whereby a future promise is rendered present. Yet that presence is not grasped in an already and immediate manner, but is the presence of what is always yet to come, and may in fact never come. '*Plus lointain ou plus difficile est l'objet de l'espoir, plus l'espoir qui l'affirme est profond et proche de sa destinée d'espoir: j'ai peu à espérer, quand ce que j'espère est presque sous la main*' (p.58). Hope speaks of the possibility of that which escapes the possible; it holds onto a relationship at the very point or limit where the relationship is lost, and makes of itself a hopeless hope which no longer awaits possibility but affirms the improbable advent of what will never happen. '*L'espoir est le plus profond, lorsque lui-même se retire et se destitue de tout espoir manifeste*' (*ibid.*). To attend the possible is to anticipate a welcome into ontology, for what is possible can be; to hope for the improbable is to wait for what can never be, not on account of an absolute nothingness, but because the categories and language of being are inadequate.

²⁵⁷ cf. E Levinas, DMT, pp.79-80

²⁵⁸ Husserl distinguishes between *mere intentions*, which refer blindly to intentional objects and are intuitively empty, and the *intuitive fulfilment* of such acts with intuitive content. Spiegelberg writes, 'There are thus two types of intentions, both having equal rights as far as their intentional structure goes: promising intentions, which are still intuitively empty, and fulfilling intentions, which also carry intuitive content.'

is impossible: hope in the beyond of time cannot be constrained by the categories of time and space for then what is other than being in its temporality would be an accomplishment of that temporality, and contact with the absolute would be accomplished in the realm of the phenomenal, a possibility excluded in the First Critique. To postulate the immortality of the soul and the existence of God define a hope which cannot be deduced from sense or intellect and which does not belong to 'the ontological adventure - as if, in the spirit, in reason, there were something other than the fact, for being, of being.'²⁵⁹ Rational hope is like an extra-ordinary, non-temporal, projection of meaning into a domain of pure nothingness, a relationship in which it is impossible to conceive or equal or contain what is hoped for, a relation of inadequation.

Yet, the presence and power of nothingness has remained largely unaddressed by philosophy. Levinas writes, '*Nothingness has defied Western thought.*'²⁶⁰

'We understand corruption, transformation, dissolution. We understand that the forms pass while something subsists. Death severs all that, inconceivable, refractory to thought, and, however, incontestable and undeniable. Neither phenomenon, hardly thematisable, nor thinkable - the irrational begins there. Even in anguish, even by anguish, death remains unthought. To have lived anguish does not permit one to think it.'²⁶¹

Yet it is impossible not to know this negativity, though its *inaccessibility* has been a characteristic of western thought from Aristotle to Bergson. With Bergson, according to Levinas, the idea of absolute nothingness is dismissed as a self-destructive, and its suppression as simply its replacement or substitution by another term.²⁶² Heidegger, too, found the possibility of a non-theoretical access to nothingness in *angst* fascinating; being objectless, *angst* has for its object the non-object, and is thus the very experience of nothingness. Phenomenology, too, also seems to give access to a thought of nothingness through the idea of intentionality as access, whether theoretical or non-theoretical, to something other than self.

But the two are intimately related. The first even requires the second as its complement' (H Spiegelberg, op. cit., p.99; for a brief outline of the intentionality of consciousness in Husserlian phenomenology, see pp.97-100).

²⁵⁹ E Levinas, DMT, p.79

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.83

²⁶¹ *ibid.*

²⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, p.81

2.7 Summary

Rahner, following Maréchal, sought to answer Kant's question regarding the possibility and the scope of metaphysics - 'what can I know?' - by undertaking a transcendental analysis of the inherent dynamism of the human spirit. As 'power to know,' the finite spirit intends being, since, following Aquinas' dictum, 'whatever is can be known.' This essential convertibility between being and knowing is articulated by Rahner in terms of self-possession. Being knows itself insofar as it possesses itself. The corollary of this is that not-knowing is a lack of self-presence. Knowledge is thus essentially comprehension, a unified and unifying grasp of Being. Although human being is finite, and so not fully present-to-self or self-possessed, nonetheless the framework within which Rahner's thought unfolds is an 'ontology of understanding,' and the proper object which the intellect intends is Being. Questioning and acquisition go hand in hand. The fulfilment of Rahner's question is the acquisition of Being. To inquire is to acquire. Acquisition is by way of inquisition.

It is this latent violence within Being's quest for comprehensivity and comprehension which is at the heart of Levinas' criticism of the western ontological tradition, the violence of comprehension which fails to give due *regard* to difference and otherness, but seeks instead to reduce the other to the same, enclosing it within an egological totality of understanding. Levinas will thus seek to pursue the totalising apparatus of thought to its limits, to the very point at which the event of thinking breaks down before the unassailable excess of the Other.

Now, although contained within and constrained by an ontological framework of understanding which would forge an essential link between Being and knowing, Rahner, attentive to a more metaphysical (in Levinas' sense of the term) strand in his thought, nonetheless recognises the limits of the ontological structure. As noted, he moves from an emphasis on human knowledge in the limiting philosophical propaedeutic of Spirit in the World and Hearers of the Word to the acknowledgement of wider human experience, writing later that 'experience of God and experience of self... in a real and fundamental sense stand for the totality of human experience and human knowledge.'²⁶³ Again, even later in Foundations, he refers to knowledge in the wider sense of human experience pointing out that 'every transcendental experience is mediated by the categorical encounter with concrete reality in our world, both the world

²⁶³

K Rahner, Experience of Self, p.122

of things and the world of persons.²⁶⁴ Knowledge is inadequately understood when it is understood as concept. Rather, knowledge, as transcendental experience, finds its perfection and realisation as freedom and love, and ultimately is to be situated within the orientation towards Mystery, categorically realised in the love of the other person. In other words, the text of knowledge has always to be read within the context of Mystery. *Intellectus* falters because *ratio*, as orientation towards mystery, is *capax infiniti*. This mystery draws close in the proximity of grace, a supernatural existential. Levinas, too, will emphasise the manner in which knowledge is disturbed by the proximity of the other. As Blanchot puts it, '*cet Autrui est étranagement mystérieux.*' The dominant and dominating position of knowledge as comprehension is always and already called into question because, with regard to it, the Other is *ex-position*.

A further related issue arises. Rahner's finite spirit demands the receptivity of materiality. The 'pure openness for absolutely everything,²⁶⁵ which the subject 'by its very nature' fundamentally is, demands the receptivity of materiality. The spirit can only realise itself by a conversion to the world. But this material world in Rahner is not necessarily anything other than the impersonal, material world. As Thomas Reid has pointed out in his criticism of Cartesianism and the philosophies which issue from it, the resulting spiritualisation of the body means that there is no place for embodiment. Rahner himself recognises the limitation of his early works in this regard and will seek to redress it in his later articles by stressing the subject's *essential* openness to the personal other and will link the loving experience of God with the loving experience of neighbour, and do so essentially. Ultimately, the redemptive role of the world for the finite spirit is achieved in the personal world of intersubjectivity.

Levinas, too, stresses the salvific role of secularity. Sensibility is not so much a staging post along the way of the ontological adventure, as in Rahner's propaedeutic, but is the locus of passivity and essential receptivity where the self is exposed to and rendered vulnerable to the incursion of the Other. These themes are yet to be more fully developed. First of all, it will be worthwhile to show how Levinas enlarges the framework of knowledge - answered by Kant's first question, 'What can I know?' - by situating it within the context of the ethical. Death and hope have already demonstrated the possibility of an egress from the ontological because they constitute a relation with

²⁶⁴ idem, Foundations, p.52

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.20

true exteriority. That egress, however, has also already and always taken place in the relationship with the Other.

3.

Beyond Presence

Rahner privileges the question as the proper starting point of metaphysics. The human subject is that being who must ask questions, and who, in asking questions, interrogates not simply beings in their particularity *ad infinitum* but being at its most fundamental, namely, being *as* and *insofar as it is*. In questioning the *being* of beings, the human subject, as Heidegger argues, is the privileged access, for the question about being includes, as part of its own questioning, the being of the one who questions; and thus, the question about being becomes also the question about the question of being. Dasein 'is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that being is an *issue* for it.... *Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being*. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological.¹ Thus, it is 'the primary entity to be interrogated.² In short, the transcendental question, which refuses to be ignored and must be asked, is that question 'which does not merely place something asked about in question, but the one questioning and the question itself, and thereby absolutely everything.³ One can try to evade the question about being by immersing oneself wholeheartedly in the world either by attempting to manipulate or control the concrete world such that by limiting reflection to the concrete entities of the world, self-reflection can be refused; or, by simply accepting the fact of finite, categorical existence and leaving the question of the ultimacy of existence to the side; or, by giving way to a despair which sees everything devoid as sense such that any question would prove meaningless.⁴ But,

'even when he pauses or even deliberately declines to carry on enquiring, he still produces an answer to the question. He declares the question to be unresolvable or meaningless, thus answering it, saying that the being of that which exists is unimportant, empty of meaning, something looking out to him from every thing which exists, and making him appear to be enquiring about nothing. Alternatively, man implicitly turns some particular existent thing into being itself - matter or business, the life-force or death and resignation. Whenever man surrenders his own existence utterly to some existent thing, by making this absolute of one existent thing he declares it to be the centre of all that surrounds him and of all that he is, and everything else to be but support and expressions of this one thing. In this fashion he declares what *he* understands and wants

¹ M Heidegger, BT, p.32

² *ibid.*, p.35

³ K Rahner, SW, p.58

⁴ See *idem*, Foundations, pp.32-33

to understand by being, and how he interprets himself as an understanding of being. He is practising metaphysics. Thus we are compelled to indulge in metaphysics because we are always doing it. We are compelled to ask: What is the "being" of that which is?"⁵

Now, the possibility of raising a question in the schema embraced by Heidegger and Rahner presupposes as a condition of that possibility some prior awareness or understanding of that which is to be questioned; it presupposes the *presence* to the subject in some manner of the object being questioned. Ultimately, since the question is an ontological and not simply an ontic pursuit, that schema is essentially ontological. Human existence has a relationship with Being as an ontological presupposition. As Heidegger writes, since Dasein 'is also that entity which already comports itself, in its Being, towards what we are asking about when we ask this question... the question of Being is nothing other than the radicalisation of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself - the pre-ontological understanding of Being.'⁶ The Heideggerian goal, taken up by Rahner then, is an attempt to make the relationship between being (*das Seiende*) and Being (*Sein*) transparent. '[T]o work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity - the inquirer - transparent in its own Being.'⁷ For Rahner, the transcendental conditions of the question are to be reduced so as to disclose the absolute horizon of Being as the ultimate possibility-condition for any act of questioning. As Rahner says, 'Every transcendental reflection on the performance of the question about being shows that it has as condition of its possibility an unthematic knowledge of being.'⁸

Now, Levinas notes that this schema is at work in the tradition from Aristotle to Heidegger: Being is not to be considered principally as a being (*Seiende*) but as a necessary condition for the manifestation of a being. Being is the open area in which a being manifests itself, and to comprehend a being properly one must journey into this open space. 'To comprehend the particular being is to apprehend it out of an illuminated site it does not fill.'⁹ Levinas notes the tendency by which spiritual dynamism towards

⁵ idem, HW, p.33-34

⁶ M Heidegger, BT, p.35

⁷ *ibid.*, p.27

⁸ K Rahner, Experience of the Spirit, p.26

⁹ E Levinas, TI, p.190

a horizon is expressed in terms of the schematism of vision and light which has occupied a privileged place in the tradition, and, indeed, such a schematism is also adopted by Rahner. Presence is equated with light, and the language of presence is the language of the 'luminosity' or 'self-luminosity' of being, 'the luminousness of the intellect.'¹⁰ Levinas writes, '[t]he *Critique of Pure Reason*, in discovering the transcendental activity of the mind, has made familiar the idea of a spiritual activity that does not issue in an object, even though this revolutionary idea was in Kantian philosophy attenuated in that the activity in question constituted the *condition* for the object.'¹¹ But such transcendental activity has always operated according to the model of sight, essentially 'contact at a distance,' by which the object is attained and illuminated within a transcendental framework.

'Illuminated space all collects about a mind which possesses it. In this sense it is already like the product of a synthesis. Kant's space is essentially a lit up space; it is in all its dimensions, accessible, explorable. It lends itself to the movement which will absorb it.... Sight apprehends and situates. The relationship of the object with the subject is given at the same time as the object itself. Already a horizon is open.'¹²

The very language of horizon implies a sight model. 'To see is hence always to see on the horizon.'¹³ 'The connection between vision and touch, between representation and labour, remains essential. Vision moves into grasp. Vision opens up on perspective, and describes a traversable distance, invites the hand to movement and to contact, and ensures them.'¹⁴ And vision, also, is subjective.

'The world, whose existence is characterised by light, is not, then, the sum of existing objects. The very idea of totality or of a whole is only intelligible where there is a being that can embrace it. There is a totality because it relates to an inwardness in the light. Here we come to

¹⁰ idem, OB, p.63

Blanchot also notes the privilege accorded to sight and its association with the notion of being as luminous. This privilege 'is originally and implicitly supposed not only by every metaphysics but also by every ontology (and, although useless to add, every phenomenology), and according to which everything which is thought, everything which is said is measured by light or the absence of light' (*Entretien Infini*, p.33, n.1).

¹¹ E Levinas, TI, pp.188-189

¹² idem, EE, p.48

¹³ idem, TI, p.191

¹⁴ *ibid.*

recognise the profundity of Kant's view about the role of the synthesis of apperception and of its unity in the constitution of the world - on condition that we understand it as a synthesis of intuition, sight or light.¹⁵

3.1 *The Dialectic of Performance and Concept.*¹⁶

Levinas criticises philosophies of presence. For Rahner, knowledge is the self-presence of Being. Such knowledge is not, however, to be equated with comprehension. Rahner recognises a dialectic in human experience. There is the experience of the object which is given in consciousness, but there is also, reflexively, the self-consciousness which accompanies this.

'[J]ust as in the case of the relationship between immediately experienced joy, anxiety, love, or suffering, and the content of a reflexive concept of joy, anxiety, love or suffering, so too exactly, but in a much more original way, is the relationship between the necessary self-presence of the subject, and his knowledge of what is objectively known, a self-presence at the subjective pole of the knowledge relationship, and the reflexive objectification of this self-presence.'¹⁷

Such experiences of joy, anxiety and love are, says Rahner, pre-reflective, and cannot be adequately articulated, for although 'experience as such and subsequent reflection upon this experience in which its content is conceptually objectified are never absolutely

¹⁵ idem, EE, p.49

The question arises once again as to the extent to which knowledge, as the being-present-to-self, coincides with knowledge understood as comprehension, and to what extent the human subject is to be *ontologically* defined in terms of its relationship with Being. Rahner himself indicates that knowledge is self-presence, and that this self-presence is an original relationship to Being. However, Rahner also indicates that this self-presence precedes conceptual elaboration. In the language of Levinas, what we need to show now is that knowledge is originally a relationship of *proximity*, and only thereafter and inadequately comprehension in concept.

¹⁶ 'Performance' or 'act' is the term used to translate '*Vollzug*', which is used by both Rahner and Coreth. The basic meaning is that of enacting or placing into act, of going from a potentiality for act (or existence) to the actual being and doing of the act. Despite the prefix '*Voll*', it does not necessarily imply a full realisation, actualisation or perfecting of an action or a being. Rather, it refers to the process of moving from potency to act, essentially ongoing and incomplete for the finite subject. For a fuller explanation, see, A Tallon, *Spirit, Matter and Becoming: Karl Rahner's Spirit in the World (Geist in Welt)*, in *Modern Schoolman*, 48 (1971), pp.151-165.

¹⁷ K Rahner, *Foundations* pp.18-19

separate one from the other... reflection never totally includes the original experience.'¹⁸ The human subject 'knows more of self at a non-thematic, non-reflective level in the ultimate and fundamental living of his life than he knows about himself by reflecting upon himself.'¹⁹ Now, while joy, anxiety, love, and suffering are experiences in which the subject is for itself - happy, egoist, deaf to the other person - experiences in which the subject sincerely 'lives from... ' or 'lives on... (*vivre de*)' the other (*autre*),²⁰ nonetheless they also betray an openness to the other person (*autrui*). Transcendental experience is thus also an experience of transcendence, and not only a transcendence of the self with respect to the self, a non-coincidental relationship of the same, but a transcendence of the other with respect to the same. Transcendental experience is not a simple undifferentiated experience before its differentiation into act and concept. The very act of subjectivity finds itself already differentiated as a non coincidental relationship with the other, with difference. Now, Rahner's transcendentalism takes as its starting-point the non-coincidence of the same. The eventual goal of knowledge however remains a coincidence of the same in which transparency, or self-luminosity is achieved. What Levinas helps us to realise is that this 'more' implicates an other and that the eye - model of sight, model of the I - will never be adequate to its disclosure, for being's lack of self-coincidence is not accidental and temporary, but essential and perduring. The core of subjectivity is difference. The original relationship is not within the realm of the same, but, beyond the same, with alterity, which is why Levinas is able to present Totality and Infinity as 'a defence of subjectivity' in terms of 'the relationship of the same with the other (*autre*).'²¹ This remains to be shown, however. For the moment, we return to the dialectic of performance and concept in Rahner.

'The limits of sense experience,' says Coreth, 'can be transcended, because we always have already transcended them.'²² It is this transcendence of the self, immediately co-presented in experience, which provides the proper starting point for a critical metaphysics. When one reflects upon the act of knowledge and its conditions of

¹⁸ idem, The Experience of God Today, pp.151-152

¹⁹ idem, Experience of Self, p.123

²⁰ cf. E Levinas, *TI*, pp.110-114

²¹ *ibid.*, p.26

²² E Coreth, Metaphysics, p.35

possibility, the *content* of the act of knowledge cannot be the proper point of departure, for each content has its own presuppositions, and these would need their own validation. However, even before the question of the *validity* of the content of knowledge, there is the prior *question* of validity itself. The critical starting point, says Coreth, needs to be presuppositionless, being self-validating and self-evident, without recourse to any evidence beyond itself by which it would be justified. In the transcendental enquiry pursued by Rahner, the *act* of questioning, that is, the question *as such*, is prior and allows a proper access to metaphysical enquiry since, in its act, it transcends its explicit content towards what is implicit in it. There is no content opening onto a virtually unlimited horizon of other presupposed contents, but only its own act which takes for granted nothing other than its own actuality as 'a continuous dynamic orientation towards unrestricted being.'²³ But, ultimately, the act of questioning is sustained by what is other than the question, for the question is not creative of its object, but is a questioning response to that antecedent object. In short, the Transcendental Ego is not its own evidence, nor is it entirely presuppositionless, as the transcendental reduction will show.

One can note here, in passing, a similar problematic in Descartes Third Meditation which Levinas addresses in Totality and Infinity. The Cartesian process of methodic doubt, according to Levinas, contains within itself an 'arbitrary halt' which has a transcendental justification elsewhere than the *cogito*. Descartes exercises doubt in respect of objects whose presuppositions yield further doubts, but doubting itself presupposes some evidence for its own exercise, demands some validation of itself as a process, which the *cogito* itself cannot provide for, as Levinas says, 'it ends up at an evidence that is not a final or initial affirmation, for it can be cast into doubt in its turn.'²⁴ What is presupposed as a transcendental necessity by Descartes in order that his 'work of infinite negation' might reach certitude is the existence and veracity of a God whose actuality is able to ground that act whereby Descartes can place the existence of all things in question, but can nonetheless affirm the exercise of doubt.

This attention to act rather than content is evident in Kant's question regarding the *a priori* transcendental conditions involved in our way of knowing objects. With Kant, however, the transcendental method was imprisoned within subjectivity, and the

²³ K Rahner, SW, p.68

²⁴ E Levinas, TI, p.93

resulting knowledge was relativised since it was subjectively, not absolutely, grounded. In considering the formal conditioning and determining relation of knowing to its object, Kant had failed, according to Coreth, to appreciate knowledge 'in its real and actual performance,'²⁵ thereby failing to appreciate *absolute* being as the *a priori* of an object's objectivity. The subject's actuation of itself in its knowing precedes all objective content of knowing, so this actual performance or act is prior, but it 'must be questioned about the conditions of its possibility, insofar as these are constitutive of performance and thereby present in it, even though only included implicitly, not thematised.'²⁶ If these conditions are vindicated as constitutive of performance, then they can be transcendently derived from it. In other words,

'If it can be shown in a transcendental reflection of this kind (a) that, whatever the content of our knowing may be, there is, as antecedent condition of possibility, a fundamental knowing occurring in concomitance, not a thematic or objective knowing, but still a knowing that is simultaneous with the occurrence of the thematic, objective knowing; (b) that this fundamental knowing can be made thematic and conceptual by reflective penetration of the conditions of possibility of performance; and as a result, (c) that this fundamental knowing is a knowing about Being as a condition of all particular knowing about beings, thus opening the horizon of being in general in which knowing as knowing is performed, then - I would venture to make it more precise still: *only* then - is metaphysics as a science possible.'²⁷

The unthematic aspect of the act of knowledge needs to be uncovered. In the Kantian analysis, the *a priori* is never attainable in itself, for finite knowledge is restricted to experience. Further, although the *a priori* is formal and determinative in respect of objects, it is contentless in itself, and only given with the empirical object. It 'can never... be shown directly, but only through the mediation of an analytically reductive

²⁵ idem, *Dialectic*, p.448

Fichte may have moved beyond Kantian formalism towards a performative understanding of knowledge by taking as his starting point the self-actuating and self-mediating spirit's self-experience (*Ich-an-sich*), but Fichte, positing the Ego as absolute being accessible within the operation of the intellect, failed to pursue the Ego's transcendental conditions. For a critique of Fichte's transcendental idealism in the context of this present study, see J Maréchal, *Le point de départ*, IV, (Brussels: Edition Universelle, 1947), pp.335-440, summarised from pp.437-439.

²⁶ E Coreth, *Dialectic*, p.450

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.451

thought process.²⁸ In other words, it is only accessible in act. 'The object of such a transcendental experience does not appear in its own reality when man is dealing with something individual and definable in an objective way, but when in such a process he is *being* subject and not dealing with a 'subject' in an objective way.'²⁹

To return to the issue of immediacy: the Kantian subject cannot be reached for it is transcendental with respect to experience, and, as there can be no intellectual intuition, immediate knowledge is denied. Fichte admits an intellectual intuition which yields knowledge of the subject, but, in so doing, removes the need for mediation through experience which can now be deductively derived from the absolute *prius* of the self-presence of the subject. Neither of these approaches, however, are acceptable within Rahner's framework. The first refuses supra-sensible knowledge, whereas the second denies the necessity of the *conversio*.³⁰ For Rahner, as for Coreth, the truth of incarnate knowledge, that is, a knowledge dependent upon sense and intellect, must lie between mediacy and immediacy in a mediated immediacy. This is the necessary tension at the root of all human thought and enquiry; the task of metaphysics is 'through transcendental retrieval to thematise and make explicit the mediation of immediacy,'³¹ while recognising at the same time that the act of knowledge exceeds its conceptualisation. 'The conceptualised and thematised self-presence of the subject and its knowing are never identical with the original self-presence and never recaptures its content completely.'³²

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.452

²⁹ K Rahner, *Foundations*, p.31

³⁰ Thomas, in the *corpus* of ST I, q.84, a.7, which is the starting point for Rahner's *Geist in Welt*, writes, '*Si autem proprium obiectum intellectus nostri esset forma separata; vel si naturae rerum sensibilibus subsisterent non in particularibus, secundum Platonicos, non oportet quod intellectus noster semper intelligendo converteret se ad phantasmata.*

³¹ E Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, in *Language Truth and Meaning*, P. McShane (tr.), (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1972), p.34

³² K Rahner, *Foundations*, p.18

Coreth expresses the same idea: 'When we reduce the activity of thinking to this condition of its possibility, the original knowledge of being can be made explicit and put into concepts. But it can never be grasped adequately in concepts; it is never exhaustively contained by concepts.... Since being is always more than what can be held in concepts, since the being that is known implicitly in the very act of thinking is always more than what is expressed on the conceptual level, we must always keep returning to

Now, the immediate that co-presents itself in every thematic act of knowledge is not simply the transcendental subject, but also, since that subject is situated within the horizon of being in its totality and as such, being in its totality and as such. 'The basic structure of being is already, i.e. immediately, set forth in every complete intellectual act as a preliminary condition of the very possibility of our questioning and judging whether or not something is.'³³ This immediate apprehension of being, though, 'must be mediated [for] there is no mediation without immediacy; however, there is also no immediacy without mediation.'³⁴ This mediation is effected through a transcendental reduction of the act of knowledge in the knowing subject to its conditions of possibility, whereby there is taken 'possession reflexively of the knowledge of being which every mind possesses and exercises even in the simplest act of inquiring and knowing.'³⁵ However, just as for Maréchal the concrete synthesis is exceeded in the affirmation which attains objects 'in the exact measure of their actuality'³⁶ and relates objects in consciousness to the order of being, so, in Rahner and Coreth, what is mediated and

our transcendental reflection...' (Problem and Method, pp.415-416).

³³ J Reichman, Transcendental Method and the Psychogenesis of Being, in The Thomist, 32, p.455

The reason why Being as such is a necessary condition for any questioning or judging is outlined by Rahner when writing on truth in Aquinas. 'For Aquinas a judgement does not consist merely in a synthesis between two concepts so as to form a single concrete idea. In Thomas' eyes a concretising synthesis of this kind - Heidegger would call it a predicative synthesis - would still be an *incompletum* of the type, for instance, to which definition belongs. In order for judgement and truth in the true sense to be present, the concretising synthesis must be further related to the reality itself, there must be a *comparatio vel applicatio ad rem per affirmationem vel negationem*. An affirmative or objectifying synthesis of this kind (and it is only through this kind of synthesis that a *complexio* or judgement is arrive at) is therefore a constitutive element of judgement and so too of truth (with Heidegger we might also call it a veritative synthesis), though admittedly only provided that this affirmative synthesis is also in fact a valid one' (K Rahner, Thomas Aquinas on Truth, p.17).

³⁴ E Coreth, Immediacy and Mediation, pp.37-38

³⁵ idem, Problem and Method, p.416

³⁶ J Maréchal, Le point de départ, V, p.321

Maréchal makes the point that the representational contents before our mind, that is, the concrete synthesis, does not co-incide with the object as affirmed in its real existence. The affirmed object displays a certain transcendence, affirmed in judgement, with respect to the knowing subject; it is always more than can be conceptualised in the concrete synthesis.

conceptualised is inadequate to the *actual* reality.

Rahner expresses time and again this incommensurability of concept and reality. For example, when speaking of the experience of grace, he reiterates the fact that the existentiell (*Existenziell*) of human living 'is an original unity of reality and its own self-presence' but it 'is not *totally* mediated by the concept which objectifies it in scientific knowledge.'³⁷ The existential experience of the Spirit is not fully measured by its concrete expression in commitment. There is a distinction between grace as God's 'genuine self-communication... to the transcendent human self and not an internal or external categorial reality of human consciousness'³⁸ and the human response 'through an existential decision which always involves historically limited, categorial material.'³⁹ Genuine experience of the Spirit of God in its essential nature 'does not consist in particular objects of experience found in human awareness but occurs rather when a man experiences the radical re-ordering of his transcendent nature in knowledge and freedom towards the immediate reality of God through God's self-communication in grace'⁴⁰ whereby God becomes 'a constitutive element in human transcendence.'⁴¹ Yet there remains 'an irreversible difference... between an original experience of transcendence... on the one hand and the objectifying and verbalising reflection on this experience of transcendence on the other...'⁴² God's actual communication of himself in human experience, though, 'is mediated through categorial objects, for the finite, spiritual essence of man only comes to self-expression in relationship to what is other, and in the ultimate analysis this other must be *personal*.'⁴³ The experience of grace as such 'is not the same as the objective form in which it is conceived'⁴⁴ nor should it be 'tacitly assumed that the grace-filled experience of radical transcendence only occurs

³⁷ K Rahner, Foundations, p.14

³⁸ K Rahner, Experience of the Spirit, p.24

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.26

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp.27-28

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.26

⁴² *idem*, Experience of Transcendence, p.176

⁴³ *idem*, Experience of the Spirit, p.28

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

when an objective concept is also produced in the form of a categorial content of knowledge...¹⁴⁵

Post-Reformation Catholic theology is to be criticised for viewing grace as 'a purely ontological reality'¹⁴⁶ which lies beyond conscious awareness. Instead, he argues that grace 'operates within human consciousness.'¹⁴⁷

'I mean by the essence of grace the self-communication of God to the transcendent spirit of man. In virtue of this self-communication the transcendence of man is permanently and necessarily ordered to the direct presence of God, whether this be the object of conscious or thematic reflection or not. Furthermore God's self-communication is a dynamic force which transforms the inner, transcendent reference of the human spirit to God so that this transcendent, spiritual movement finds its fulfilment in the beatific vision, the direct knowledge of God face to face in love, in which God is possessed without the mediation of any created reality. Grace is thus understood as the radical transformation of human transcendence so that God is not merely the final goal of human striving which one may come nearer to but never reach. He is not only the ultimate objective which, asymptotically approached, opened up the whole spiritual movement and intellectual history of mankind and kept it in motion. Grace is that which makes it possible for this movement to *reach* God in himself. Naturally, therefore, grace divinises man and bestows upon him a share in the holiness of God.'¹⁴⁸

Further,

'Uncreated grace is thus God himself, the goal and ground of those acts which are related to God himself. According to our thesis no particular, categorial object of consciousness is assigned to this grace, which is present rather in transcendent experience. The latter can, however, subsequently be the object of historical and categorial reflection and in fact must be reflected upon, since no transcendent experience is to be found without some complementary historical expression.'¹⁴⁹

And while the reality of the experience of God is affirmed, and thereby excluding atheism, sceptical positivism and the theology of the absolute remoteness of God, nonetheless 'the experience of God' is 'more fundamental than that knowledge of God which can be acquired through the so-called proofs of God's existence... which are the

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp.28-29

⁴⁶ K Rahner, Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace, p.37

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.39

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.40

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.41

outcome of an *a posteriori* process of reasoning as the conceptual objectification of what we call the experience of God;⁵⁰ '[t]he original basic realisation of man's transcendence as mind and freedom toward the mystery that we Christians call God on the one hand and the categorial and verbal, reflective objectification on this basic realisation on the other are never identical....'⁵¹

We have, then, a hermeneutic of understanding which can be termed a 'dialectic between performance and concept,' 'a dialectic between the pre-conceptual non-explicit knowing included unthematically in performance, and the conceptually explicit, thematically formulated knowing.'⁵² More precisely, '[a] dialectic between the act and concept means therefore more exactly a dialectic between the knowledge of being which is implicitly co-affirmed in the act of thinking and the knowledge which is each time expressed in concepts. Since concepts never exhaust being, the awareness of it always points beyond itself.'⁵³ This dialectic has its own circularity. On the one hand, the original self-presence of being, that is, the performance, seeks always to translate itself into concepts so that it can be communicated inter-subjectively. 'Everyone strives to tell another, especially someone he loves, what he is suffering.'⁵⁴ On the other hand, a movement also occurs from concept to experience. 'Reflection, conceptualisation and language have a necessary orientation to that original knowledge, to that original

⁵⁰ idem, The Experience of God today, p.149

⁵¹ idem, Experience of Transcendence, p.177

⁵² E Coreth, Dialectic, p.453

⁵³ E Coreth, Problem and Method, p.416

This dialectic is unlike Hegel's dialectic which is a dialectic between concept and concept. Rather, it is a dialectic in the Fichtean sense 'between the spiritual drive to the Absolute which is the spring of every question and the limited conceptual expression which the answer to each question must receive on the level of explicit, objective knowledge' (G McCool, Philosophical Pluralism and an Evolving Thomism, in Continuum, II, No.1 (Spring), p.14), a dialectic between concept and act, between that which is thought and that which is thinking it.

A comparison may be made with Blondel who views the concept as deriving from a reflection upon living action. However, the concept is insufficient in its comprehension of the fulness of the action. There is the need for a second concept which is opposed to the first but which, nevertheless, is united with the first in the action itself. Yet, even these two concepts, expressing the same action, fail to grasp the full act, and so the need for yet more concepts. Thus there is a constant interaction or dialectic between the concept and the act which always transcends the concept.

⁵⁴ K Rahner, Foundations, p.16

experience in which what is meant and the experience of what is meant are still one.¹⁵⁵ A person tries to experience in his life what he already knows conceptually; he tries to translate his knowledge into lived experience so as to authenticate it. Rahner writes of this transcendental experience,

'We shall call *transcendental* experience, the subjective, unthematic, necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual act of knowledge, and the subject's openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality. It is an experience because this knowledge, unthematic but ever-present, is a moment within and a condition of possibility for every concrete experience of any and every object. This experience is called transcendental experience because it belongs to the necessary and inalienable structure of the knowing subject itself, and because it consists precisely in the transcendence beyond any possible group of possible objects or of categories. Transcendental experience is the experience of transcendence.¹⁵⁶

This experience of transcendence is not only the active transcendence of the subject, co-present in every act of knowledge, but is also the actual transcendence of being as such, to which the subject is open, and which is disclosed through a transcendental reflection. 'Man is the subject of a transcendentality that is limitless. As such he apprehends each of the objects of his knowledge and freedom in a prior awareness, itself not contained within any finite limits, of the original and infinite unity of all possible objects.'¹⁵⁷ But further, and significantly, the transcendence of being to which the subject is open, and which is to be disclosed through a transcendental reflection, is the transcendence of *personal* being. As previously noted with regard to the experience of grace, 'in the ultimate analysis this other must be *personal*.'¹⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp.16-17

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.18

⁵⁷ *idem*, Reflections on Methodology in Theology, p.104

⁵⁸ *idem*, Experience of the Spirit, p.28

3.2 *The Interrogative Relation*

Like Rahner, Blanchot and Levinas recognise the importance of raising the question, but question its privilege and its commerce with Being. Whereas for Rahner the question is ordered towards the unity of the whole within a framework of continuity, Blanchot recognises the disruptive force of the question, which responds to the philosophical demand for discontinuity (*l'exigence de discontinuité*), rather than continuity, and Levinas rejects the ontological nature of the question which always reduces the *who* to a *what*, *quis-nity* to *quiddity*.⁵⁹

For Blanchot, interrogation has been institutionalised in teaching and philosophy, and its fulfilment is found in the unified synthesis which research intends, the university dissertation being its prized model. Yet this institutionalisation of interrogation, whereby it submits to the whole of a course (*cursus*), already charted, was not always the case. Blanchot cites the example of Aquinas whose *Summa* was presented not so much as being built on underlying principles ordered towards a unified whole, but was based rather on the principle of interrogation; so too with Descartes who undertook his research in the *Discourse on Method* by a questioning advance upon the object questioned. One would want to include also in this scenario Rahner himself, whose work does not achieve itself by way of a unified and systematic corpus, but whose *Schriften zur Theologie* are pursued by way of various *Theological Investigations*, and which, as inachieved (*inachevées*), seeks to answer the various, disparate questions of the time,⁶⁰ albeit within a transcendental framework which strains under the effort - but this is our own question being pursued here.

The institutionalisation of philosophy as interrogation began, according to Blanchot, with Socrates, Aristotle and Plato when philosophy as the intelligent conversation (*la conversation intelligente*) prized by Heraclitus, in which the Logos was communicated in the form of *lesson* (*leçon*), gave way to teaching, in which 'la

⁵⁹ See E Levinas, OB, p.27

⁶⁰ When asked whether there might be 'a short formula for what you [i.e. Rahner] propose to accomplish with your theology,' Rahner responded, 'My life work, if we can call it that, has had no plan, proposed in advance, but was strongly influenced by the needs of the day, by the tasks I had as a professor, and so on. If you look at the twenty volumes of my *Theological Investigations*, you will see that they are made up of individual articles, which were mostly lectures originally' (*Karl Rahner in Dialogue*, p.334).

philosophie s'institutionalisée.⁶¹ This institutionalisation continued in Church and State, with the notable exceptions of Pascal, Descartes, Spinoza proving the rule and marking the rupture with the philosophical courses which were current in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Pascal's *Apology* may have offered a structured and coherent discourse for teaching Christian truths, but this discourse, with its double dissonance of thought and death, says Blanchot, unfolded as *dis-cursus*, a '*cours désuni et interrompu*,' and for the first time advanced the idea of the *fragment* as coherence. From this point onwards, says Blanchot, it was writing, not teaching, which became the mode of philosophy, finding its accomplishment in Rousseau in the eighteenth century. Nietzsche went further and, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, thought accomplishes itself by way of separate and separated fragments. The traditional philosophical task of bringing what is disparate together to form an *ensemble* is abandoned. '*Cette noble manière d'être ensemble... est ici refusée*.⁶² When Heidegger, who was essentially a *writer*,⁶³ opened his inaugural lecture (*une leçon inaugurale*) at the University of Friburg in 1929, it was with the question, 'what is metaphysics?'

Now, the fact that Heidegger initiated his course with the question 'what is metaphysics' invites the deeper reflection on the question which Levinas offers. In the opening chapters of *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas presents the Heideggerian schema, also evident in Rahner. Questioning, as a quest for the truth, intends the 'exhibition of being.'⁶⁴ This is possible because '[t]he question, "*what shows itself?*"... is already wholly enveloped with being.'⁶⁵ It is being's correlative. The question 'is ontology, and at the same time has a part in effectuation of the very being it seeks to understand.'⁶⁶ Because it is in the presence of Being, the question is possible; because it does not yet

⁶¹ M Blanchot, *Entretien*, p.2

⁶² *ibid.*, p.3

⁶³ Blanchot writes in a footnote, '*Mais il faut tout de suite l'ajouter, l'un des traits de la philosophie telle qu'elle se manifeste avec Heidegger peut exprimer ainsi: Heidegger est essentiellement un écrivain*' (*Entretien*, p.4).

The point being made, similar to Derrida's criticism of the tradition for view writing in its position of secondarity with respect to the *voice (phone)*, is that, whereas speaking is characterised by the proximity of voice and word, writing is marked by distance, for what is written stands on its own with respect to the writer.

⁶⁴ E Levinas, *OB*, p.23

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.24

fully possess Being, it is necessary. Thus, Levinas points out, 'Being would be not only what is most problematical; it would be what is most intelligible.'⁶⁷

But 'this intelligibility is questionable.'⁶⁸ So, too, is the question about the question of Being, namely, *Dasein* as the *who* of the question. '[E]ach question about the question is more radical still.'⁶⁹ So, too, is the question as the *exhibition* of Being. For, although the manifestation of being is the primary event - '*the very primacy of the primary is in the presence of the present*' - this manifestation 'is discontinuous, and lasts from a question to the response,'⁷⁰ and what is forgotten - radically - in the question, in the movement from question to response, is the *who*, who is taken to be 'the identical subject, allegedly placed in the openness of Being,' yet who is 'the crux of a diachronic plot... between the same and the other.'⁷¹ It is this *who* which must be surprised in the question. The problem with an the ontological analytic of the *who* is that the *who* amounts to a "what?", and the logical supremacy of the "what" which the logos articulates 'lets the "who?" get lost in the "what?'" In asking "'who is this *who*?" it asks "what about this *who*?"⁷² 'Thus,' says Levinas, 'on all sides the privilege of the question "what?", or the ontological nature of the problem is affirmed.'⁷³

Now, Being and cognition do go together, and the question does align them, but '[t]he subject opening to the thought and truth of being... opens upon a way quite different from that which lets the subject be seen as an ontology or an understanding of being. Being would not derive from cognition.... Being and cognition together signify in the proximity of the other and in a certain modality of my responsibility for the other, this response preceding any question, this saying before the said.'⁷⁴ It is this element of a *saying* before the *said* which will need to be reduced, as we hope to show later. The question become the question of the question of Being - subjectivity itself - cannot avoid the fact of the 'intrigue of the other in the same which does not amount to an openness

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.25

⁷² *ibid.*, p.27

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.26

of the other to the same.¹⁷⁵ The significance of subjectivity is not its relation to Being, but its relation to the Other (*autrui*) who eludes ontological confinement. '[S]ubjectivity is the other in the same,'¹⁷⁶ and this is experienced as responsibility. 'The knot tied in subjectivity... signifies an allegiance of the same to the other, imposed before any exhibition of the other, preliminary to all consciousness.... This allegiance will be described as a responsibility of the same for the other, as a response to his proximity before any question.'¹⁷⁷

'Both being and the vision of being refer to a subject that has arisen earlier than being and cognition, earlier than and on this side of them, in an immemorial time.... The "birth" of being in the questioning where the cognitive subject stands would thus refer to a *before the questioning*, to the anarchy of responsibility, as it were on this side of birth. We will try, with the notion of the saying without the said, to expose such a modality of the subjective, an *otherwise than being*.'¹⁷⁸

While questioning seeks a response from being, letting entities be heard,' as it were, what Levinas draws attention to is the need to 'surprise the echo of the saying, whose signification cannot be assembled'¹⁷⁹ ontologically. 'Behind being and its monstration, there is now already heard the resonance of other significations forgotten in ontology, which now solicit our inquiry.'¹⁸⁰ 'It is not ontology that raises up the speaking subject; it is the signifyingness of saying going beyond essence that can justify the exposedness of being, ontology.'¹⁸¹ Again, '[i]t will be possible to show that there is question of the said and being only because saying or responsibility requires justice.'¹⁸² This is yet to be reduced, but nonetheless, Levinas avers 'we suspect that there is in the position in which the folding back of being upon itself, or subjectivity, is produced something else than this reflection....'¹⁸³

Now, the significance of speaking, of *saying*, can be seen, according to Blanchot,

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.25

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.26

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.27

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.38

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*, p.45

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.28

in teaching. Blanchot wishes to demonstrate, however, that the traditional model of teaching, in which the professor occupied his chair to hand down his *cursus* to his pupils, was essentially *dis-cursus*, and that the synthesis he sought to present was actually subverted in the very act of teaching, which has its own original structure, and which rather than being a 'tranquil discursive continuity'⁸⁴ is fundamentally rupture. To teach is to speak, but at the heart of speaking is not simply what is *said* by the master, but the inter-relational space (*l'espace interrelationnel*) which opens up between him and the disciple, a space which refuses any symmetry of presence, any reversibility of relation, and any unified discourse. As Rahner might put it, they relate *asymptotically*. There is and can be no equivalence between master and pupil; between the point occupied by each there is an uncommon distance, an 'infinite distance,' a 'relation of infinity' which separates them like an abyss. The field of relations between them is upturned (*bouleverser*) and what is spoken by the master is offered to the disciple from the point of the 'unknown,' such that to know is to know by measure of the unknown, which is 'to approach things in their familiarity, while preserving their strangeness.'⁸⁵ In other words, the abyss at the core of master-pupil relation is the model of the abyss at the core of interrogation, which is always a knowing-not-knowing. Two consequences follow: firstly, the unknown which research questions is neither subject nor object, for the speech in which the unknown speaks belongs to a relationship of infinitude. '*Le rapport de parole où s'articule l'inconnu est un rapport d'infinité*;⁸⁶ secondly, the relationship is always tangential - which, with Levinas, Blanchot terms 'curvature' (*courbure*) - always by way of approach but, asymptotically, never of making contact, never direct, nor symmetrical nor reversible, never the formation of an *ensemble*, nor the achievement of any contemporaneity whether in time or in place. Asymptotic.

Blanchot, in conversation with himself, notes three different kinds or genre of relation. In the first, 'a mediate relation of dialectical or objective identification,⁸⁷ the human subject craves unity and contests any separation. What presents itself as other is to be incorporated in the identity of the same through struggle in nature and work in

⁸⁴ M Blanchot, *Entretien*, p.8

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.5

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.6

⁸⁷ M Blanchot, IC, p.68; *Entretien*, p.97

history. The second relation, 'a relation demanding immediate unity,'⁸⁸ also demands unity, but obtains it immediately in a relation of coincidence and participation between the self and the absolutely other. The Self and the Other lose themselves in one another: there is ecstasy, fusion, fruition.⁸⁹ The sovereignty of the self (*je*) is surrendered in the face of the sovereignty of the Other who becomes the sole absolute. Yet, in such a participatory relationship, the other is a substitute for the one. It is a third relation, which Blanchot terms the relation of the '*troisième genre*', which is significant.

3.21 *A relation of a third genre*

The third *genre* of relation does not tend towards unity; the One does not constitute the ultimate and continuous horizon. In fact, Blanchot subtitles the section of his essay dealing with with the third *genre* of relation, '*Man without horizon (Homme sans horizon)*.' Further, this third *genre* of relationship, which is a pure interval between one person and an other, relates the self to another person, but not to that other as another myself. The relationship with another is radically outwith my control; he is truly exterior and absolutely outwith my own perspective and horizon; he is not at the centre of another horizon similar to my own which I might map in relation to my own and which I might glimpse. Rather, he turns towards me from a horizon which is wholly his, and, in this sense, with respect to me, the Other can be said to be *a-horizontal*, that is, beyond any perspectival description, and thus beyond the possibility of any horizontal relation. In this sense, says Blanchot, he is 'a being without being, a presence without a present, thus foreign to everything visible and to everything invisible.'⁹⁰ The approach he makes to me, neither seeing nor being seen, is as speech (*parole*), which is at the heart of the third relationship, the relation of the third *genre*, for speech is the relationship with that which remains radically separate, without unity and without equality. As such, any communication with the Other (*Autrui*) is neither a trans-subjective nor intersubjective relation, but inaugurates a relation which is neither from

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.66; (*Entretien*, p.95)

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.69, (*Entretien*, p.98)

Levinas will express this lack of an ontological horizon in terms of the ethical verticality of the relationship with the other who always dwells in the transcendent dimension of height.

subject to subject, nor from subject to object. 'The relation of this *Autrui* to myself is not a relation of subject to subject.'⁹¹ Instead, it is characterised by an interruption of being. '[B]etween man and man there is an interval that would be neither of being nor of non-being, an interval borne by the Difference of speech - a difference preceding everything that is different and everything unique.'⁹² What founds this relationship is no longer proximity but strangeness or foreignness. 'Now what "founds" this third relation, leaving it still unfounded, is no longer proximity - proximity of struggle, of services, of essence, of knowledge, or of recognition, not even of solitude - but rather the *strangeness* between us: a strangeness it will not suffice to characterise as a separation or even as a distance.'⁹³ To reach this point, says Blanchot, is to reach a threshold, which verges on the question of alterity. Who is the Other (*Autrui*)? He is the subjectless other (*autre*), beyond substantiality (for language makes of everything a substance). '*Autrui, c'est donc l'Autre, lorsqu'il n'est pas sujet.*'⁹⁴

Such an understanding of the other beyond subjectivity is at the heart of Levinas' understanding of alterity, and will be developed by him in terms of *illeity*,⁹⁵ as we shall see later. To regard the other person as another subjectivity with whom I can share the mutual comm-*union* of familiarity, as do Buber and Marcel in their characterisation of the inter-personal relationship in terms of a *tutoiement*, is to relativise his alterity by situating it 'within the community of a genus - excluding one another by their definition, but calling for one another by this exclusion, across the community of their genus.'⁹⁶ A relation of inter-subjectivity or trans-subjectivity is a relationship *within* a genus, and already a nullification of alterity. The relation of the third *genre* is a relationship in which '[t]he Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign.'⁹⁷ It is a

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.70, (*Entretien*, p.99)

⁹² *ibid.*, p.69, (*Entretien*, p.99)

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.68, (*Entretien*, p.97)

⁹⁴ M Blanchot, *Entretien*, p.100

⁹⁵ Levinas regards the origin of alterity as *illeity*. For Levinas, the other is not to be dressed or addressed in the familiarity of a *tu* (*tutoiement*), but in the *im*-personality of the *il*. He writes, '*L'illéité de cet Il, n'est pas le "cela" de la chose qui est à notre disposition... L'illéité est l'origine de l'altérité de l'être à laquelle l'"en soi" de l'objectivité participe en le trahissant*'(*HAH*, p.69).

⁹⁶ E Levinas, *TI*, p.194

relationship in which difference is not produced by the differentiation of species with a genus, a relation in which '[t]he difference thus encountered remains bound up with a logical hierarchy it contrasts with, and appears against the ground of the common genus.'⁹⁸ For Levinas, such a specific difference is not truly difference, and certainly not the difference from which speech flows. What is in play here is absolute difference, and the possibility of a relationship, despite Derrida's criticism of the logical incoherence of Levinas' thought of absolute alterity, with what is and remains absolutely other, beyond the commonality of subjectivity and so also outwith any dialectic which would conceive of the other as a negation of the self or the same yet still within the constructive whole of subjectivity. Formal logic balks at the thought of this, yet it is possible in speech for speech 'accomplishes a relation between terms that break up the unity of a genus,'⁹⁹ a relation in which 'the terms, as interlocutors, absolve themselves from the relation, or remain absolute within the relationship.'¹⁰⁰ 'Language is perhaps to be defined as the very power to break the continuity of being or of history.'¹⁰¹ It is eschatological. What Levinas is opposing here is the notion of 'the one great comprehensive event' of history and the notion of 'the irresistible working of historical forces' which is connoted by the term *Geschichte*, and in which the individual is caught up as part of the process.¹⁰² The significance of the interlocutor is that - like the extraordinariness of the eschatological prophet who 'institutes a relation with being *beyond the totality* or beyond history,'¹⁰³ and submits it to judgement - by the 'incomprehensible nature' of his presence, by the very fact of speaking (*le Dire*), he contests the comprehensivity of continuity, and invests being and history with

⁹⁷ ibid.

⁹⁸ ibid.

⁹⁹ ibid., p.195

Levinas writes that the whole of Totality and Infinity 'aims to show a relation with the other not only cutting across the logic of contradiction, where the other of A is the non-A, the negation of A, but also across dialectical logic, where the same dialectically participates and is reconciled with the other in the Unity of the system'(TI, p.150).

¹⁰⁰ ibid., p.195

¹⁰¹ ibid.

¹⁰² See the article History in Encyclopaedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi, K Rahner (ed.), (London: Burns and Oates, 1975), pp.618-635

¹⁰³ E Levinas, TI, p.22

significance by instituting 'a relation with the infinity of being which exceeds the totality.'¹⁰⁴ Within a Christian theological perspective, the power to interrupt history and invest it with a significance beyond itself through a relationship with the incomprehensible Other is surely at the heart of the Incarnation. As W Kaspar puts it, speaking of the theology of history:

'The *starting-point* is the primary mystery of the grace of the self-communication of God to man and hence to history. This has taken place once and for all in Jesus Christ, and will be fully manifested in a real future yet to come. This affirmation about the end of history is necessarily veiled, because it sees the fulfilment as the sovereign act of God, whose mystery cannot be anticipated by human knowledge.'¹⁰⁵

It seems, then, that in our relation with the Other, we deal with what is ungraspable, save for the fact that the Other speaks. Blanchot writes,

'*Autru* speaks to me. The revelation of *autru* that does not come about in the lighted space of forms belongs wholly to the domain of speech. *Autru* expresses himself, and in this speaking proposes himself as other. If there is a relation wherein the other and the same, even while holding themselves in relation, *absolve themselves* of it (being terms that thus remain *absolute* within the relation itself, as Levinas firmly states), this relation is language.'¹⁰⁶

Now, as we said earlier, '*Autru*, *c'est donc l'Autre, lorsqu'il n'est pas sujet*.'¹⁰⁷ For Levinas, the cipher of this Other devoid of a common subjectivity is the 'face' (*visage*), which is the epiphany of the other in its very refusal to be grasped or contained within the same, and this 'occurs only by the opening of a new dimension'¹⁰⁸ which, with Blanchot, we term a third *genre* of relation. The face, of course, is an ambiguous metaphor for the Other, for faces present themselves to us, are distinguishable, but identify what is other than us within a common humanity. Faces indicate a specific difference between the self and the other. Hence the confusion and hesitation when the difference in the face is not specific enough to identify one specific other but results in mistaken identity. But to view the face of the other in such a way, that is, as indicating a specific difference, is for Levinas, to overlook the real significance of the face. For

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.23

¹⁰⁵ W Kaspar, *The Theology of History*, in *Encyclopaedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, K Rahner (ed.), p.633

¹⁰⁶ M Blanchot, IC, p.55; *Entretien*, p.79

¹⁰⁷ *idem*, *Entretien*, p.100

¹⁰⁸ E Levinas, TI, p.197

although a face may present another to us, it presents another without giving the other to us. The face is a presence, but it is present as a 'refusal to be contained.'¹⁰⁹ The other whose face I see remains other than his face, is beyond any phenomenology. Levinas, responding to a question on the phenomenology of the face, speaks:

'I do not know if one can speak of a "phenomenology" of the face, since phenomenology describes what appears. So, too, I wonder if one can speak of a look turned toward the face, for the look is knowledge, perception. I think rather that access to the face is straightaway ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as towards an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the colour of his eyes! When one observes the colour of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that.'¹¹⁰

When it manifests itself, the face breaks through its own plastic image.

*'Sa présence consiste à se dévêtir de la forme qui cependant déjà le manifestait. Sa manifestation est un surplus sur la paralysie inévitable de la manifestation.... le visage parle. La manifestation du visage est le premier discours. Parler, c'est, avant toutes choses, cette façon de venir de derrière son apparence, de derrière sa forme, une ouverture dans l'ouverture.'*¹¹¹

The visitation of the face is not the unmasking of a world. In the concreteness of the world, the face is abstract or naked. It is denuded of its own image, detached from its form. The face enters into our world from a sphere absolutely foreign, from an absolute. Its significance is literally *extra*-ordinary, outwith all order, and every world. In short, the face is that aspect of the Other wherein the Other offers himself as absolute and wholly other mystery.

The face is the transcendent other proximate to me in his difference and distance: '[i]n the visage (*visage*) whereby it offers itself to me openly, in the frankness

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.194

¹¹⁰ *idem*, *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, R Cohen (tr.) Pittsburgh (Duquense University Press), 1985, pp.85-86.

One can trace this thought in Rahner also. Speaking of the theology of the Incarnation, Rahner notes the mystery which is the other person, and that '[t]hat which is *absolutely* unseen and *wholly* other is not appropriated by the free act, when it aims at definite and limited objects' (K Rahner, *On the Theology of the Incarnation*, in TI, IV, p.119). The definite description of the Other is not the object of our love, but the mystery which, beyond the plastic image, offers itself to our gaze.

¹¹¹ E Levinas, HAH, p.51

of a gaze, in the nakedness of an approach that nothing prevents, it is presence itself.¹¹² Blanchot comments that, for Levinas, the face - and the very word, he says, is difficult - is not simply an aspect of the body. Rather, by his face the other, already beyond a common world, becomes visible. Yet in his visibility, and this is the essential thing, he remains outwith the possibility of subjective domination, absolutely other than the I and other to the I, and always in excess of any subjective representation, or form, image or view or idea which I can affirm. The face is the other radically freed from my power. 'In front of the visage, Levinas emphasises, *I am no longer able ("je ne puis plus pouvoir")*.'¹¹³ Even to the point of killing. The relationship with the face, at first ethical rather than ontological or epistemological, is from the outset an obligation, which is summed up in the biblical injunction, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Blanchot reflects upon Cain's murder of Abel in the book of Genesis which can be considered as the archetypal affirmation of the self and refusal of the other. Cain could not accommodate Abel within his own framework. Although brothers, Cain could not accept Abel in his alterity as neighbour, who called him to ethical responsibility, and so the only remaining option is to kill, thus removing Abel's intrusive presence which disturbs his own 'order of things.' Reflecting on this passage from Genesis, Blanchot notes that

'Cain killing Abel is the self that, coming up against the transcendence of *autrui* (what in the other exceeds me absolutely ...), attempts to confront it by resorting to the transcendence of murder.

- But are these two transcendences of the same order? And what can their conflict mean? Cain says to Abel: your dimension as infinite and absolutely exterior, that by which you claim to surpass me, that which puts you beyond my reach - I will show you that I am its master; for as a man of power, I am master also of the absolute and I have made death into my possibility.

- This is because Abel's infinite presence stands in Cain's way like a thing that is thus truly a thing belonging to Abel and of which Cain must deprive him. And in a sense, this is not false: this presence is also Abel's good fortune, the blessing, the flock that multiplies. As soon as the presence of the other in *autrui* is not received by me as the movement through which the infinite comes to me, as soon as this presence closes around *autrui* as a property of *autrui* established in the world, as soon as it ceases to give rise to speech, the earth ceases to be vast enough to contain at the same time *autrui* and myself, and it is necessary that one of the two reject the other - absolutely.¹¹⁴

¹¹² M Blanchot, IC, p.54; *Entretien*. p.77

¹¹³ *ibid.*; (*Entretien*, p.78)

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.61; *Entretien*, pp.86-87

In other words, 'we have to say that man, when facing another, has no choice but to speak or to kill.'¹¹⁵ For, if '[p]eace is produced as [the] aptitude for speech,' war and killing flow from the fact that, although people can speak, they 'lend their lips to the anonymous utterance of history.'¹¹⁶

To sum up, Blanchot recognises a relationship of a third *genre* whose *genre* is language and writing. This is not an abstract relation; rather, in it, the one is never comprehended by the other, nor forms with him an *ensemble*, nor a duality, nor a possible unity; instead, the one is foreign to the other, without this distance privileging either the one or the other. Such a relationship can be called neutral (*neutre*), indicating that it cannot be grasped either in affirmation or in denial, and demanding of language the possibility of a saying which says without either saying 'being' or denying it. Such a neutral relation of one to the other, a '*rapport sans rapport*', is doubly dissymmetrical.¹¹⁷ It arises within a non-isomorphic field whereby the distance between point A and point B is not the same as the distance between point B and point A - a distance which excludes reciprocity, but presents a curvature. As Levinas expresses it '[t]he curvature of space expresses the relation between human beings.'¹¹⁸ While it is easy to focus on

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ E Levinas, TI, p.23

¹¹⁷ cf. M Blanchot, *Entretien*, p.104

¹¹⁸ Blanchot recalls that it was Levinas 'who gave this turn of speech its determinant signification'. Cf. IC, p.441, VII, n.1; *Entretien*, p.104, n.1

Elsewhere, comparing the geometries of Euclid and Riemann, he notes that the dialogical relationship between two people has often been conceived in terms of straight-line geometry and on the same plane such that relations are direct and remain symmetrical. He continues, however, 'But let us suppose that the field of relations rests upon some anomaly analogous to what physicists would call a curvature of the universe; that is, a distortion preventing any possibility of symmetry and introducing between things, and particularly between man and man, a relation of infinity.'

Let us suppose with regard to this spatial knot, this point of abrupt density, this polarisation, this fundamental irregularity that hollows out and swells extension and duration in such a way that there would be nothing equal in them, and nothing simply unequal either - let us suppose that it falls to speech not to reduce it, not to turn away from it by declaring it unsayable, but rather to present it, that is (just the same), give it form. Yes, let us suppose this, and let us agree to acknowledge the full reach of the exigency that is given to us by this supposition. First of all, that to speak is certainly to bring the other back to the same in a search for a mediating speech; but it is also, first of all, to seek to receive the other as other and the foreign as foreign; to seek *autrui*, therefore, in their irreducible difference, in their infinite strangeness, an empty strangeness, and such that an essential discontinuity can retain the affirmation proper

the two terms of the relation, it is the relation itself - which Levinas will express in terms of responsibility for-the-Other - which is important for the Other who participates in this *genre* of relation is no longer one of the terms; but, while he is proximate in nothing other than the relation itself, he is other than the relation. Here, a double contradiction needs to be thought: to think of the Other as the infinite of a relation without terms, and as the infinite terminal point of a term without relation.

Now, it is precisely on this point of the irreversibility of the relation across the interval that Levinas disagrees with Buber. Buber acknowledges that the self is not a substance but a relation. There is no event of pure subjectivity because the self (*je*), in the totality of its situation, is 'already transcendence' and finds itself in an encounter with a personal other (*tu*), which leads, not back to the subject, but to the event of *being*. This interval between the two ('*l'entre-les-deux*', *Zwischen*) is not a geometric or intersidereal space but is the *je-tu* encounter in its particularity. Buber's ontology is founded on this interval - '*la notion de l'entre-les-deux fonctionne comme la catégorie fondamentale de l'être*'¹¹⁹ - and, since the interval arises in the inter-personal encounter, presents itself as an anthropology. Levinas quotes Buber's affirmation of the ontological necessity of the other for subjectivity: '*Ce n'est pas par un rapport avec soi-même mais par un rapport avec un autre soi-même, que l'homme peut être complet.*'¹²⁰ The relation between the self and the other is not simply a psychology, but an ontology. Further, the relation can also be considered a relation of true knowledge because it acknowledges the alterity of the *Tu*. '*La tentative de Buber consiste à maintenir dans la relation Je-Tu l'altérité radicale du Tu dans la liaison précisément: le Je n'y absorbe pas le Tu comme un objet, ni ne s'absorbe en lui extatiquement.*'¹²¹ And, '*La relation Je-Tu est une relation avec ce qui demeure absolu malgré la relation.*'¹²²

However, Levinas has some objections. He asks, on the one hand, how it can be possible to maintain the specificity of the I-Thou relation without valuing the strictly

to it.... It is to this Difference that we are initially turned...' (Blanchot, IC, p.81-82; *Entretien*, p.115).

¹¹⁹ E Levinas, *Nommes Propres*, p.31

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, quoting from Buber's Collected works, *Dialogisches Leben* (Zurich: Gregor Müller, 1947, p.399)

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.32

¹²² *ibid.*, p.33

ethical sense of responsibility which, for Levinas, is disinterested with respect to the Other, and, on the other hand, how it can be possible to value this ethical sense without placing in question the reciprocity which Buber always insists upon, for ethics always begins when the I relates to another which is *above* itself, a-horizontal.

It is to the reciprocity of the I-Thou in Buber and his failure to recognise an *essential* dissymmetry,¹²³ that Levinas addresses his principal criticism. Buber uses ethical themes often, but he describes the I-Thou encounter in the more abstract structure of distance and relation. Levinas wonders whether the dialogical relation with the alterity of the Other (*Autrui*) can be described without taking note of the paradoxical difference of level between the I and the Thou. The originality of the relation between the I and the Thou in Buber is that it takes its point of departure from the I who accomplishes it, and whose place therefore is interchangeable with that of the Thou. If I become I in saying 'Thou,' then I hold the place of what is co-related to me, and the I-Thou relationship then resembles any other relationships, which raises the question of ipseity. The formality of the encounter in Buber makes both terms of the relationship indifferently interchangeable. But, in a truly ethical encounter, the relationship between the I and the Thou, what distinguishes the I from the Thou, is the dimension of height which breaks with the formalism of Buber. What Buber has done is attempt to qualify the relationship with alterity in a wholly formal way rather than qualify alterity itself. In reflecting on the interval and the *Relation*, Buber has failed to take *separation* seriously. '*L'homme n'est pas seulement la categorie de la distance et de la rencontre, il est aussi un être à part.*'¹²⁴

¹²³ Levinas writes in a letter to Buber of 11 March 1963 that his objection is guided by the idea that the Relation is '*essentially* dissymmetrical' (*Nommes Propres*, p.46).

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.42

3.22 *Discontinuity*

Returning to Blanchot, it would seem that dissymmetry and irreversibility give rise to two demands for a resolution of the problem, the first being 'the demand for absolute continuity and a language that might be called spherical,' first evidenced in Parmenides;¹²⁵ the second, which is opposed to this, is 'the exigency of a discontinuity that is more or less radical, the discontinuity of a literature of fragments,'¹²⁶ which persists in Heraclitus, the Platonic dialogues, Pascal, Nietzsche, Georges Bataille, and René Char. The first, the language of continuity, the official language of philosophy, took its origin in Aristotle, the father of the Western onto-theological tradition, and exalts logical coherence, reducing it to the three principles of identity, non-contradiction and the excluded middle. Yet, though Aristotle's thought might seem to present a unified and unifying unity, his writing, Blanchot notes, was neither continuous or coherent, but is a badly unified ensemble, put together by his editors.¹²⁷ Continuity proper was only achieved in Hegel's system, which managed to bring together being and nothingness in a dialectical relation, thereby including discontinuity as part of the process towards continuity. Yet, says Blanchot, this systematic dominance of synthesis and reconciliation pays insufficient regard to the part played by the strand of discontinuity. Because being and its contradiction are simply opposed, they are already too close to one another, like 'two enemies already bound in a relation of unity,'¹²⁸ whereas between the 'unknown' and the familiar the difference is infinite. Rather than the harmony of the whole, the language of discontinuity speaks of interruption and rupture, difference and tension. There is a demand for discontinuity, for discontinuity is at the core of language.

Building on the notion of teaching as communication, the sense of interruption and discontinuity can be appreciated if the dynamics of dialogue are considered. When two people are in conversation, they do not speak together, but each in his own turn. One says something then stops, then the other speaks and stops. Discourse is sequential and interrupted, not continuous. The fact that speech must necessarily pass from one to

¹²⁵ M Blanchot, IC, p.6; *Entretien*, p.6

¹²⁶ M Blanchot, IC, p.6; *Entretien*, p.6

¹²⁷ W.D.Ross points out that '[t]he *Metaphysics* as a whole expresses not a dogmatic system but the adventures of a mind in its search for truth' (Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Vol 1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, p.lxxvii).

¹²⁸ M Blanchot, IC, p.8; *Entretien*, p.8

another shows the necessity of interval. The power to speak interrupts itself, and although this interruption may seem to play a subservient role, in reality it bears with itself the very enigma of language: the attentive pause is significant for it enables language. The one who speaks incessantly closes in on himself, and engages in terrible self-enclosed monologue. Interruption permits exchange. *'S'interrompre pour s'entendre, s'entendre pour parler.'*¹²⁹ In other words, discontinuity assures the continuity of understanding.

The significance of this interruption can be pursued in two directions: firstly, says Blanchot, there is the *'arrêt-intervalle'*, comparable to the ordinary pause which allows the one-after-another of conversation. This discontinuity is essential, since it promotes exchange, but relative - quite simply, one must breathe. *'Elle est la respiration du discours.'*¹³⁰ *'S'interrompre pour s'entendre.'*¹³¹ But, there is another, second kind of interruption, more enigmatic and weightier, which introduces an expectation which is the measure of the irreducible distance between two interlocutors. In interrelational space, communication with another person can take various forms. The other can be considered as an objective possibility within the world and related to objectively; or, he can be considered as another myself, who, though possibly different, is first identical, and thus equally capable of speaking in the first person; or, thirdly, he can be related to immediately rather than through the mediacy of impersonal comprehension, each thus claiming to lose themselves in each other or to draw close to each other in the proximity of an intimacy (*'tutoiement'*) which wipes out any distance. These three modes of relation have a common support, namely, 'the fact that all three tend toward unity: the "I" wants to annex the other (identify the other with itself) by making of it its own thing, or by studying it as a thing, or, yet again, in wanting to find in it another myself, whether this be through free recognition or through the instantaneous union of two souls.'¹³² But there is another mode of relation which does not have unity as its goal, and where common ground with the other is not sought. What is at issue here is the essential and absolute distance (*'étrangeté'*) between the self and the other, the idea of an infinite

¹²⁹ M Blanchot, *Entretien*, p.107

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p.108

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² M Blanchot, IC, p.77; *Entretien*, p.108

separation, fissure, and interval which leaves him infinitely outwith me, but which, nonetheless, in this very interruption of being, founds my relation with him. It is a relationship with an alterity which is not 'for me,' an alterity which is not another me, nor another existence, nor a modality or a moment of universal existence, nor a 'surexistence' (God or non-god), but is the unknown in his infinite distance. Such an alterity can be named the 'neutral.'

3.3 *The Neutral Turn, or Illeity*

The 'neutral' is articulated by Levinas in terms of 'illeity.' When the personal other approaches us as 'tu,' it is to 'il' that we relate. The proximity of *tutoiement* remains with horizon of the I, but the face of the other does not speak to us from a simple canvas nor from another world behind our own world. '*L'"au-delà" est précisément au-delà du "monde"*.'¹³³ He is beyond any unveiling and transcends all knowledge, whether symbolic or signified - '*Ni semblable, ni dissemblable, ni identique, ni non-identique.*' Wyschogrod notes that what the face opens is 'a personal order irreducible to rational discourse or to the world of need,' 'a third person' who has 'withdrawn into an irreversible past' which is designated as "illeity",¹³⁴ '[a] neologism formed with *il* (he) or *ille*.'¹³⁵ It is this perduring trace of illeity which is 'the origin of alterity'¹³⁶ in the other, the foundation of all other 'seeming alterity' which 'assures the condition of possibility of ethics as the very possibility of the beyond.'¹³⁷ In other words, illeity ensures the irreducibility of the other to a theme of discourse or the satisfaction of a need by ensuring that the relationship with him is a relationship of transcendence. The face, thereby, is 'always open,' beyond definition, for it takes its origin *in* the trace of illeity,

¹³³ E Levinas, HAH, p.62

¹³⁴ Edith Wyschogrod, op. cit., p.147

¹³⁵ E Levinas, OB, pp.12-13

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p.150; cf. Emmanuel Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1988), p.201 (Hereafter, DEHH)

¹³⁷ Marc Faessler, *L'Intrigue Du Tout-Autre, Dieu dans la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas* in *Les Cahiers de La Nuit Surveillée: Emmanuel Levinas*, Jacques Rolland (ed.), (Lagrasse: Editions Verdier, 1984), p.141

and thereby betrays the objectivity and alterity of the plastic image which I can form.¹³⁸ The face breaks the mould for the radical exteriority - the illeity - of the other which is 'refractory to disclosure and manifestation'¹³⁹ confronts comprehension with its own insufficiency. For Levinas, the face in its illeity, beyond disclosure and manifestation, is 'by itself visitation and transcendence'¹⁴⁰ and 'visits like the dawn from on high.'

The face is abstract, but not a logical abstraction. The face is naked; it has no form in which to present itself. It does not indicate. *'Atrui est un pur trou dans le monde. Il procède de l'absolument Absent.'*¹⁴¹ The relationship with the face signifies a relationship with absolutely absent which does not reveal the absent. Revelation and dissimulation have no place here. But there is a third path, that of the significance of the trace. *'L'au-delà dont vient le visage signifie comme trace. Le visage est dans la trace de l'Absent absolument révolu, absolument passé, retiré... dans... "profond jadis, jadis jamais assez" (Paul Valéry)....'*¹⁴² The face signifies the trace of the other with whom we enter into relation outwith any representable time, a relationship of diachrony. The face signifies the *'au-delà de l'être'*. The personal order to which the face obliges us lies beyond being; it is otherwise than being, and this otherwise than being is a third person whose profile is *'il'*, and who is not defined by ipseity. The possibility of this third direction of irrectitude escapes the polarity of immanence and transcendence. What is *au-delà* is the *illeity* of the third person, which expresses inexpressible irreversibility. Illeity is not less than being; it escapes ontology.

While we relate to illeity in the significance of the trace, as a signifying without appearing, we have to approach it through a third way, for the trace is not like any other sign, although it plays the same role as a sign. Signs refer to people who are absent, and we follow them like the detective who seeks the evidence of presence. The trace, though, unlike other signs, relates to irrepresentable presence, beyond all intention and project. The trace breaks up the ontological order of the world. Its original significance is that it seeks to erase the signs of its having been present, like the thief who leaves a

¹³⁸ E Levinas, DEHH, p.202

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *idem*, HAH, p.63, quoting Sartre.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p.64

sign of his presence in the very act of removing signs. In this sense, all signs are traces. They point to a past. *'Dans la trace a passé un passé absolument révolu.'*¹⁴³ *'La trace est l'insertion de l'espace dans le temps, le point où le monde s'incline vers un passé et un temps.'*¹⁴⁴ And this time is essentially diachronic, a time characterised by the withdrawal of the other from being and from the ontological distinction between Being and beings, for the *il* is absolute. Properly speaking the illeity of the other, as trace, has never been there but is always past. *'La trace comme trace ne mène pas seulement vers le passé, mais est la passe même vers un passé plus éloigné que tout passé et que tout avenir, lesquels se rangent encore dans mon temps - vers le passé de l'Autre où se dessine l'éternité - passé absolu qui réunit tous les temps.'*¹⁴⁵

Now this talk of illeity, which would seem to be in the order of speculative philosophy, is not without significance in the practical and ethical order. For example, Richard McCormack, in his 1974 'Notes on Moral Theology', draws attention to 'an excellent article' by Albert Outler which, in the context of the abortion debate, 'rejects as arbitrary all "magic moment theories" as to when the defenseless deserve to be defended.'¹⁴⁶ Outler rejects as a prolongation of the body-soul dualism the attempt to ascertain the "moment" at which personhood can be claimed. Instead, notes McCormack, Outler 'sees terms such as "person," "personality," "personhood," and "self" as code words for a transempirical or self-transcending reality... [which]... is not a *part* of the human organism nor is it inserted into a process of organic development at some magic moment. "It is the human organism oriented towards its transcendental matrix."¹⁴⁷ This question as to what constitutes the "person" is one that constantly infiltrates philosophical and theological debate, and ever more pressingly in the light of

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.67

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp.68-69

¹⁴⁶ Richard McCormack, *Notes on Moral Theology, 1965-1980*, (Washington: University Press of America, 1981), pp.499-500. The article in question is by Albert C Outler, *The Beginnings of Personhood: Theological Considerations*, Perkins Journal 27 (1973), pp.28-34

For a fuller discussion of the ethical significance of illeity see my article, [The Ethical Significance of Illeity \(Levinas\)](#), in [Heythrop Journal](#), 37, 2 (April, 1996), pp.125-38.

¹⁴⁷ R McCormack, *op. cit.*, p.500

the increasingly complex developments which medical technology offers to medical ethics for consideration and which raise questions of life from its very inception to its extinction. Is the foetus to be considered a person? Is the child with a severe mental handicap capable of a relationship? Is the young adult, victim in a car accident and now lost to the conscious world, worthy of care? Is the spouse, companion for half a century and lost in Alzheimer's disease - no longer the person he or she once was - to be abandoned? Or is there still someone there who, in their very wordlessness, beckons us to responsibility? Such questions often seek the assurance of objective criteria by which the state and the status - the essence - of personhood can be adjudged. But perhaps the question needs to be asked in a more radical manner. When we relate to others, what is it we are actually relating to? When the objective and, in some way quantifiable marks fail the test of personhood, does the relationship thereby falter and fail, or is it possible that, from the beginning, the relationship is inaugurated and sustained by something, the essence of which is other than the image, and remains in the realm of the unknown and yet to be discovered, but ever beyond disclosure? When, after a lifetime, dialogue and discovery is still possible in a relationship, why should this be? Is it not the case that personal relationships have their origin beyond the *persona* in which the other is clothed, in the illeity which founds alterity? Ultimately, the quest to articulate the defining characteristics of "personhood" must fail, for the relationship with the other takes its origin in, and is constituted and sustained by something that goes beyond the *phenomenon* of the other and resides in the neutrality of what Levinas terms 'illeity,' and which, as Outler correctly indicates, is to be considered as 'a transempirical or self-transcending reality.' With respect to such illeity, understood as the other person in his neutrality and divested of the form in which his subjectivity has become clothed, knowledge, understood as comprehensive mastery, provides an inadequate first tool to moderate the relationship and the response we make within the relationship, for the relationship is straightaway ethical. It is not so much the case that knowledge dictates the moral judgements that we make in respect of others, but rather that the ethical relationship with the other, which calls for a response, should guide the progress of understanding. As Levinas aptly puts it, 'Philosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love.'¹⁴⁸

Now, the illeity of the *il* is the origin of the alterity of being, and its neutral

¹⁴⁸

E Levinas, OB, pp.161-162

presence distorts the relational field, preventing any direct communication or tendency towards unity. It is not simply a reduction to silence to allow the other to speak, which nonetheless remains dialectical and has the accomplishment of unity in view, but is rather a fundamental change in the form or structure of language, such that to speak or write, 'is to cease thinking solely with a view to unity, and to make the relations of words an essentially dissymmetrical field governed by discontinuity.'¹⁴⁹ Both these interruptions, corresponding to a dialectical and a non-dialectical demand, have an ambiguous relation to each other: falling silent to allow the other to speak is only a pause in the first degree, but already, in its alternance, it enables the work of interruption by which the unknown is indicated; that is, the pause allows exchange; the waiting measures the infinite distance.

The difficulty, says Blanchot, then becomes one of recognising the plural force of language, whereby a plural word (*parole plurielle*) can be uttered which is founded, neither on equality or inequality, nor on dominance and subordination, nor reciprocal mutuality, but on dissymmetry and irreversibility - in other words, how language constitutes a relation of infinity. The real question is the question of recognising how disruption overturns the continuity of speech or of writing, but, more profoundly, of recognising, in the question, interruption as meaning, and rupture as form ('*l'interruption comme sens et la rupture comme forme*').¹⁵⁰ Blanchot remarks that 'any language where it is a matter of questioning rather than responding is a language already interrupted - even more, a language wherein everything begins with the decision (or the distraction) of an initial void.'¹⁵¹ This leads Blanchot to conclude that human existence has more to do to with the demand for discontinuity than with the demand for unity. The received philosophical wisdom has always been a concern with unity, but, for Blanchot, the real question is the question of discontinuity. Man is 'a non-unitary possibility.'¹⁵² 'It means that, through man, that is, not through him but through the knowledge he bears, and first of all through the exigency of speech that is in advance always already written, it may be that an entirely different relation announces itself - a relation that

¹⁴⁹ M Blanchot, IC, p.77; *Entretien*, p.110

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.8; (*Entretien*, p.9)

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵² *idem*, *Entretien*, p.11

challenges the notion of being as continuity or as a unity or gathering of beings; a relation that would except itself from the problematic of being and would pose a question that is not one of being. Thus, in this questioning, we would leave dialectics, but also ontology.¹⁵³ In a footnote he writes that '[w]hen it is supposed (most often implicitly) that the "real" is continuous, and that only knowledge or expression would introduce discontinuity, it is first of all forgotten that the "continuous" is no more than a model, a theoretical form that, through this forgetting, passes for pure experience, pure empirical affirmation. But the "continuous" is itself only an ideology that is ashamed of itself (*une idéologie honteuse d'elle-même*)....'¹⁵⁴ Then quoting J Vuillemin, 'the infinite is the genus of which the continuous is a species.'¹⁵⁵

3.4 The Ultimate Question

What then *is* the deepest question, *La question la plus profonde*? According to Heidegger, it is the question of Being, which is the widest, deepest and most fundamental of questions.¹⁵⁶ Blanchot, however, questions the origin of the concern to question and the dignity which is accorded to this question. Questioning searches to the foundations of all things, but, beyond all things, the question's passion is directed towards a single central question or the question of *all* (*tout*). It is the question of the whole (*la question d'ensemble*) which embraces all questions. This would seem to be Rahner's approach - the question as the only 'must' which refuses to go away and which intends being in its totality. To question is to move towards the horizon of every question; it is to place in question the possibility of questioning through partial or particular questions, even though every question is in actuality a particular question posed from a particular position. The question, then, is that movement in which what is indeterminate holds itself back in the determination of the question, where what is not known proposes itself in the known as not known. 'A question is movement, the

¹⁵³ idem, IC, pp.9-10; (*Entretien*, p.11)

¹⁵⁴ ibid., p.437, n.7; (*Entretien*, p.11, n.1)

¹⁵⁵ ibid., p.437; (*Entretien*, p.11, n.1), quoting from J Vuillemin, *La philosophie de l'algèbre*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962)

¹⁵⁶ cf. M Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp.1-9

question of everything is a totality of movement and movement of everything.¹⁵⁷ But, there is the need for something other than the question, for the question is not everything, but only a part. The question is essentially partial; it remains unachieved. It is 'incomplete speech' (*'parole inachevée'*). 'Through the question we give ourselves the thing and we give ourselves the void that permits us not to have the it yet, or to have it as desire.'¹⁵⁸ The question is akin to desire, a possessing not-possessing. 'The question is the desire of thought.'¹⁵⁹

Now, although the question is 'incomplete speech', the response which it evokes never does it justice, for although the question is an opening, the answer is always a closure which, once given, destroys the plenitude of possibility which the question opens. 'The answer is the question's misfortune, its adversity (*La réponse est le malheur de la question*).'¹⁶⁰ Between the question and the answer there is a 'strange relation,' as Levinas indicates when drawing attention to the discontinuity of manifestation in the movement from question to response, the need to radicalise the question by reducing the significance of the *who* who questions. In the response, the question fails to pursue itself; instead, the answer ends and encloses the question. Although the question awaits an answer, the answer fails to satisfy it, for, even if it brings it to an end, it does not extinguish the waiting which is the question of the question, the 'essence of the question' which is not extinguished by the response.

What, then, does the question place in question? Whereas Heidegger speaks of a 'questioning advance' on Being,¹⁶¹ and Rahner views Being as the absolute horizon which is intended by the question, Blanchot wishes to make the point that the question does not so much interrogate Being as place Being itself - as the object of the question - in question. Indeed, as access to Being, the question is outwith Being, as Levinas has shown in his reflection on the phenomenological access to Being as part of the meaning of Being. In dialectical thinking, he says, the most fundamental question is a moment in the question of the whole which contextualises the dialectic, whether that whole is the

¹⁵⁷ M Blanchot, IC, p.12; (*Entretien*, p.13)

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*; (*Entretien*, p.14)

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.13; (*Entretien*, p.15)

¹⁶¹ M Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, p.19

question of God, or of Being, or of the ontological difference between Being and beings. But, even here, this is not the final question but a return to a beginning, for the epistemological thrust of the question finds that, in advancing on its ultimate object, it arrives back at the ontological origin which initially inspired it. The question of meaning and the question of being are thus inextricably and dialectically linked. Each calls for the other in the circularity of transcendental reflection. Thus it is, in a transcendental dialectic, that the starting point does not really matter, for, whatever is questioned, there is the presupposition of being already and always¹⁶² in the presence of the totality. 'Today every question is already the question of everything.'¹⁶³ Yet, says Blanchot, it is being itself which is placed in question and at risk. While Rahner, following Heidegger, advances the preoccupation of metaphysics beyond beings (*Seiendes*) to the question of Being (*Sein*) as such, Blanchot notes that the real significance of the *Seinsfrage* is that it is a question which places Being itself in question. One sees this, observes Blanchot, in the tendency of Germanic languages to 'promote' the verb in the interrogative form, something lost in French. Thus, '*Le ciel est bleu*' becomes interrogatively '*Le ciel est-il bleu?*' whereas 'The sky is blue' becomes '*Is the sky blue?*' and '*Der Himmel ist blau*,' '*Ist der Himmel blau?*' This is the significance of the question: by bringing being to the fore the possibility of its dissolution or suspension is given. The question is not simply the question of the meaning of Being, as in Heidegger's *Seinsfrage*, or 'the transcendental question, which does not merely place something asked about in question, but the one questioning and the question itself, and thereby absolutely everything.'¹⁶⁴ Rather, and more fundamentally, in the question, Being itself is questioned as to its own possibility or not. Is the question of Being the widest, deepest, and most fundamental of questions? As Blanchot says, 'when we arrive at the end-point that is the question of everything, this question once again dissimulates itself in the question of knowing whether the question of the whole is the most profound.'¹⁶⁵

The most profound question, then, is not the question of Being, nor is it the question of the whole. There remains, behind being and the totality it forms, another

¹⁶² As Blanchot writes, *toujours déjà*.

¹⁶³ M Blanchot, IC, p.16; (*Entretien*, p.19)

¹⁶⁴ K Rahner, SW, p.60

¹⁶⁵ M Blanchot, IC, p.15; (*Entretien*, p.18)

question which is not asked, which is kept in reserve, and this question, the most fundamental question, is 'the question of the neutral (*la question du neutre*),' which does not intend the unity and identity of the whole, but like a question raised in panic or in the depths of flight - a panic question (*question panique*) which intends no goal or object other than the fleeing itself - intends what is other than the 'all' (*l'autre que tout*), 'what is absolutely other and has no place in the whole,'¹⁶⁶ and affirms the Wholly Other where there is no longer any possibility of a return to the same.

But to question what is other than the whole is to question more than we are able to question, and to question more than the question of Being. The question is never finally accomplished, not because there is always more within the totality of being to question, but because the question relates us to the infinite; or, in terms of the Other (*autrui*), to the neutrality of illeity which, invested with no form, the question cannot lay hold of to divest. Within the question there is an excess which exceeds necessarily the power of questioning, and which confronts the one who questions with the impossibility of his own question, revealing 'the question as the impossibility of questioning.'¹⁶⁷ 'In the profound question, impossibility questions.'¹⁶⁸ Every question which opens on to the whole finds its closure and fulfilment in the answer, which in turn opens on to a further *ensemble* of questions which also find fulfilment in the response. But, the question which questions what is other than the whole and beyond the totality, the question which is asked in the face of infinity, is a question which is asked by way of 'a detour that diverts questioning from being able to be a question, and from being able to bring about an answer,'¹⁶⁹ for this question relates us to that which withdraws from all questioning and exceeds all power of questioning.

'Questioning places us in relation with what evades every question and exceeds all power of questioning. Questioning is the very attraction of this detour. What shows itself in the questioning of the profound question, even as it slips away in the detour of speech, is that which

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.19; (*Entretien*, p.25)

In a long footnote, Blanchot points that his remarks on the question may only have succeeded in making clear that there is a question other than the question of the whole accomplished in dialectical thinking, and that this question should not be confounded with the problematic of being (*Entretien*, p.32, n.1).

¹⁶⁷ *idem*, *Entretien*, p.27

¹⁶⁸ *idem*, IC, p.20; (*Entretien*, p.27)

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.21; (*Entretien*, p.28)

cannot be seized by an affirmation, nor refused by a negation, nor raised up to possibility by interrogation, nor restored to being through a response. *It is speech as detour*. Questioning is this detour that speaks as a detour of speech.¹⁷⁰

3.5 Summary

Rahner privileges the question as the starting point of his transcendental enquiry, and proceeds to expose its conditions of possibility through a transcendental reflection. Ultimately, the supreme transcendental condition of possibility is absolute being which is demanded by and sustains the dynamism of the spirit.

Whereas Kant's transcendental reflection was formal and static, Rahner, following Maréchal, focuses on the act or performance (*Vollzug*) of knowledge which shows itself to be a constant movement of transcendence. Thus, although the ontology which sustains Rahnerian epistemology is one in which Being and knowing are essentially related, nonetheless, the finite spirit is less to be understood in terms of self-presence, but rather, and more primordially, as transcendence towards what is other than the subject, towards the alterity of exteriority.

Theologically, the relation with alterity is experienced in the proximity of grace, in which God communicates himself to the essentially open and receptive subject, while remaining himself uncompromised by his offer.

Now, this paradoxical relation of proximity and distance in grace finds philosophical articulation in Levinas who stresses the absolution of the terms of the relation from the relation. The Other to whom the self relates is, with respect to the self, infinite and unencompassable. In fact, so infinitely distanced is the Other from the same that the Other does not constitute a horizon for the activity of the same. Horizons relate to a focal point which projects them. The Other, absolute with respect to the Same, maintains himself, beyond any horizontality of relation, in a position of verticality and metaphysical height. This, says Levinas, is the true meaning of transcendence.

Now, for Levinas, the horizon of understanding against which the philosophical tradition has operated has always been Being. Hence, the deepest, widest and most fundamental philosophical question, as Heidegger indicates, has always been the question of the meaning of Being. Absolute alterity, however, finds its meaning in an

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

absolution from Being. Thus the need, as Blanchot points out, to rethink the question. The question does not intend Being; rather, it is the promotion and the privilege of Being within the question which is itself to be placed in question. The question is not Being, but whether Being is the question. The question does not find its fulfilment or completion in the complete presence which the possession of Being would offer. Rather, the response marks a closure of the question. The true significance of the question lies elsewhere than Being in the one to whom and of whom questions are asked, the interlocutor. The ontological question of the meaning of Being will thus become the ethical question of the significance of the Other, as interlocutor.

4.

Subjectivity and Infinity

Blanchot, in questioning the promotion of being in the question of all, indicated that what is actually placed in question by the question is Being itself, and hinted that the question of Being is not the most fundamental question. Rather, the question relates us to that which refuses to be present to the question, to that which withdraws from all questioning and exceeds all power of questioning. The most profound question is a question beyond being and other than presence, and carries us along by way of the detour of speech. Questioning is a detour, as Blanchot says, that 'speaks as a detour of speech.' What we wish to argue in this chapter is that subjectivity is not primarily to be understood as the being-present to itself of being, but as a relationship with infinity. Before it is ontological, subjectivity is fundamentally ethical.

4.1 *Subjectivity and Being*

Being, in the Western onto-theological tradition, has always been thought in the present tense, and it is always conceived in terms of presence. The subject is one who stands in the presence of Being, one for whom to be is to be conscious of being. But this intentional directedness towards being, which then becomes represented in thought, does not fully measure the depths of subjectivity. Although the subject may be said to stand in the presence of Being, the relationship between the subject, as being (*das Seiendes, l'étant*), and Being (*Sein, Être*) is never synchronic. It is, rather, always diachronic; the subject is always out of step with Being, 'otherwise than Being', whose universality and ontological priority is thereby contested. The fullness of being cannot fill the reality of human existence, and the adequation of Being and Knowing which would characterise human being-in-the-world proves inadequate to account for human existence and its relations.

4.11 *The metaphysical itinerary: beyond being*

Philosophy has two itineraries. The one, Abrahamic in nature, is essentially outgoing and transcendent; the other, Odyssean in intent, remains locked in immanence and its end is always a return to its starting point.

Contemporary philosophies of modernity seem to be characterised by the dominance of a politics and economics of expediency. Economics and technology have become the providers both of the modern mind's categories of understanding and of the

language in which this understanding is expressed, a fact noted by Habermas in his critique of purposive-rational action in modernity.¹ Cultural meaning and value finds its interpretation in economic and technological terms. Levinas also recognises this.² Interpreting in his own manner, he identifies the key note of the philosophy which underpins modern thinking as the absorption of otherness into the politics of identity and the same, a 'neutralisation of alterity.'³ Notwithstanding the fact that life precedes philosophical reflection, and existence is prior to essence, philosophy, like nature abhorring a vacuum, maintains an aversion to alterity, and develops itself as a refusal of engagement with what is Other (*l'Autre*); rather than involving itself in action and commerce with others, it is characterised by a latent attentiveness and indifference, which demonstrates, he says, that universal allergy of the philosopher's first childhood, caught up in its own concerns with no transcendent reference. In short, philosophy has not woken up to alterity; it is deaf to the Other (*autrui*). 'The itinerary of philosophy remains that of a Ulysses whose adventure in the world was only a return to his native

¹ For a summary of Habermas' thinking, see David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas, (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp.249ff. Held outlines Habermas' major concern as 'the spread of instrumental reason to many areas of social life' and the 'rise of technocratic consciousness' (p.254) which increasingly entails the definition of practical problems as technical issues in social theory. Epistemologically the instrumentalisation of reason has obscured the epistemic subject, reducing any autonomy and responsibility the subject might have. To counter technocratic and instrumentalised consciousness, Habermas advocates a communicative praxis, which frees language from the systematic distortion it has experienced in purposive rationality. Language is ordered towards consensus, but needs emancipated through 'the transcendence of such systems of distorted communication' (p.256).

Habermas himself writes, '[b]y "work" or *purposive-rational action* I understand either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction. Instrumental action is governed by *technical rules* based on empirical knowledge.... The conduct of rational choice is governed by *strategies* based on analytic knowledge.... By "interaction", on the other hand, I understand *communicative action*, symbolic interaction. It is governed by binding *consensual norms*, which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour.... Their meaning is objectified in ordinary language communication....' (Jürgen Habermas, Technology and Science as "Ideology", in Toward a Rational Society, (London: Heinemann, 1980), pp.91-92).

² See E Levinas, HAH, p.42

See also J Derrida's description of the economics of return in Given Time, pp.6-11.

³ *ibid.*

island - a satisfaction (*complaisance*) with the Same, a misunderstanding of the Other,⁴ an effort 'where the adventure pursued in the world is but the accident of a return.'⁵ Expressed philosophically, in the context of this present work, the Odyssean itinerary of philosophy is a *reditio in seipsum*, a folding back of being upon itself. It remains, too, the nostalgic mourning of Penelope, weeping for Odysseus, longing for that return and for unity with him once again.⁶ This Odyssey which traces out its past, and seeks to recollect and incorporate into the kingdom of the same whatever is outside and other, whether by assimilation or removal, has been the philosophical agenda of western metaphysics which, maintains Levinas, 'has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same,'⁷ where 'to know amounts to grasping being out of nothing or reducing it to nothing, removing from it its alterity.'⁸ The inherent intelligibility of a comprehensible reality capable of being brought to a unified synthesis, subjectively centred, is at the heart of this philosophy. But this philosophical effort at comprehensivity, based as it is on the identity of being and knowing, is not truly *metaphysics* whose term is *beyond* comprehension.

Now, although affirming the ultimate adequation of being and knowing, Rahner nonetheless admits the inadequacy of the tradition's understanding of knowledge as

⁴ *ibid.*, p.43.

Levinas writes, '*La philosophie se produit comme une forme sous laquelle se manifeste le refus d'engagement dans l'Autre, l'attente préférée à l'action, l'indifférence à l'égard des autres, l'allergie universelle de la première enfance des philosophes. L'itinéraire de la philosophie reste celui d'Ulysse dont l'aventure dans le monde n'a été qu'un retour à son île natale - une complaisance dans le Même, une méconnaissance de l'Autre*' (*ibid.*).

⁵ *idem*, TI, pp.176-177

⁶ When Penelope sits unpicking her weaving each night to delay her suitors, she longs for union with Ulysses. But such a longing remains in the realm of eros, the nostalgic desire for a lost union, a movement of return towards true Being. Such a desire is not the desire which fuels metaphysics, which should not be confused with eros. Maurice Blanchot, reflecting upon Simone Weil's words, '*[l]e désir est impossible*', comments upon this as meaning 'Desire is precisely this relation to the impossible, it is impossibility become relation.' He continues, '[m]etaphysical desire is desire for that with which one has never been united, the desire of a self not only separated but happy with the separation that makes it a self, and yet still in relation with that from which it remains separated and of which it has no need: the unknown, the foreign, *autrui*' (Maurice Blanchot, IC, p.53; *Entretien*, p.76)

⁷ E Levinas, TI, p.47

⁸ *ibid.*, p.44

'comprehensive mastery.'⁹ He writes, '[w]hat is called knowledge according to the common usage originating in the western tradition of philosophy, i.e. comprehension and mastery, consists in the ordering of data in a horizon of understanding and system of coordinates which is evident to us as the object which we possess identically with ourselves. But it is this which is a defective form of the real nature of knowledge in which the mystery itself unfolds.'¹⁰ Again, '[c]omprehensive knowledge is a deficient mode of knowing when measured by that knowledge which is beyond all doubt the highest, the most intensive, and that which bestows the deepest blessing upon us, that which takes place in the immediate vision of the incomprehensibility of God.'¹¹ For Rahner, knowledge as comprehensive mastery must always fail when it confronts the utter mystery and incomprehensibility of God, but such a confounding of knowledge's totalising tendency is not limited to the divine, for although 'creation strictly as such can contain no absolute mysteries,'¹² all beings as created 'partake of the mysterious character of God' and, insofar as they are referred to God, 'cannot be adequately understood without this relationship and hence in terms of this relationship.'¹³ 'Thus all understanding of any reality whatsoever is in the last resort always a *reductio in mysterium*.'¹⁴ 'The predominant desire for theoretical understanding'¹⁵ which characterises classical theology approached the problem of the incomprehensible nature of God from the standpoint of the inadequacy and incapacity of the finite intellect. But

'[t]he horizon of understanding which is assumed here, the criterion by which human knowledge is measured so that God remains incomprehensible, represents a conception based on a model of knowledge in which an object is penetrated and mastered. In comparison with this paradigm of knowledge, human perception of God on earth and even in the state of final fulfilment remains deficient.... In such an ideal

⁹ K Rahner, The Hiddenness of God, p.234

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.236

¹¹ *idem*, Reflections on Methodology in Theology, p.104

¹² *idem*, The Concept of Mystery, p.62

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

It will be important later to address the question of the relationship between God and the other person, not only Rahner, but also in Levinas.

¹⁵ *idem*, The Hiddenness of God, p.231

of knowledge the Greek desire of absolute gnosis and the modern understanding of knowledge as a process which leads to the mastery of an object come together, whether the mastery in question is conceived in terms of German idealism or of the natural sciences.¹⁶

Such a conception of knowledge fails, foundering on 'the alien and inhospitable rock of God's incomprehensibility'.¹⁷ Rahner continues, '[i]f the fundamental sense of knowledge is understood, not in the sense of "seeing through" an object, but rather as a possible openness to the mystery itself, then the question becomes at once more straightforward. Knowledge in the traditional sense would then be regarded as a derivation of the basic meaning of knowledge.'¹⁸ Rahner writes,

'[i]n contrast knowledge in the primary sense is the presence of the mystery itself. It is being addressed by what no longer has a name, and it is relying on a reality which is not mastered but is itself the master. It is the speech of the being without a name, about which clear statements are impossible.'¹⁹

One sees this linking of the 'gnoseological adventure' with sight, which Rahner understands as a reduction of the basic meaning of knowledge, in Levinas too. Sight is contact at a distance, a 'theoretical receptivity from a distance (which is that of the look).'²⁰ Sensibility is reduced to sight and finds its role in 'a synchrony of thematised

¹⁶ ibid.

¹⁷ ibid., p.233

¹⁸ ibid.

¹⁹ ibid., p.237

Levinas, too, speaks of the namelessness of that by which we are addressed, when he notes that it is the the pronominal "*il*" of illeity which enables the name of God to be uttered divested of its divinity. Divinity is the nominalisation of the noun insofar as it "participates" in being. 'But the name outside of essence or beyond essence, the individual prior to individuality, is named God. It precedes all divinity, that is, the divine essence which the false gods, individuals sheltered in their concept, lay claim to' (OB, p.190, n.38). For Levinas, '[a] word is a nomination... a consecrating of the "this as this" or "this as that" by a saying which is also *understanding* and *listening*, absorbed in the said Identification is ascription of meaning' (ibid., p.37). But this already happens within a horizon. Entities . . . are not first given and thematized, and then receive a meaning; they are given by the meaning they have . . . in an *already said*' (ibid.). God is ~~is~~ ultimately accessible, not within Being, but as the counterpart of the justice I render to my neighbour because in the opening of illeity one finds the trace of God.

²⁰ E Levinas, OB, p.75

elements and their simultaneity with the look.²¹ Sensibility, however, is not to be so interpreted, says Levinas. Rather, like 'being addressed by what no longer has a name,' sensibility 'is being affected by a non-phenomenon, a being put into question by the alterity of the other.'²² And this, says Levinas, opens on to a 'notion of subjectivity independent of the adventure of cognition.'²³ Now, insofar as Rahner asserts the finite spirit as *capax infiniti*, he actually contests the traditional understanding of subjectivity of origin, and recognises that any interiority requires as its founding moment an exteriority. Though expressed in the language of ontology, this surely is the aim of the transcendental deduction of the ontological affirmation undertaken by Maréchal and pursued by Rahner. Rahner writes, '[e]xistentially, and for a theory of knowledge, [mystery] is at once a menace and a blessed peace. It can make him chafe and protest, because it compels him to leave the tiny house of his ostensibly clear self-possession, to advance in the trackless spaces, even in the night.'²⁴ Like Abraham, his native land forsaking, Rahner's subject is summoned to go beyond the globe of comprehended familiarity in response to mystery's utter incomprehensibility and absolute alterity.

Now, according to Levinas, the traditional approach - founded on the adequation of being and knowing, and funded by the economics of interest and return - which would place the understanding of being before the actuality of the existent needs to be reversed, and in its place *a non-allergic relation with alterity*, already appreciated in discourse and founded in the ethical relation, needs to be posited. This is not to abandon philosophy and its historical concerns of subjectivity, knowledge and truth, which is why Levinas writes of Totality and Infinity that it 'presents itself as a defence of subjectivity',²⁵ rather it is to found them in the already given and lived experience of the relationship with the other. It is to affirm exteriority as the basis of subjective interiority. 'The ethical relation, opposed to first philosophy which identifies freedom and power, is not contrary to truth; it goes unto being in its absolute exteriority, and accomplishes

²¹ *ibid.*, p.67

²² *ibid.*, p.75

²³ *ibid.*, p.78

²⁴ K Rahner, The Concept of Mystery, p.58

²⁵ E Levinas, *TI*, p.26

the very intention that animates the movement unto truth.¹²⁶ It is precisely in the relationship with the other person that philosophy is confounded, and yet enabled to go beyond its limits, by being attentive to its proper origin.

Contrasted with the Odyssey, the Abrahamic itinerary is by way of a different terrain. If Odysseus is the model for philosophies of totality, Abraham is the archetypal ethical person who hears the command, 'leave your own country, your kindred and your father's house for a country which I shall show you'¹²⁷ and who goes 'as Yahweh told him.'¹²⁸ Abraham recognises the otherness of God's voice, and his own journey becomes one of response rather than initiative. Outgoing, he leaves his homeland and separates himself from what is his own. The movement is beyond self and the familiarity of the same into a language of dialogue with the extreme otherness of God - a dialogue, however, begun before ever anything is said (*dit*) in the strange (*étrange*) and foreign (*étrange*) paradoxical *proximity* of the extremely other, or as Rahner might describe it, 'the *absolute proximity* of the mystery,'¹²⁹ in his response to the call, Abraham's life becomes an acknowledgement of and a response to the existence and priority of the Other who is always and already there as interlocutor. 'The religious discourse that precedes all religious discourse is not dialogue. It is the "here I am" (*me voici*) said to the neighbour to whom I am given over....'¹³⁰ For Levinas, the philosophical enterprise is called to be 'like Abraham, his native land forsaking,' taking its origin and point of departure, not in a self-seeking self-seeking to gather what is other into a gnoseological and dominating act of identification, but in an Other, who accuses the egology of the same, and renders the self as the accusative of response. To say 'I' is to say '*me voici*.' The nominative self becomes the accusative: *me voici!* Levinas notes, 'the accusative (*me voici*) here is remarkable: here I am, under your eyes, at your service, your obedient servant.'¹³¹ Abraham, obedient to the call of God, displaces himself and becomes homeless. The continuity which had previously characterised his life and the *ensemble*

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.47

²⁷ Gen. 12:1

²⁸ Gen. 12:4

²⁹ K Rahner, The Concept of Mystery, in TI, IV, *passim*

³⁰ E Levinas, GP, p.141.

³¹ *ibid.*

which surrounded him is disrupted. The displacement (*dépaysement*) he experiences takes him beyond his monadic world, closed in on itself, and sets him on a nomadic existence without an abode, wandering the desert, living in a tent, setting out for an unknown country. But, displacement - to be a refugee and homeless - does not simply signify the loss of one's place; more significantly, it is a way of residing which is more authentic, an inhabiting of a place without having any habitation; to be an exile is to have a new relation with that which is beyond or outwith (*Dehors*) our perspective. To be homeless is to relate to the world in a different way.³²

In philosophical terms, Levinas speaks of the priority of Ontology and immanence when, in God and Philosophy he writes that philosophy can be understood as 'the bearer of the spirituality of the West, where spirit is taken to be coextensive with knowing. But knowing - or thought, or experience - should not be understood as any kind of reflection of exteriority in an inner forum.'³³ The tradition has preferred the theoretical relation, in which knowing is appreciated as letting the known manifest itself. But this is a reductive relation, for 'theory also designates comprehension [intelligence] - the logos of being - that is, a way of approaching the known being such that its alterity with regard to the known being vanishes.'³⁴ To know is to comprehend; comprehending is a taking (*prendre*) or a grasping.³⁵ The known being is deprived of its alterity because a third term, not a being, but a concept thought or sensation is introduced, and this, says Levinas, is ontology, the dominant understanding of metaphysics in the tradition: 'a reduction of the other to the same by the interposition

³² For a more detailed treatment of the significance of the home in Levinas' thought, see my article, Homelessness as a Theological Motif: Emmanuel Levinas and the Significance of the Home, *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, XV, 2, Autumn, 1994, pp.88-104

Levinas contends that the home is primarily extra-territorial in contrast to the terribly territorial dwelling which Heidegger's Dasein constructs for itself, part of that bald and cold pre-ontological world, "*wherein*" a factual Dasein can be said to "live"! (M Heidegger, Being and Time, p.93) Territoriality provides an ontological situation, whereas extra-territoriality, as a positive element, disrupts the primacy of the ontological order, and locates the significance of the home in its possibility of welcome and intimacy for the Other.

³³ E Levinas, GP, p.129

³⁴ idem, TI, p.42

³⁵ cf. the pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) of Being in Rahner's transcendental approach.

of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.³⁶ Philosophy needs to reverse this situation, and with it theology,³⁷ for it is not ontology which is prior, but the metaphysics which precedes it. Instead of ontology's all-embracing comprehension of what is other, Levinas advocates an ethical metaphysics, or a metaphysics as ethics, which is *a non-allergic relation with alterity*, which arises in discourse, and which is best articulated in terms of *Desire*. The reason why this reversal is needed is because the true origin of philosophy lies not so much in the wonder which gives rise to reflection, but 'in a cry of ethical revolt, a testimony of responsibility. It begins in prophecy.'³⁸ By ethics, Levinas envisages a primordial experience of responsibility for the other which precedes all reflection, which is *prima philosophia*, and which, as such, is to be distinguished from morality, understood as 'a series of rules relating to socio-political behaviour and civic duty.'³⁹ Historically, the problem with any philosophical consideration of ethics is that it has been dissimulated in the philosophical tradition, whence the need, as Critchley points out, to reformulate the question.

'[R]ather than ethics being understood as a traditional and regional component of philosophical thinking, built upon the ground of an ontological or logocentric metaphysics, Levinassian ethics is first philosophy (TI, 34) that disrupts ontology or logocentrism. Accordingly, the first question for philosophy is not Hamlet's "To be or not to be" (OB,3) or Heidegger's Leibnizian question "Why are there beings at all and why not rather nothing?" but rather "How does being justify

³⁶ E Levinas, TI, p.43

³⁷ Levinas writes, '[t]he transcendence of God cannot be stated or conceived in terms of Being, the element of philosophy, behind which philosophy sees only night' (GP, p.142).

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 143

Levinas views philosophy as prophetic, for philosophy's task today is essentially a placing in question of the dominance of ontology and asserting ethics as first philosophy. The assertion of the primacy of the ethical and the challenge to the totalising system is the role of the prophet. Writing of the power of and the nature of eschatological prophecy, he says that its import lies in the 'institution of a relation with being beyond the totality or beyond history' TI, p.22). The prophet is related to 'a surplus always exterior to the totality, as though the objective totality did not fill out the true measure of being, as though another concept, the concept of *infinity*, were needed to express this transcendence with regard to totality, non-encompassable within a totality and as primordial as totality.' The prophetic experience is situated within the totality and history, but it disrupts that totality.

³⁹ R Cohen, Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas in Face to Face with Emmanuel Levinas, p. 29

itself?"⁴⁰

And is this not akin to Kant's questions '*What must I do?*' and '*What have I the right to hope for?*' which seek to provide a grounding and a justification for knowledge in the wider context of practical reason? And is such a reversal as proposed by Levinas not, as previously indicated, a recognition that there is a wider domain of (ethical) meaning 'which inclusion cannot comprehend' and reasons that "reason" does not know, and which have not begun in philosophy.⁴¹

This need to go beyond the notion of the power and limit of reason understood as comprehension is called for by Rahner also when asks if 'the precise nature of "ratio" [is] so clear and obvious.'⁴² Reason is not to be understood in the positivistic and a *posteriori* sense of coming across objects in the world, such that any mysteries which lies beyond the world are to be relegated to faith, since although these 'should strictly speaking have come within the scope of reason with its power to see and *comprehend* ... in this case [they] do not meet its demands.'⁴³ Instead of this sense of ratio found in classical theology, Rahner maintains that 'reason must be understood more fundamentally as precisely the capacity of the incomprehensible, as the capacity of being seized by what is always insurmountable, not essentially as the power of comprehending, of gaining the mastery and subjugating. Reason must be understood... as the capacity of *excessus*, as going out into the inaccessible...'⁴⁴ Reason is thus *more than reason*. It is 'the faculty which welcomes the greater sight unseen, the faculty of simple rapture, of submissive dedication, of loving ecstasy. But this can only be if its most proper object is that sovereign and all-embracing exigence which cannot be mastered, comprehended, or challenged: in a word, the mystery.'⁴⁵ The significance of what Rahner advocates in this expansion of reason is that he is essentially displacing the subject from its position of dominance and mastery, and attributing to mystery a priority

⁴⁰ S Critchley, The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas, (Oxford: Blackwell,1992), p.9

⁴¹ E Levinas, GP, p.143

⁴² K Rahner, The Concept of Mystery, p.38

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.39

⁴⁴ *idem*, The Human Question of Meaning, p.97

⁴⁵ *idem*, The Concept of Mystery, p.43

and pre-eminence in the light of which the subject is constituted as a knowing subject. The fact of mystery's incomprehensibility becomes 'a positive characteristic of a relationship between one subject and another,'⁴⁶ and incomprehensible mystery becomes 'the primordial and fundamental which is the ultimate transcendental condition of possibility of knowledge.'⁴⁷

For Levinas, this mystery is the mystery of the other person who in the ethical confrontation with a subject witnesses to the fact that

'[t]here is meaning testified to in interjections and outcries, before being disclosed in propositions, a meaning that signifies as a command, like an order that one signifies. Its manifestation in a theme already devolves from its signifying as ordering; ethical signification signifies not for a consciousness which thematises, but to a subjectivity, wholly an obedience, obeying with an obedience that precedes understanding. Here is a passivity still more passive than that of receptivity in knowing, the receptivity that assumes what affects it.'⁴⁸

It involves a movement towards an alien outside-of-oneself (*hors-de-soi*) - without hope of an Odyssean return - towards a yonder that is termed *other* in an eminent sense. 'The metaphysical desire tends towards something else entirely, toward the absolutely other.'⁴⁹ Its intention is not some object which might satisfy and fulfil it. Rather, metaphysical desire 'desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness - the Desired does not fulfil it, but deepens it.'⁵⁰ It is absolute desire, a relation to 'unanticipatable alterity':⁵¹ the desiring being is mortal; the Desired invisible. 'To die for the invisible - that is metaphysics.'⁵²

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.41

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.42

⁴⁸ E Levinas, GP, p.143

⁴⁹ *idem*, TI, p.33

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.34

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*, p.35

4.2 *Metaphysics and Transcendence*

It is on account of this transcendent movement towards an absolutely exterior term that metaphysics is able to break ontological circle of totality 'The metaphysical movement is transcendent, and transcendence, like desire and inadequation is necessarily a transascendence.⁵³ Like the gulf between Dives and Lazarus lying in the bosom of Abraham, which one who has traversed may not retrace,⁵⁴ the upward movement of transascendence is an irreversible relation, a 'radical separation between the same and the other,⁵⁵ who is and always remains radically heterogeneous and unassimilable by the I. How is transcendence as transascendence to be understood?

Bernard Forthomme, in *Une Philosophie de la Transcendence: La métaphysique d'Émmanuel Levinas*,⁵⁶ begins his section on transascendence by taking recourse to Descartes who in his Third Meditation writes, 'I would not have... the idea of an infinite

⁵³ ibid.

Transascendence as a particular transcendence has to be understood in contrast to transcendence. According to B Forthomme (*Une Philosophie de la Transcendence: La métaphysique d'Émmanuel Levinas*, Paris, 1979, pp.3 1-33), the term was first employed by Jean Wahl in *Subjectivité et transcendance*, *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie* 1937, p. 162, who wanted to contrast the two directions which transcendence could take - the upward movement towards a transcendent superior, or a descent towards some demoniacal force, which could either be something elementary and elemental or the deep forces at play in being. Wahl, however, did not oppose the negativity of transcendence to the positivity of transascendence: it was a matter of indifference whether the goal of transcendence was angel or demon. Levinas, however, refuses any form of equivocation between the two. Transcendence is always opposed to the metaphysical movement of transascendence. In *Totality and Infinity*, he writes that 'Transcendence is not Negativity,' for, in negation, 'negator and negated are posited together, form a system, that is, a totality. The doctor who missed an engineering career, the poor man who longs for wealth, the patient who suffers, the melancholic who is bored for nothing oppose their condition while remaining attached to its horizons. The "otherwise" and the "elsewhere" they wish still belong to the here below they refuse' (TI, p.41).

For Levinas, transascendence is connected with the hyperbolic doubt already indicated in Descartes, which questions both the world and the self. It is a doubt which leads Descartes, according to Levinas, on a downward spiral into the ever deeper abyss of the *il y a*, which is beyond both negation and affirmation (see TI, p.93), and whose only exit is the response which the approach of the other enables the self to make.

⁵⁴ cf. Luke 16:19-31

⁵⁵ E Levinas, TI, p.36

⁵⁶ B Forthomme, *Une Philosophie de la Transcendence: La métaphysique d'Émmanuel Levinas*, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J Vrin, 1979)

substance, I who am a finite being, if it had not been placed in me by some substance which was truly infinite.¹⁵⁷ Transcendence concerns the difference between true and false infinity, which also distinguishes true and false transcendence. Forthomme indicates that it is necessary to distance a philosophy of transcendence from any philosophy of 'evasive evasion' (*I'évasion évasive*). Unlike contemporary philosophies of transcendence, transcendence is not to be understood as a passage from a Sartrean nothingness to being nor as a conversion from a life of average everydayness to a Heideggerian authentic life; nor is it the exaltation experienced in liturgy, mystical ecstasy or spiritual enlightenment. Such transcendences approach the original relationship between the same and the other as a passage from the self towards an abstract totality, whether human or divine, which is able to gather into some unity both the same and the other. Further, a philosophy of transcendence is also to be distinguished from philosophies of immanence which, beginning from subjective interiority, lead on to an objective totality or a universal and anonymous reconciled history. All of these fail to take account of separation, and do not, therefore, represent true transcendence. A true philosophy of transcendence is a philosophy of transcendence for it recognises that the Other to whom the self is ordered does not approach us on the same plane or within the same horizon. A horizontal understanding of the other leads to a false transcendence. True transcendence, as transcendence, is characterised by a relationship with the Other in his or her verticality. The approach of the other is always from on high, and his appeal is always by way of command and injunction.

Levinas illustrates false transcendence when, in *Sur Maurice Blanchot*, he addresses the relationship of the Same with the Other (*autrui*). Using the image of someone who steps back to allow a child's carriage to pass, he notes that 'the one draws back before the other,' and suggests the interpretation that 'the one is for the other.'¹⁵⁸ Now, such a natural, almost spontaneous, courtesy and recognition of the Other would seem to place us outwith the economy of being with its self-interested hope of return or profit, but, says Levinas, such an interpretation would be false. What really happens is that the self, solicitous for its own being and its perseverance in being - the *conatus essendi* - has shown a 'devotion' to others (*autrui*), even to the point of annulling its own

⁵⁷ Descartes, *Meditations*, 45

⁵⁸ E Levinas, SMB, p.68

egoism, but this happens in accordance with the expected courtesies of Western society. Altruistic consciousness always returns to itself. It is not enough 'to suffer for others (*autrui*) and in others (*autrui*)' for this is not "dis-inter-estedness" (*dés-inter-essement*). 'Suffering for and in others (*autres*)?' Levinas asks, 'It is the others (*autres*) who make me suffer!'⁵⁹ Suffering *for* or *in* others (*autrui*) is no more than a 'consolidation of the self or an 'abnegation which is only a detour of European individualism and hardening (*durcissement*) of the self, which admits to no more than the affirmation that "'I" am stronger than others.'⁶⁰ Ultimately, altruism flows from the freedom of the self, and affirms the self in its freedom. The situation of giving way to others is more radical than a question of offering my self for and in others. It involves a transcendence towards the other which does not take its origin or find its initiative in the self. Forthomme concludes that, for Levinas, true transcendence is otherwise: '*la transcendance véritable se produit comme le dessaisissement de la surprenante solidité de l'existence soucieuse d'elle-meme. Selon lui, la transcendance vraie ne peut se passer que comme un dérapage du conatus essendi ou de l'irrémissible persévérance dans l'être.*'⁶¹

Now, to affirm true transcendence as transcendence is to introduce the dimension of height. Contemporary philosophy, characterised by horizontalism, situates the other within a horizon, but horizons always demand a point of departure which is subject or subjectively centred. For Levinas, it is the vertical relation (*dehiscence verticale*) which is pre-original or pre-archic. Although this may have theological resonances, the transcendent move is not a theological movement. The other of whom Levinas writes is not, at this stage, a Divine Other but the other who is proximate as neighbour.⁶² Transcendence does not only involve ascension (*scandere*); it is also

⁵⁹ E Levinas, SMB, p.69

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ B Forthomme, *op.cit.*, p.168

⁶² Levinas, however, finds the condition of possibility of the relationship with the other person in God, who is the *excluded third* in the relationship. The illicity of alterity is sustained by the trace of the Other (*Autre*) of the other (*autrui*). In the ethical relationship with the Other,

'God is drawn out of objectivity, presence and being. He is neither an object nor an interlocutor. His absolute remoteness, his transcendence, turns into my responsibility - non-erotic par excellence - for the other. And this analysis implies that God is not simply the "first other," the "other par excellence," or the "absolutely other," but other than the other

transitive (*trans*). It brings together two movements: the traversing of the emptiness of an interval and, at the same time, the enjambement (*enjambement*) of stepping over (*enjambement*) this while changing level.

The model of height also entails a reversal. The relation between the higher and the lower does not first proceed from experience and then find metaphysical application. Rather, it is the approach of the other from on high which gives significance to any image of height or depth. Height is principally not a relation within geometric space, but is the experience of utter alterity. According to Levinas, height has a metaphysical status; it cannot be reduced to any experience of the body's own verticality. It is because I am ordered towards height in metaphysical desire that the human body finds its position in a space where one can distinguish between the low and the high. He writes in *La Signification et Le Sens*, stressing the anteriority of meaning in respect of the cultural situation in which people find themselves, that

'before Culture and Aesthetics, signification is found in Ethics, the presupposition of all Culture and all signification. Morality does not belong to Culture: it allows it to be judged, and discovers the dimension of height. Height orders being.

Height introduces meaning (*sens*) into being. It is already lived throughout human bodily experience. It leads human societies to erect altars. It is not on account of their bodies that human beings have an experience of the vertical which places the human under the sign of height. It is because being orders itself towards height that the human body is placed in a space where the high and the low are distinguished and discovers the sky which, for Tolstoy's Prince Andrew - without any

[*autre qu'autrui*], other otherwise, other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other, prior to the ethical bond with another and different from every neighbour, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of possible confusion with the stirring of the *there is*. In this confusion the substitution for the neighbour gains in dis-interestedness, that is, in nobility, and the transcendence of the Infinite arises in glory' (ibid., *God and Philosophy, Collected Philosophical Papers*, pp.165-166; see, '*Dieu et la Philosophie*,' in *De Dieu qui vient*, pp.114-115).

God is accessible as the counterpart of the justice I render to my neighbour because in the opening of illeity one finds the trace of God. God, as pre-originary, God as excluded third, "assures the condition of possibility of ethics as the very possibility of the beyond." (Ibid., *La Trace de l'autre*, p.141). In transcendence, 'the distinction between transcendence towards the other man and transcendence towards God must not be made too quickly' (ibid., '*La Philosophie et L'Éveil*', p.104) Although the Other 'is indispensable for my relation with God' (TI, p.78) for there can be no "knowledge" of God outwith the social relation, nevertheless and conversely, God is the indispensable other than the other [*autre qu'autrui*] who, as absolutely excluded third, makes possible the relationship with true alterity - the illeity of the Other - which is maintained in his trace.

word of the text evoking colours - is utter height.⁶³

In other words, as already outlined in Existence and Existents, whose theme is the subject's 'position in Being,'⁶⁴ the position of a subject in Being - the emplacement of the I - is to be understood as a condition and a base for any relationship with the world and things within the world rather than as that relationship itself, which is how localisation is normally understood. It is from a position as a subject, which is the positing of a subject, that any localised position of a subject is possible. 'The here we are starting with, the here of position, precedes every act of understanding, every horizon and all time.'⁶⁵ Position is not added to consciousness; rather it is a point of departure out of which consciousness arises. Position's antithesis is not the freedom of being suspended, of being 'off the ground,' but is the destruction or displacement of the subject, as when, for instance, great emotions overwhelm and destroy our equilibrium, dislocating us even though we are in a concrete place.

True transcendence, then, as transascendence, acknowledges the utter separation between the self and the other. But this is to exclude any form of homogeneity, and admit a radical heterogeneity between the self and the other which contests the priority which philosophy traditionally ascribes to the I. It is this radical heterogeneity which lies at the heart of the ethical relation, making possible the reversal of the philosophical enterprise. The situation in which philosophy finds itself can be overturned, for it has already and always been overturned in the ethical relation. 'Metaphysics is enacted in ethical relations,'⁶⁶ As Levinas writes, '[i]f ontology... is impossible... it is because the comprehension of Being in general cannot dominate the relationship with the Other.'⁶⁷ '[T]his relationship with the Other as interlocutor, this relation with an existent - precedes all ontology; it is the ultimate relation in Being. Ontology presupposes metaphysics.'⁶⁸

Now, like Rahner, Levinas sees metaphysics as involving transcendence in two

⁶³ E Levinas, HAH, p.58

⁶⁴ idem, EE, p.60

⁶⁵ ibid., p.71

⁶⁶ idem, TI, p.79

⁶⁷ ibid., p.47

⁶⁸ ibid., p.48

senses. There is the subjective experience of transcendence in which the confines of subjectivity are breached, and there is the objective transcendence of alterity. Rahner distinguishes the subjective 'original experience of transcendence,'⁶⁹ an 'original basic realisation of man's transcendence as mind and freedom,'⁷⁰ and the Whither of transcendence, implicit in the human experience of transcendence as its counterpart and its transcendental condition of possibility. 'The Whither is not experienced in itself, but only in the subjective transcendence and it is known only unobjectivatedly.'⁷¹ The 'Whither of transcendence can only be spoken of in terms of experience of transcendence as the limitless openness of the subject itself.'⁷² This 'Whither,' as absolute transcendence, is the source or attraction for the spirit's transcendence, 'the primordial and fundamental which is the ultimate transcendental condition of possibility of knowledge.'⁷³ Although the Whither of human transcendence is, as Levinas might express it, 'absolutely other,' 'wholly infinite,' nonetheless it offers itself to the subject, in the self-communication of grace, in proximity, as the horizon which is 'the condition of possibility of all spiritual understanding and insight,'⁷⁴ and which 'gives [human] transcendence its reality.'⁷⁵ This 'abiding mystery of God is not merely the asymptotic point of refuge which provides it with its goal.'⁷⁶ Rather, the abiding mystery discloses itself 'to achieve a state of absolute immediacy and proximity to him, and in this act of self-communication itself sustains this transcendental movement on the part of man himself.'⁷⁷

Further, just as Levinas demands exteriority as a defense for subjectivity, otherwise transcendental subjectivity would have to ground and bear all the weight of

⁶⁹ K Rahner, Experience of Transcendence, p., 176

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 177

⁷¹ *idem*, The Concept of Mystery, p.52

⁷² *ibid.*, p.49

⁷³ *ibid.*, p.42

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.57

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *idem*, Reflections on Methodology in Theology, p.94

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

evidence independently, so subjectivity as understood by Rahner, following Maréchal's thinking, demands the affirmation of an absolute if the subjective experience of transcendence is not to be frustrated, and the subject itself is not to be groundless. Act and its finality constitute a unity. For Maréchal's dynamism, the transcendental reduction of spiritual dynamism ultimately demands the transcendental deduction of the ontological affirmation, that is the affirmation of an absolute towards which subjectivity is oriented.

Now, to make the ontological affirmation (Maréchal-Rahner) or to affirm exteriority as sustaining subjectivity (Levinas) is also to affirm a source of intelligibility beyond the subject. Levinas, albeit operating with an understanding of Being which does not coincide with that of Rahner, as we hope to show, expresses this by saying that '[t]he intelligibility of transcendence is not something ontological.'⁷⁸ The phenomenality of what is other than the subject is interrupted by the transcendence which signifies phenomenally but whose proper meaning lies beyond the phenomenon. Rahner will indicate this by speaking of 'even our sublimest ontological ideals' as being 'approximate' to the absolute,⁷⁹ which, as absolute transcendence, always exercises mastery over the subjective.

'The orientation of transcendence cannot be mastered but consists in the infinite, silent mastery over us in that moment and indeed always when, by making a judgement on it, we begin to master something by making it subject to the laws of our *a priori* reason. It is not merely given as the *goal* of transcendence itself (which means that, since this goal is not experienced in itself but is only known unobjectively in the experience of subjective transcendence, every thesis of ontologism is already avoided from this point of view alone) - and its presence, furthermore, is the presence of such a transcendence that it is always given only as the condition of possibility of a knowledge in categories and not by itself alone.'⁸⁰

Thus, the unity of transcendental apperception, in which immanence always triumphs over transcendence⁸¹ is broken up. Transcendence does not find its meaning within an ontological framework; it discovers it in ethics, for signification is contained in the ethical structure of the 'one-for-the-other', which is a structure of relation in which a

⁷⁸ E Levinas, GP, p.142

⁷⁹ cf. K Rahner, The Theology of the Symbol, p.226

⁸⁰ idem, Theology of Freedom, TI, VI, p.180

⁸¹ E Levinas, GP, p.143

subject relates to what always and already exceeds the logic and meaning of being. To say that the ethical experience is an experience of transcendence and constitutes the first moment of philosophy is to recognise that subjectivity

'is not, in the last analysis, the "I think" (which it is at first) or the unity of "transcendental apperception" ... [but] ... is, as a responsibility for the other, a subjection to the other. The I is a passivity more passive still than any passivity because it is straightaway in the accusative - oneself (*soi*) - and never was in the nominative; it is under the accusation of the Other, even though it be faultless. It is a hostage for the other, obeying a command before having heard it, faithful to a commitment that it never made, to a past which has never been present.¹⁸²

Thus, the priority of the subject is contested, and the absolute significance of the Other asserted.

4.3 *To be is to be conscious of...*

Levinas seeks to place *experience* as the source of meaning in question, and assert the non-priority of the Same, that is, subjectivity as founded. He does so by contesting the representational understanding of consciousness, whereby consciousness is seen as constitutive of its object. In place of the stress on the act of being, Levinas draws attention to the essential passivity and receptivity of the subject, and to the fact that consciousness is already, in its very exercise, inadequate to its object.

Within the tradition, 'Knowing is only understood in its proper essence when one begins with consciousness.'¹⁸³ Consciousness is always specific. It has an intentionality which is always directed towards some object, although this specificity can be overlooked or forgotten in any theoretical consideration of it. Now, insofar as consciousness is intentional, it is linked to presence, and this presence is presence to being. 'The essential destiny of consciousness'¹⁸⁴ would be the adequation of thought and being in knowledge. Now, insofar as consciousness intends being, it can, says Levinas, be articulated in terms of the intentionality of desire. But desire is not a purely conscious event, for it unconsciously goes beyond its object. The unconscious, however, says Levinas, is not to be interpreted as often interpreted as another consciousness which

⁸² *ibid.*, GP, p.136-137

⁸³ E Levinas, GP, p.129

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.134

compromises the sincerity of consciousness; consciousness has an ontological function, which philosophy has failed to recognise, in that it establishes a sincere relationship with the world which thereby becomes 'the field of a consciousness,'⁸⁵ 'a closed circle in which it stays by effacing every ulterior finality';⁸⁶ the role of the unconscious is "before" the world arises.

Levinas illustrates his understanding of consciousness by using the model of insomnia, and its relation to sleep and consciousness, and exposing it to a phenomenological reflection. Insomnia is a basic category or metacategory, which can be roused into consciousness or fall into sleep. Thus, consciousness is 'a modality or modification of *insomnia*.'⁸⁷ While consciousness is consciousness of . . . , an intentionality, insomnia is simply consciousness whose specificity has not been focused. It has no specific object, yet it is not an abstracted notion. Gathering into the presence of being is essential, but insomnia relates to the anonymous, which Levinas

⁸⁵ idem, EE, p.38

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.44

⁸⁷ idem, GP, p.129

Maurice Blanchot writes of the 'experience of night' and insomnia when, in *L'espace Littéraire*, (*The Space of Literature*) he describes the writer's entry into 'nocturnal space' as the place of inspiration and the possibility of writing. Inspiration is an 'experience of night' (SL, p.163), but it is not an experience of that first night of welcoming and welcome sleep, that 'dear repose for limbs with travel tired' (Shakespeare, Sonnet 25), in which the day is surrendered and the burden of living laid aside. Such a night is really part of the kingdom of the day. Inspiration belongs to the other night, which is the appearance of 'everything has disappeared, when 'the dark does not seem dark enough, or death dead enough' (SL, p. 163). If the first night is the disappearance of everything, the other night is the appearance of disappearance. If the first night is the absence of presence, the other night is the presence of absence, an emptiness filled by a formless void. When all has disappeared what remains is the fact that there is (*il y a*) continues to rustle and murmur in the darkness, a 'muffled whispering, a noise one can hardly distinguish from silence' (p. 168), a wakefulness in the midst of the darkness, when there is no sound, no light, no self-awareness, but simply the oppressive presence, 'full of the nothingness of everything' (E Levinas, EE, p.58), which fills us with horror, and which is a trap impossible to escape. It is 'the long night of insomnia.' To sleep is to lay aside the day, but insomnia is a consigning to the night - the other night - when 'everything has disappeared' only to be replaced by a forceful absence. To sleep is to attempt to escape from existence, but insomnia is bare existence foiling this flight. Although every object has disappeared, there remains an impersonal presence which is 'neither a *being* nor consciousness functioning in a void, but the universal fact of the *there is*, which encompasses things and consciousness' (*ibid.*, p.65).

terms the there is (*il y a*). Insomnia is wakefulness and 'wakefulness is anonymous.'⁸⁸ The category of the substantive is disrupted and there is 'not only the disappearance of every object, but the extinction of the subject.'⁸⁹ As insomniac, 'I am, one might say, the object rather than the subject of an anonymous thought.'⁹⁰ Consciousness, however, modifies this anonymous relationship by giving the world. By the amplification of that resistance against anonymous and fateful being by which existence becomes consciousness... an escape from anonymity opens up and a subject is posited. 'To be conscious is to be torn away from the there is, since the existence of a consciousness constitutes a subjectivity, a subject of existence, that is, to some extent a master of being, already a name in the anonymity of the night.'⁹¹ The significance of consciousness and sleep is that it provides an escape from, and victory over, the anonymity of the *il y a*, and the first affirmation of the self. 'Consciousness appeared to stand out against the there is by its ability to forget and interrupt it, by its ability to sleep,'⁹² and sleep, as a lapse from consciousness into unconsciousness 'is not a new life which is enacted beneath life; it is a participation in life by non-participation, by the elementary act of resting.'⁹³ As wakefulness or vigilance, insomnia, 'far from being definable as a simple negation of the natural phenomenon of sleep, belongs to the categorial, antecedent to all anthropological attention and hebetude.'⁹⁴ Insomnia is not the vigilance of the sentinel on the parapet peering into the shadows for some ill-defined figure which can be identified and 'clothed with a form'⁹⁵ by which it would make its appearance to consciousness. Such a vigilance, exercised in the shadows, in the kingdom of the night, seeks ~~to~~ bring something into the kingdom of the day and its light, to identify and thematise it and set it among the same. Such a 'watching for' is a

⁸⁸ E Levinas, EE, p.66

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.67

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.66

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.60

⁹² *ibid.*, p.67

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.69

⁹⁴ *idem*, GP, p.129

⁹⁵ *idem*, EE, p.40

seeking of the Same. The watchfulness of insomnia is different. It is simply 'watching'. The vigilance of insomnia is simply vigil; it is a waiting rather than awaiting (as waiting *for*). 'It is consciousness alone that is watching....'⁹⁶ Levinas distinguishes attention and vigilance. Attention is intentional; it is turned towards objects; vigilance, however is 'absorbed in the rustling of the unavoidable being'.⁹⁷ 'Vigilance is quite devoid of objects.'⁹⁸ It has no subject on which to focus. It is situated in the anonymous void left by absence, the there is (*il y a*) which is not outwith presence, but is a bare, objectless presence in which watching has nothing to watch for. 'Insomnia or wakefulness is without intentionality; it is dis-interested. It has an indeterminateness which does not call for a form.... It is uncontained - infinity.'⁹⁹ Now, it is this intentionality which distinguishes consciousness from insomnia. Consciousness is directed towards an object other than itself, and it is the presence of this radically alien object which disturbs insomnia.

'Consciousness has already broken with this dis-interestedness. It is the identity of the Same, the presence of Being, the presence of presence.... Presence is only possible as a return of consciousness to itself, outside of sleep - and it is thus connected with insomnia.... Presence is only possible as an incessant renewal of presence, as an incessant representation... It is representation which is the very possibility of a return.'¹⁰⁰

As a category or metacategory, insomnia 'is disturbed in the core of its formal or categorical *sameness* by the *Other* which tears away at whatever forms a nucleus of, in insomnia, substance in the Same, a nucleus of identity, repose, presence, sleep. Insomnia is disturbed by the Other which breaks this repose.'¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ idem, GP, p.130

⁹⁷ idem, EE, p.65

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ idem, GP, p.130

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

4.31 *Phenomenology and Ontology*

Levinas recognises in the new phenomenological method initiated by Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, the 'soul of the phenomenological movement,'¹⁰² but recognises also the need to go beyond a representational understanding of consciousness, linked as it is to presence. 'Husserl,' says Levinas, 'had an intuition of his philosophy before he made it a philosophy of intuition,'¹⁰³ and so, in his method, 'anticipate[d] the "meaning" of the being which is approached.'¹⁰⁴ The science of the meaning of being was in some way *a priori* to a knowledge of the properties of being. Husserl thus forged a link between method and ontology. It is this link which Levinas pursues in his *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* which seeks to show 'how the intuition which [Husserl] proposes as a mode of philosophising follows from his very conception of being.'¹⁰⁵ As André Orianne notes, one of the 'major theses' of Levinas' work is that 'phenomenology transcends its apparently epistemological starting point to develop into a fully fledged ontology.'¹⁰⁶ What Levinas finds significant in Husserlian phenomenology is that, in 'discovering the unsuspected *horizons* within which the real is situated, apprehended by representative thought...'¹⁰⁷ Husserl showed 'that consciousness and represented Being emerge from a non-representative "context."¹⁰⁸

Now, like Rahner who seeks the philosophical event in Aquinas rather than undertake a historical approach, Levinas avoids a historical approach to Husserl in order to 'study and present Husserl's philosophy as one studies and presents a living philosophy.'¹⁰⁹ According to Levinas, the progress of the natural and historical sciences in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century had led to the belief 'that the

¹⁰² idem, TIPH, p. xxxi

¹⁰³ ibid., p. xxxii

¹⁰⁴ ibid.

¹⁰⁵ idem, TIPH, p. xxxii

¹⁰⁶ A Orianne, *Translator's Introduction*, in E Levinas, TIPH, p. xiii

¹⁰⁷ E Levinas, *Signature*, in *Difficile Liberté*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976), p.406

¹⁰⁸ ibid.

¹⁰⁹ E Levinas, TIPH, p. xxxiii

sciences exhaust the totality of what can be known of being, so that, at first, philosophy seems to be without an object.¹¹⁰ Only epistemology, as a critique of the criteria employed by scientific and historical investigation, remained. Thus, 'the identification of philosophy and theory of knowledge, the latter being understood as a reflection on the sciences.'¹¹¹ The singularity of the scientific approach, however, led to a universalisation of its underlying naturalism at an ontological level. But, 'the structure of being which is the object of ontology is not everywhere the same: diverse *regions* of being (*Seinsregionen*) have a different constitution and cannot be thought of by means of the same categories.'¹¹² Further, this difference is not only essential, but also a difference in existence. '*To exist does not mean the same thing in every region.*'¹¹³ It is this question regarding the existence of being forby its essence which is for Husserl, according to Levinas, the new ontological problem. The naturalisation of ontology gives rise to the naturalisation of consciousness. 'If to be is to be part of nature, then consciousness, through which nature is known, must also be part of nature inasmuch as it claims to exist. Otherwise it would be nothing.'¹¹⁴ The consequence of this is a categorial understanding of consciousness, like nature, in terms of causality, which explains its relation to reality. The path to knowledge supposes the mediation of the material basis of the world which, by acting upon the senses, *causes* knowledge, and so '[o]ne must start from what is immediately given and go back to that reality which accounts for what is given.'¹¹⁵

Now, to counter naturalistic ontology, Husserl proposes a phenomenological theory of being which asserts the absolute existence of consciousness, and which addresses the problem that '[i]f *to be* means to exist the way nature does, then everything which is given as refractory to the categories and to the mode of existence of nature will, as such, have no objectivity and will be, a priori and unavoidably, reduced to something natural.'¹¹⁶ Further, ethics, aesthetics and all that can be said to contribute to

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. xxxv

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 3

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p.4

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.13

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.15

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.17

the meaning of human life, insofar as possessing any objectivity, are thereby called into question. 'As long as the naturalistic ontology is accepted, existence, including the existence of nature, is not determined by the meaning of life. Rather, life itself must, in order to exist, be conceived on the model of nature.'¹¹⁷ To go beyond naturalism conclusively, the very notion of being had to be examined 'to show that the origin of all being, including that of nature, is determined by the intrinsic meaning of conscious life and not the other way round.'¹¹⁸ 'We must therefore determine which theory of being may, negatively, detach itself from the naturalistic ideal of existence and may, positively, rely solely on the internal meaning of life.'¹¹⁹ In other words, 'the world of transcendent *res* necessarily depends on (*ist angewiesen an*) consciousness.'¹²⁰

Now, because material reality extends beyond present perception, the concept of consciousness must include more than the central sphere of awakened and active consciousness; objects stand out against a horizon against which they are perceived, and this is a necessary part of the structure of consciousness - 'Each perception is an *exception* (*jedes Erfassen ist ein Herausfassen*).'¹²¹ 'Cogitation makes the *cogitatum* its own by extracting it from a background which constantly accompanies it and which may become itself the object of an *Herausfassen*.'¹²² This background does not, however, exist independently of the conscious subject, for although the marginal background against which objects make their appearance is always present, though not to actual conscious life, it nonetheless belongs to the sphere of possibilities implied in actual consciousness as the not-yet-actualised or *potential* consciousness. It is this opposition between actual and potential consciousness which enables any understanding of the independence of the material world with respect to subjectivity. '*It is an independence only with respect to actual consciousness*.'¹²³ In other words, and in sum, 'the existence

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.18

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.19, quoting *Ideen*, 49

¹²¹ *ibid.*, quoting *Ideen*, 35

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.*, p.20

of an unperceived material thing can only be its capability of being perceived.¹²⁴ Physical objects exist relative to consciousness, but they are not exhausted by the multiplicity of their aspects. 'The aspects which we see at any given moment always indicate further aspects,¹²⁵ - virtually infinitely. 'Things are never known in their totality; an essential character of our perception of them is that of being inadequate.¹²⁶

Levinas maintains that Husserl's analysis places the problem on a new level because it does not make assertions about whether or not things exist, but rather about the *very mode of existence of external things*. He says,

'the existence of material things contains in itself a nothingness, a possibility of not-being. This does not mean that things do not exist but that their mode of existing contains precisely the possible negation of itself.... [O]ne must take this possible negation as a constitutive element of the very existence of things.'¹²⁷

In other words, things present themselves according to a duality: a being is intimated, but it is intimated in an infinite sequence of subjective phenomena. '*Contingency, here, is not a relation between the essence and the existence of an object but a determination of the existence itself*. The purely phenomenal character of the existence of external things which Kant determines by opposition to the "things in themselves" appears here as an internal determination of this existence.¹²⁸ Phenomenality is not in opposition to the noumenon, but the exposition of the noumenon. The traditional epistemological theory which debates how a subject and an object come into contact is seen as posing a fictitious problem, for 'the origin of the very idea of "an object" is to be found in the concrete life of a subject.'¹²⁹

For Husserl, consciousness is to be posited as an absolute. It is that more original phenomenon of existence which alone makes possible traditional philosophy's distinction between subject and object, which according to the Husserlian concept of consciousness are two abstractions from the concrete phenomenon of intentional

¹²⁴ ibid., p.21

¹²⁵ ibid., pp.21-22

¹²⁶ ibid., p.22

¹²⁷ ibid., p.23

¹²⁸ ibid.

¹²⁹ ibid., p.25

consciousness. 'For Husserl, consciousness is a primary domain which alone renders possible and comprehensible an 'object' and a 'subject', terms that are already derivative.'¹³⁰ The fundamental intuition of Husserl's philosophy, says Levinas, 'consists of attributing absolute existence to concrete conscious life and transforming the very notion of conscious life.'¹³¹ Levinas writes,

'We are taking as a starting point "consciousness" in the pregnant sense of the term, in the sense which first comes to mind and which can most easily be expressed as the Cartesian *cogito*, as "I think". As we know, Descartes understood the *cogito* in a wide sense, in such a way as to include any state such as: "I perceive, I remember, I imagine, I judge, I desire, I want" and similarly, all analogous ego states (*Icherlebnisse*) in their innumerable successive formations.'¹³²

In line with his rejection of a phenomenal understanding of reality, Husserl maintains that these *Erliebisse* are not simply a region of reality alongside the world of nature. 'Consciousness has in itself its proper being.... It constitutes a *region of being original in principle*.'¹³³ Again, '[t]here emerges an essential and fundamental difference between *being qua consciousness* and *being qua thing*.'¹³⁴ 'In this way is intimated a difference in principle between the *modes of existence* of consciousness and of reality, the most important difference that there is.'¹³⁵

Now, like the indubitably certain cogito which Descartes posited as foundational, Husserl, by positing consciousness as an absolute, sees consciousness as foundational. Husserl, however, goes further than Descartes, for the absoluteness of consciousness does not simply apply to the certainty of the truths of consciousness but to the very existence of consciousness itself. In fact, '[t]he absolute evidence of the *cogito* is founded on the mode of being of consciousness'¹³⁶ which is not merely as an object of reflection, for conscious life exists even when it is not an object of reflection. Rather, 'the existence of consciousness reveals its independence with respect to internal

¹³⁰ E Levinas, TIPH, p.35

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p.25

¹³² *ibid.*, p.26 quoting *Ideen*, 34

¹³³ *ibid.*, quoting *Ideen*, 33

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, quoting *Ideen*, 42

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, quoting *Ideen*, 77

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p.28

perception, as opposed to external objects, whose very existence refers us back to consciousness.¹³⁷ To summarise: consciousness presents itself as a sphere of absolute existence. This absolute existence not only expresses the indubitable character of the *cogito* but also, *qua* positive determination of the very being of consciousness, founds the possibility of an indubitable *cogito*.¹³⁸ It is here that the difference between the Cartesian *cogito* and the Husserlian *cogito* is to be found. Descartes undertook an analysis of knowledge.¹³⁹ Since sensibility is subject to error, the external world could be doubted. Only the *cogito* is indubitable. However, Descartes does not question the evidence for the *cogito*; his analysis stops short of the ontological foundation of consciousness which renders this evidence possible. Husserl, on the other hand, holds that the necessary existence of consciousness does not follow from the *cogito*; rather it allows a *cogito*. Descartes halted too soon. 'Once he had reached, in consciousness, a domain of absolute existence, he did not see that the term 'existence' is used there with a quite different meaning from the one it has when applied to the world of spatial things.'¹⁴⁰ Husserl's development lies in the fact that he sees that '[t]he evidence of the *cogito* is grounded on the mode of existence of consciousness in the same way that

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p.29

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, pp.30-31

¹³⁹ One needs to acknowledge at this stage that a more deconstructionist reading of Descartes would question whether or not Descartes' concern was simply epistemological. Andrew Benjamin, in *The Plural Event: Descartes, Hegel, Heidegger* (Routledge, London, 1993), writes, '[t]he *Meditations* open with doubt. An opening stated in the subheading of the 'First Meditation,' '*De iis quoe in dubium revocati possunt*' (II,177). The possible scepticism of such an opening, however, is immediately checked since the opening line of the Meditation serves to position doubt in relation to the existence of uncertainty, false opinions and that which is itself doubtful. Doubt does not exist in itself, nor, as will be suggested by the time the *Meditations* are written, is it purely epistemological' (p.34). Cartesian doubt, according to Benjamin, is not a doubt about 'the totality of objects but... the possibility, and thus the ground of possibility of knowledge itself' (p.37). It is this understanding of doubt which is behind the *Meditations*. 'Indeed it can be argued that the importance of doubt in the *Meditations* is signalled by the fact that within the wider strategy of the text there is more, as has been argued, than just the connection of doubt to narrowly epistemological concerns. Doubt is linked to the strategy of deconstruction and the possibility of philosophical inauguration; the inception of the transcendental' (p.37).

¹⁴⁰ E Levinas, TIPH, p.32

appearing characterises the very being of external things.¹⁴¹ The knowledge of an object cannot be separated from its being, and so Descartes theory of knowledge gives way to a theory of being in Husserl. What needs emphasised here is the primacy of consciousness and its absolute existence. Consciousness does not lie behind being but is itself being, and it is within the sphere of consciousness that the meaning of existence is to be sought, and naturalism overcome. Being is to be understood in terms of subjectivity rather than substance. Naturalism depends on consciousness, which it presupposes as its source. 'The world of nature, from which naturalism derives its notion of existence, only exists in the measure in which it enters the life of consciousness.'¹⁴²

4.32 *Levinas' Criticisms of Husserl:*

Levinas recognises that, 'by overcoming the substantialist concept of existence, [Husserl] was able to demonstrate that a subject is not something that first exists and then relates to objects.'¹⁴³ A subject is constituted in terms of intentionality. 'Intentionality is what makes up the very subjectivity of subjects,¹⁴⁴ and '...intentionality is constitutive of *all* forms of consciousness.'¹⁴⁵ For Husserl, intentionality is 'a genuine act of transcendence;' but more, it is '*the prototype of any transcendence.*'¹⁴⁶ The problem is that this intentional directedness towards an object has as its aim not simply the objectivity of the object with respect to the subject but the representation of the object to the subject. As Levinas writes, '[f]or him [Husserl], representation will always be the foundation of all acts.'¹⁴⁷ In other words, Being and knowing ultimately collapse into each other. 'For a theory of intuition, the primacy of theoretical consciousness is of the first importance.... The act of intuition, which brings us into contact with being, will

¹⁴¹ ibid.

¹⁴² ibid., pp.34-35

¹⁴³ ibid., p.41

¹⁴⁴ ibid.

¹⁴⁵ ibid., p.45

¹⁴⁶ ibid., p.40

¹⁴⁷ ibid., p. 62

be first and foremost a theoretical act, an objectifying act, and it remains so despite the modifications that *Ideen* will try to introduce into the notion of an objectifying act."¹⁴⁸ The transcendence of the subject remains, for Husserl, within the sphere of consciousness and continues to be the problem of knowledge. At the beginning of the *Logische Untersuchungen, II*, the problem is put thus: 'How are we to understand the fact that the intrinsic being of objectivity becomes "presented", "apprehended" in knowledge, and so ends up by becoming subjective?'¹⁴⁹ 'How does thought transcend itself? What does consciousness aim at when it transcends itself? In other words, 'the various problems of knowledge are reduced to the problem of how objects are constituted by consciousness.'¹⁵⁰ And it is this constitution of an object by subjective consciousness, which possesses its own inherent ontological value, which constitutes the meaningful existence of an object. 'To be is to be experienced or to have a meaning in life.'¹⁵¹

Now, although Husserl asserts the primacy of theory, Levinas notes at the end of *The Theory of Intuition* that Husserl also locates being in a *concrete* life, which, besides being theoretical, is also intentional in its practical and aesthetic aspects. However, at the root of these, one continues to find 'the ontological activity of consciousness' whose investment seeks a comprehensive return as presence and representation.¹⁵² Nonetheless, although always founded on a purely theoretical experience, these 'aesthetic and ethical categories are also constitutive of being and their mode of existing, and of meeting consciousness have a specific structure.'¹⁵³ The question can thus be asked whether the affirmation of the intentional character of practical and axiological life¹⁵⁴ provides a way beyond Husserl's confinement to theoretical consciousness, whether there is the possibility of 'another direction besides that of a tendency going to its term,' 'an affectivity which breaks with the form and

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 63

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.125

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.126

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.149

¹⁵² See *idem*, GP, p.131

¹⁵³ *idem*, TIPH, p.158

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

purpose of consciousness, and leaves immanence.¹⁵⁵ But this is to raise again Kant's questions, 'What must I do?' and 'What have I the right to hope for?'

4.4 *The Idea of Infinity: Descartes and the Cogito:*

Levinas recognises in Husserl's positing of consciousness as absolute, the development of the Cartesian epistemological understanding of the cogito to an ontological understanding. Consciousness as absolute is, for Husserl, not simply expressive of the indubitability of the cogito but is the very possibility of the cogito. Levinas, however, returns to Descartes' understanding of the *cogito* to read it not ontologically, as Husserl does, but to re-read it in a *clôtural* manner in order to overturn 'the universal validity and primordial character of intentionality,'¹⁵⁶ which is Husserl's position. That Descartes should not be read ontologically, as in Husserl, but re-read with a view which is other than ontological, taken in Levinas' sense of the ontological as totality, is confirmed in Andrew Benjamin's deconstructive reading of the *Meditations*.

¹⁵⁵ idem, GP, p.132

¹⁵⁶ ibid.

'*Clôtural* reading articulates the ethical interruption of ontological closure, thereby disrupting the text's claims to comprehensive unity and self-understanding.... A *clôtural* reading of a text would consist, first, of a patient and scholarly commentary following the main lines of the text's dominant interpretation, and second, in locating an interruption or alterity within that dominant interpretation where reading discovers insights within a text to which that text is blind. My governing claim is that these insights, interruptions or alterities are moments of *ethical transcendence*, in which a necessity other than that of ontology announces itself within the reading, an event in which the ethical Saying of a text overrides the ontological Said. This is very much the way in which Levinas reads the idea of infinity in Descartes' *Meditations* or the Good beyond Being (*epikeina tes ousias*) in Plato's *Republic*, texts from the ontological tradition which resist claims to totality and comprehension and adumbrate an ethical structure irreducible to ontology' (S Critchley, op. cit., pp.30-31).

Benjamin argues that Descartes' method of doubt is not purely epistemological but is 'part of the strategy that involves overcoming the totality - the "all" (*omnia*) - that has been handed down'¹⁵⁷ in the philosophical tradition. When Descartes doubts, what is doubted is not simply the *cogito's* knowledge of a particular object. In such a framework, the *cogito*, as 'that which is excluded from the doubt [becomes] the possibility of knowledge itself.'¹⁵⁸ Descartes' 'move to the transcendental,' away from the consideration of knowledge of specific objects, is a move which is not aimed at grasping the totality of known and knowable objects of which the *cogito* would form the ontological basis, 'but to the possibility, and thus the ground of possibility of knowledge itself.'¹⁵⁹

Now, for Descartes, it is not simply the *cogito* which provides a foundation for knowledge and thus, in Husserl's reading, an ontological basis for epistemology. There is also the demand for the veracity of God, a need for a beyond to the system to whom the evidence can be offered and who will vouchsafe the evidence. In other words, being is already disrupted at its core by an alterity which sustains the ontology which being itself supports. Ontology as foundation is already and always founded. Thus, Levinas can say that what counts truly in Husserlian intentionality is not the defining character of thought but 'the idea of the overflowing of objectifying thought by a forgotten experience from which it lives.'¹⁶⁰ The formal structure of thought is already broken up 'into events which this structure dissimulates, but which sustain it and restore its concrete significance.'¹⁶¹ Levinas' methodological task will be to pursue this disruption of ontology which is always and already occasioned by the ethical intervention of the

¹⁵⁷ A Benjamin, op. cit., p.34

Benjamin argues that the tradition operates by endless repetition which is established as the framework for understanding. Descartes, by asking '*Quid igitur erit verum?*' (II,182), and not simply '*Quid est verum?*' refuses 'tradition's gift' and so raises the question beyond the purely epistemological in order to seek the grounds for the possibility of knowledge. 'The premise is that the conditions handed down for the acquisition and guarantee of such knowledge were no longer germane, and that therefore the enjoined task was to establish anew new conditions' (ibid., p.43).

¹⁵⁸ ibid., p.36

¹⁵⁹ ibid., p.37

¹⁶⁰ E Levinas, TI, p.28

¹⁶¹ ibid.

other. With regard to Benjamin's deconstructionist reading of Descartes, the important point regarding Descartes' 'professed doubt concerning the existence of God,'¹⁶² concerns method. The question of the existence of God is not directly raised in the *Third Meditation*; rather, 'the force of this particular instance of doubt is to be located in how it is overcome; in other words in how God's existence is to be established and the knowledge of that existence presented.'¹⁶³ What matters is not the *existence* of the idea, but its coming to be clearly and distinctly perceived. As Descartes says, '*No one is able to deny that such an idea of God is in us*' (III,124), and that it can be had *clearly and distinctly*. It is the method which has priority, for, 'to the extent that it is this method that establishes, within and for philosophy, the existence of God, then, as has been suggested, it must be the method which has philosophical priority.'¹⁶⁴ God is only introduced *post factum* as the guarantor of the method, though, says Benjamin, this has no philosophical justification or necessity, for 'the use of method need make no reference to God.'¹⁶⁵ The existence of God only comes into play and can be linked to the faculty of knowledge when the method establishes God as being beyond doubt since clearly and distinctly perceived.

Now for Levinas, the 'overcoming of the totality' as part of the inaugural event of philosophy, which Benjamin speaks of and recognises in Descartes' new method, is the overcoming of the ontological tradition of Western philosophy; for Levinas, it is Descartes' insight into the *Cogito's* relation to the idea of the Infinite which holds the key to this, for the idea of the infinite disrupts the power of consciousness and leads beyond ontology. He writes, 'what we find most distinctive is the Cartesian analysis of the idea of infinity, although we shall retain only the *formal* design of the structure it outlines.'¹⁶⁶ It might be useful at this stage to outline Descartes own thought in his *Third Meditation* to grasp better what Levinas says.

Descartes' *Third Meditation*, on '*The Existence of God*,' seeks to present his

¹⁶² A Benjamin, op. cit., p.39

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.42

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.40

¹⁶⁶ E Levinas, Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity, in CPP, p.52

'principle argument for proving the existence of God.'¹⁶⁷ Descartes affirms himself as *res cogitans* - 'I am a thing that thinks,' - and of this he is certain: 'I am certain that I am a thinking thing.' Yet doubt belongs properly to thinking, and having doubted all else that is perceived, how is it possible not to doubt himself as a thinking being? It could well be that he, as *res cogitans*, is subject to deception for perhaps there is a deceiving God. In fact, it may be that God, whose veracity acts as co-foundation for what can be known clearly and distinctly, may not exist at all. So, 'in order to remove this slight reason for doubt, as soon as the opportunity arises I must examine whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether he can be a deceiver. For if I do not know this, it seems that I can never be quite certain about anything else.'¹⁶⁸

Descartes proceeds by classifying his thoughts in order to discern which might properly be called true and which false. Some can be described as ideas - such as man, angels or God; some take as their object the particular as in willing, fearing, affirming or denying and may be either volitional, emotional or judgemental, but 'include something more than the likeness of that thing.'¹⁶⁹ Now, emotions and volitions are non-problematical for their objects, so willed or felt, need not necessarily exist other than for me as a thinking subject; judgement, however, is not only about an idea, but, as in Aquinas and pursued by Maréchal, affirms the objective status of that idea, and 'the chief and most common mistake which is to be found here consists in my judging that the ideas which are in me resemble, or conform to, things located outside me.'¹⁷⁰ The reason for this attribution of existence to external objects needs to be considered, for nature, as experience teaches, may be a false teacher. Perhaps a consideration of causality may help, for 'there must be at least as much [reality] in the efficient and total cause as in the effect of that cause.'¹⁷¹ In other words, the effect cannot be greater than the cause, both formally and objectively, since 'for a given idea to contain such and such objective reality, it must surely derive it from some cause which contains at least as

¹⁶⁷ Descartes, *Meditations*, 14

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 36

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 37

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

For judgement as affirmation in Aquinas, see K Rahner, Thomas Aquinas on Truth

¹⁷¹ Descartes, *Meditations*, 40

much formal reality as there is objective reality in the idea.¹⁷² But there cannot be an infinite regress; 'eventually one must reach a primary idea, the cause of which will be like an archetype which contains formally [and in fact] all the reality [or perfection] which is present only objectively [or representatively] in the idea.'¹⁷³ If, then, there is an idea in me whose objective reality is such that I cannot be its cause, then my solitary existence in the world is contested and something other than my self needs to be posited. Now, of all the ideas that I have as a thinking thing, it seems that only the idea of God could not have originated in myself, since to have the idea of God is to have the idea of the infinite, whereas I am finite. Further, it is not that I perceive the idea of the infinite 'merely by negating the finite;' the idea of the infinite is a true idea; further, since 'there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one... my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself.'¹⁷⁴ 'It does not matter that I do not grasp the infinite, or that there are countless additional attributes of God which I cannot in any way grasp, and perhaps cannot even reach in my thought; for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself.'¹⁷⁵ Descartes' conclusion, therefore, is that '[i]t is true that I have an idea of substance in me by virtue of that fact that I am a substance; but this would not account for my having the idea of an infinite substance, when I am finite, unless this idea proceeded from some substance which really was infinite.'¹⁷⁶ In other words, what is being discarded is the Socratic notion of maieutics whereby the role of the teacher is simply to draw out of the disciple what is already contained within. The idea of the infinite, insofar as it is a teaching, teaches by placing within us what would otherwise not be there. 'The idea of infinity... has been *put* into us... The thinker who has the idea of infinity is *more than himself*, and this inflating, this surplus does not come from within, as in the celebrated *project* of modern philosophers, in which the subject

¹⁷² *ibid.*, 41

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, 42

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 45

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 46

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 45

surpasses himself by creating.¹⁷⁷

Now, although Descartes' addresses the question of the existence of this Infinite Being which is God - though, as Benjamin points out, not directly - and conceives of it 'as an eminent being, or that being that *is* eminently,¹⁷⁸ what Levinas is concerned with is not any proofs of God's existence in the Cartesian Meditations - '[s]uch proofs,' says Benjamin, 'are henceforth for Descartes, not in God's gift; neither proof nor knowledge of God are God given'¹⁷⁹ - but with 'the break up of consciousness...'¹⁸⁰ The force of the idea of the infinite is that it 'breaks up the unity of the "I think",¹⁸¹ and it is this which is 'unsurpassable' in the Cartesian Meditation, and provides a methodological egress beyond the totality. While Descartes considers a God 'that *is* eminently,' Levinas focuses a God 'that *is* *eminently*.' *Eminence* is not simply an indicator of a transcendence beyond finitude, but take us beyond being itself, 'otherwise than being, or beyond essence,' for '[w]e are outside the order in which one passes from an idea to a being.'¹⁸²

The idea of the infinite, then, disrupts consciousness, interrupting its actuality as a first moment of consciousness, for the notion of the infinite, as Descartes says, is earlier than the finite and precedes any thought that the *Cogito* might actually think. Descartes reiterates this precedence of the infinite in his reply to the *Fifth Objection* to

¹⁷⁷ E Levinas, Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity, p.54. Levinas refers in a footnote to Heideggerian and Sartrean explanation of man as a project (*Entwurf* in Being and Time, pp.184-188, 263-266, 370-375; and *pro-jet* and *pro-jeter* in Being and Nothingness, pp. 650-653).

In Totality and Infinity, he writes that 'Socratic maieutics prevailed over a pedagogy that introduced ideas into a mind by violating or seducing (which amounts to the same thing) that mind' (p.171) whereas teaching is to be understood as a relationship with the 'whole of infinity of exteriority.' 'Teaching is not a species of a genus called domination, a hegemony at work within a totality, but is the presence of infinity breaking the closed circle of totality' (p.171). It 'is a discourse in which the master can bring to the student what the student does not yet know. It does not operate as a maieutics, but continues the placing in me of the idea of infinity' (p.180). He continues by saying that '[t]his whole work [Totality and Infinity] seeks only to present the spiritual according to this Cartesian order, prior to the Socratic order' (p.180).

¹⁷⁸ idem, GP, p.132

¹⁷⁹ A Benjamin, op. cit., p.39

¹⁸⁰ E Levinas, GP, p.132

¹⁸¹ ibid.

¹⁸² ibid., p.133

the *Third Meditation*: 'it is false that the infinite is understood through a negation of a boundary or limit; on the contrary, all limitation implies a negation of the infinite.'¹⁸³

Phenomenologically speaking, the idea of the infinite

'is an idea signifying with a signifyingness prior to presence, prior to all presence, prior to every origin in consciousness and thus an-archival, accessible in its trace. It signifies with a signifyingness from the first older than its exhibition, not exhausting itself in its exhibiting itself, not drawing its meaning from its manifestation, and thus breaking with the coincidence of Being and appearance in which, for Western philosophy, meaning or rationality lie, breaking with synopsis.'¹⁸⁴

This priority of the infinite with respect to the finite contests an understanding of consciousness as origin. 'The idea of God breaks up the thought which is an investment, synopsis and synthesis and can only enclose in a presence, re-present, reduce to presence or let be.'¹⁸⁵ 'The putting into us of an uncludable idea overturns the self-presence which is consciousness...'¹⁸⁶

Now, since the infinite precedes and founds any thought, the relationship of the finite *Cogito* to the Infinite cannot be one of that welcome and receptivity which derives from an already presupposed and constituted self; such a '[r]eceptivity is,' says Levinas, 'a recollection that takes place in a welcome, as an assumption that takes place under the force of a blow received.'¹⁸⁷ With respect to the idea of infinity, the *Cogito* is passive. 'The break up of the actuality of thought in the "idea of God" is a passivity more passive still than any passivity.'¹⁸⁸ The idea of infinity is not thought, but is undergone.

In fact, it is not possible for the idea of the infinite to be thought since thought is inadequate to the idea of the infinite, and it is here that the traditional understanding of knowledge, still evident in Husserl as the model of traversing a gap between the self and the Other in a representational act of consciousness and the consequent closing of a distance, breaks down. Descartes' first evidence 'reveals the I and God without

¹⁸³ Descartes, *Meditations*, 265 [Fifth Reply: CSM, 252]

¹⁸⁴ E Levinas, GP, p.134

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, pp.132-133

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.134

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.133

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

merging them,¹⁸⁹ sustaining them rather as 'two distinct moments of evidence mutually founding one another.'¹⁹⁰ Distance is not closed, but maintained, and this is the essential meaning of *separation*. Again in his reply to the *Fifth Objection*, he responds to the criticism that 'the human intellect is not capable of conceiving infinity, and hence... neither has nor can contemplate any idea representing an infinite thing,' and says that one must distinguish between 'an understanding which is suited to the scale of our intellect... and a fully adequate conception of things.'¹⁹¹ One can have the idea of the infinite without adequate comprehension of the infinite. In fact, it is the infinite's infinition, says Levinas, which is a constant opening up of distance and a maintenance of separation, which is known by the finite intellect. 'The distance between me and God, radical and necessary, is produced in being itself.'¹⁹² At the core of finite being there is produced, as a founding moment, a transcendence towards alterity, a relationship between the self and the Other, which is not destroyed either by the radical transcendence of what is other or by any incorporation of the other into a whole. The relation is 'a relation with a reality infinitely distant from my own reality, yet without this relation destroying this distance, as would happen with relations within the same...'¹⁹³ It is a relation with what is radically outwith the possibility of relationship, but which, in its utter distance, makes the relation possible. This separation or transcendence of the Infinite with respect to the "I" is the measure of the infinitude of the idea: 'the transcendence of the Infinite with respect to the I which is separated from it and which thinks it measures (so to speak) its very infinitude.'¹⁹⁴ Its infinition constitutes the content of the idea as incomprehensible and separate. 'The distance that separates *ideatum* and idea here constitutes the content of the *ideatum* itself.'¹⁹⁵ 'Infinity does not enter into the *idea* of infinity, is not grasped; this idea is not a concept. The infinite is the radically, absolutely, other. The transcendence of infinity with respect to

¹⁸⁹ idem, TI, p.48

¹⁹⁰ ibid.

¹⁹¹ Descartes, *Meditations*, 365, [*Fifth Reply*: CSM II 252]

¹⁹² E Levinas, TI, p.48

¹⁹³ ibid., p.41

¹⁹⁴ ibid., p.49

¹⁹⁵ ibid.

the ego that is separated from it and thinks it constitutes the first mark of its infinitude.¹⁹⁶

4.41 *The Agent Intellect and the Excess*

Levinas recognises that 'this presence in thought of an idea whose *ideatum* overflows the capacity of thought'¹⁹⁷ is given expression in the notion of *intellectus agens* in Aristotle, which Aquinas takes up,¹⁹⁸ and Rahner subsequently develops as the *Vorgriff*. 'The Aristotelian analysis of the intellect, which discovers the agent intellect coming in by the gates, absolutely exterior, and yet constituting, nowise compromising, the sovereign activity of reason, already substitutes for a maieutics a transitive action of the master, since reason, without abdicating, is found to be in a position to *receive*.'¹⁹⁹

In *de Anima*, 430a 10 - 25, Aristotle recognises a potentiality and an actuality both in nature and in the soul.²⁰⁰ The intellect can be said to be potential 'because it becomes all things' (ὁ παθητικὸς νοῦς), but active 'because it makes all things' (ὁ ποιητικὸς νοῦς) (430a 15-16). Now, although in the individual, potential knowledge, namely, the faculty of knowing, precedes actual knowledge, the priority is not absolute²⁰¹ for the true nature of the intellect is to be separable, impassive, unmixed, and

¹⁹⁶ idem, Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity, p.54

¹⁹⁷ E Levinas, TI, p.49

¹⁹⁸ For Thomas' Commentary on Aristotle's teaching on the Agent Intellect, see *In Aristotelis Librum De Anima Commentarium, Liber III, Lectio X, 'Praeter possibilem intellectum, qui est omnia fieri, dari rursus in anima oportere alium agentum intellectum, qui est omnia facere, et qui est separabilis, impassibilis, et immixtus actu, ostendit; conditiones item ponit ipsius intellectus in actu, concludens demum animae partem, intellectivam esse penitus a corpore separabilem, cui competet alius intelligendi modus, quam nunc habeat.'* Marietti, Turin, 1925, pp.239 et seq.

¹⁹⁹ E Levinas, TI, p.51

²⁰⁰ R D Hicks, Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), p.498

²⁰¹ In 430 a 21, Aristotle notes that, as potential knowledge does not precede actual knowledge in other respects, so neither does it precede in time, since before X actually knows something, someone else knew it. Potentiality may precede actuality in one individual, but this potentiality was preceded by actuality in someone else. cf. the general temporal priority of ενεργια over δειμις in *Metaph. 1049 b 17 f*

therefore immortal and eternal. The faculty of knowing, as knowledge in potency, is surpassed by the act of knowing in which knowing and known are one. The active intellect, as cause, acts upon the passive intellect to bring it to actuality, in similar manner to an efficient cause acting upon matter, as potentiality, to realise its form, or actuality,²⁰² as, for example, the iron in the hand of the artisan cannot pass from potency to act without some agency.²⁰³ In terms of intellect, the agency which realises knowledge is the active intellect. Hick renders *a 14*, 'the one intellect is passive, like matter, in that it becomes all objects, the other intellect is active, like the efficient cause, in that it makes all objects,²⁰⁴ the sense being that 'passive intellect exists in so far as it becomes all objects, active intellect, in so far as it makes all objects.'²⁰⁵ Thus, in the same way that light makes potential colours actual colours, so νοῦς makes potential νοητά actual νοητά. Now, what is to be avoided is a drift from potency to actuality and vice versa in the intellect such that the active intellect at one time thinks and at another time does not think; the active intellect is always actually thinking - '*sua essentia est sua operatio*.' Indeed, 'without the active intellect no thinking is possible.'²⁰⁶ As Rahner will articulate it, the agent intellect is the '*a priori* condition, inherent in thought itself, of the possibility of something actually intelligible.'²⁰⁷

Rahner develops the Thomistic interpretation of the agent intellect in terms of the *Vorgriff*, or the *excessus* in Thomas. The key point of significance here is that 'the agent intellect is defined essentially for Thomas by the fact that it apprehends *esse* absolutely.'²⁰⁸ As already seen, the one human knowledge is both intellect and sense. 'The one human knowledge is objective reception (*Hinnahme*) of the other, of the world... [but] ... [i]n order to grasp the possibility of an intuitive reception of the other as such on the basis of the presupposition of the identity of knowing and being,

²⁰² See Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1045 a 30

²⁰³ Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1071 b 29 f

²⁰⁴ R D Hicks, *op. cit.*, p.500

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.510

²⁰⁷ K Rahner, *SW*, p.136

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.202

sensibility as the act of matter was introduced.²⁰⁹ Sensibility, however, does not yield an object. For this to happen, a further act whereby subject and object are differentiated and on account of which the subject abstractively returns to itself is required. Such an act, 'which sets the knower over against what exists in itself (*das Ansichseiende*) by the abstraction of being from the existent,²¹⁰ is the accomplishment of the agent intellect. Now, the agent intellect accomplishes intelligibility by recognising the material confinement of form liberating it. Such a recognition is possible because the agent intellect is already beyond the individual object in a pre-apprehensive grasp of *esse absolutum*. As Rahner notes, it is the spontaneity of the human spirit - the agent intellect - towards the horizon of absolute Being which 'offers the possibility of experiencing the forms of sensibility as limited.'²¹¹ One can note here also the fact that the agent intellect, as pre-apprehension, does not attain an object. 'Apprehension cannot be understood as representation (*Vorstellung*).²¹² Indeed, '[e]very represented (*vorgestellte*) object of human knowledge... is able to be apprehended itself only in a pre-apprehension.'²¹³ Knowledge, as Levinas will stress, is not primarily representation. The agent intellect, as the tendency towards *esse absolutum*, or towards pure exteriority, beyond representation, as Levinas might say, is 'this presence in thought of an idea whose *ideatum* overflows the capacity of thought.'²¹⁴

Now, as 'always thinking', the thought which the agent intellect thinks is always in excess of its own capacity for thought and is to be thought in terms of the incomprehensible. Rahner writes, that

'[f]or Thomas the incomprehensibility of God is present in an "excessus", in an "excedere." This "excessus" should not simply be identified with the "via eminentiae," even though it is the latter's ultimate foundation. It is the primary movement of the spirit and of its activity (*intellectus agens*) directed to the unlimited being and

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, pp.132-133

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.135

²¹¹ *ibid.*, p.143

²¹² *ibid.*, p.202

²¹³ *ibid.*, p.143

²¹⁴ E Levinas, *TI*, p.49

incomprehensibility of God, which is the ground of all knowing.²¹⁵

The excessus, however, as transcendence towards the absolute presupposes the absolute as already having been given to the intellect in a transcendental experience, which is the experience of transcendence. This point is made by Rahner when, reflecting on veneration of the Sacred Heart, he notes that transcendental experience enables finite subjects to go beyond their limitations. 'They do this in virtue of the content implanted in them right from the very first by grace, the content in which their ultimate significance consists, and which is nothing less than the ineffable reality of God himself, and of his world permeated with himself.'²¹⁶ It is this relation with a God already given in grace, understood as God's self-communication to the finite creature, which renders spiritual activity possible. 'This horizon, then, makes knowledge possible within its ambience, this ultimate point of reference towards which all knowledge tends, is itself radically beyond all comprehension, and its incomprehensibility is such that it is not removed even when... the absolutely original cause and the ultimate goal of this transcendental awareness, prior to all knowledge, *actually imparts itself* directly to man.'²¹⁷ For Rahner, then, one can understand the infinite within us to which we are receptive and which contests the autonomy of subjectivity as grace. As Levinas says, the affirmation of the agent intellect is the affirmation that thought finds its origin not within the interiority of the self but in an exteriority 'which comes in by the gates,

²¹⁵ K Rahner, The Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas, pp.253-254

²¹⁶ K Rahner, Unity - Love - Mystery, p.239

²¹⁷ idem, Reflections on Methodology in Theology, pp.104-105 (*Italics added*).

Rahner invests this self-communication of God with Trinitarian significance in the same article. He writes that 'Man constitutes absolute and limitless transcendentality' (p.94) which is historically explicated and communicated and which is opened up and sustained by his orientation towards God as absolute mystery. The 'abiding mystery of God is not merely the asymptotic point of refuge which provides it with its goal' (p.94) but discloses itself 'to achieve a state of absolute immediacy and proximity to him, and in this act of self-communication itself sustains this transcendental movement on the part of man himself' (p.94) God's self-communication has its own history which finds its highpoint in Jesus Christ. 'Where the history of God's self-communication to the world attains its absolute highest point, its point of irreversibility, and where the offering of God's self-communication to the world as a whole as endowing it with grace at the transcendental level has brought about the definitive acceptance of this offering on the part of the world itself, there is achieved that which is designated as the hypostatic union and also (naming it according to its concrete realisation in history) that which we call the absolute bringer of salvation, Jesus as crucified and risen, the Son of the Father' (p.94).

absolutely exterior' in relation to which the subject is receptive.²¹⁸ And the precise meaning of this receptivity, 'beyond any capacity of the I' is 'to have the idea of infinity.'²¹⁹

Reflecting on the relation described by Descartes, Levinas maintains that what Descartes describes is a 'situation... in which the "I think" maintains with the Infinite it can nowise contain and from which it is separated a relation called "idea of infinity".²²⁰ This idea of infinity is to be distinguished from ideas of things whose 'objective' or 'formal' realities would have the possibility of a total coincidence; the idea of infinity is 'exceptional in that its *ideatum* surpasses its idea.'²²¹ In comparison with other ideas, '[t]he transcendent is the sole *ideatum* of which there can only be an idea in us; it is infinitely removed from its idea, that is exterior, because it is infinite.'²²² Again, '[a]s the idea of God, the *cogitatum* of a *cogitatio* which *to begin with* contains that *cogitatio*, signifies the un-contained par excellence; is it not the very absolution of the absolute? It overflows every capacity; the *cogitatum's* "objective reality" breaks open the "formal reality" of the cogitation.'²²³ The impossibility of grasping God in thought while having the idea of God in us points to an 'ex-ceptional relation... as though the difference between infinity and what ought to include and comprehend it were a non-indifference of Infinity to this impossible inclusion, a non-indifference of Infinity for thought. There is a putting of the Infinite into thought, but this is a wholly different structure than a comprehension of a *cogitatum* by a cogitation.'²²⁴ To think the infinite is not to think an object; it is, says Levinas, 'in reality to do more or better than think,'²²⁵ for what characterises thinking, as a mental act which represents an object, is essentially 'the

²¹⁸ E Levinas, TI, p.51

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

²²⁰ *ibid.*, p.48

²²¹ *ibid.*, p.49

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ *idem*, GP, p.132-133

²²⁴ *ibid.*, p.133

²²⁵ *idem*, TI, p.49

possession of an object,²²⁶ albeit at a distance, which is 'the suspension of its being.'²²⁷ 'The not-being-able-to-comprehend-Infinity-by-thought is somehow a positive relationship with this thought... not yet hastening towards the adequation between the term of the spontaneous teleology of consciousness and this term given in Being.'²²⁸

Now, the relationship with infinity as a positive relation rather than a negation of finitude highlights the 'arbitrary halt' within the Cartesian *cogito*. Besides methodic doubt, there is also the implication, in Descartes, that this doubt can be evidenced, and that this evidence, even though able to be denied, is yet affirmed in its very denial. 'In the *cogito* the thinking subject which denies its evidence ends up at the evidence of this work of negation.'²²⁹ However, the evidence of a self which doubts is not a final resting place which becomes the final or initial affirmation. Doubt continues, and, says Levinas, Descartes finds himself having embarked upon a journey which is a vertiginous descent beyond affirmation or negation towards an even more profound region, 'a work of infinite negation, which is indeed the work of the atheist subject that has broken with participation and that remains incapable of an affirmation.'²³⁰ This insight is taken up by Levinas who describes his own project as 'an analysis which feigns the disappearance of every existent - and even of the *cogito* which thinks it - [but] is overrun by the chaotic rumbling of an anonymous 'to exist', which is an existence without any existent and which no negation manages to overcome. *Il y a* - impersonally - like *it is raining* or *it is night*.²³¹ Consciousness, then, is ultimately incapable of any affirmation, for the self stands on the precipice of the *il y a*, which is the disappearance of all things. The Cartesian *cogito* demands for its affirmation the idea of God whose veracity is beyond doubt.

²²⁶ *ibid.*

²²⁷ *ibid.*

²²⁸ *idem*, GP, p.134

Compare Levinas' assertion of the positive nature of the relationship with infinity with Rahner when he writes, '[a]ny interpretation of the Thomist doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God should not overlook the fact that this doctrine is primarily a statement about man, about his finite nature and its positive quality' (K Rahner, The Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas, p.252).

²²⁹ E Levinas, TI, p.93

²³⁰ *ibid.*, p.93

²³¹ *idem*, Signature, in Difficile Liberté, p.407

'The I in the negativity manifested by doubt breaks with participation, but does not find in the *cogito* itself a stopping place. It is not the I, it is the other that can say yes. From him comes affirmation; he is at the commencement of experience.¹²³²

Again,

'[t]he latent birth of negation does not occur in subjectivity, but in the idea of Infinity. Or, if you will, it is in subjectivity qua idea of Infinity. It is in this sense that the idea of Infinity, as Descartes affirms, is a "genuine idea" and not merely what I conceive "by the negation of what is finite".¹²³³

It is precisely this '*difference between objectivity and transcendence*'¹²³⁴ which will guide his thinking on exteriority as a defence of subjectivity. Thought's comprehensive failure in the face of infinity, rather than being any negation of the subject, is its sustaining condition, by which subjective transcendence is enabled and subjectivity posited. To affirm Infinity *in-finitude*, the idea of the infinite in me, is to indicate that it is 'as though the psychic nature of subjectivity were equivalent to the negation of the finite by Infinity, as though - without wanting to play on the words - the *in* of Infinity were to signify both the *non* and the *within*.'¹²³⁵ The subject is constrained and negated but brought beyond limitation and confinement. As Rahner says, '[t]he most radical and ultimate statement of this anthropology is that man is a being who is endowed through the free self-communication of God in grace with the infinite incomprehensibility and incomprehensible infinity of God, and so shares in his own being in divine incomprehensibility.'¹²³⁶

4.5 Summary

Levinas contrasts two itineraries: the Ulyssean and the Abrahamic. The Ulyssean journey is by way of return. What is other and alien is brought home by thought to dwell in the confines of the Same. It is this movement of return to full presence which has

²³² idem, TI, p.93

²³³ idem, GP, p.144, n.7

²³⁴ idem, TI, p.49

²³⁵ idem, GP, p.133

²³⁶ K Rahner, The Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas, p.253

been the hallmark of western philosophy, 'a reduction of the Other to the Same.' In its place, Levinas proposes an Abrahamic ex-cendence which moves beyond the self in a relationship with true alterity. Such an ex-cendence is, for Levinas, an egress from the comprehension of Being.

Rahner, too, recognises the transcending movement beyond the same, and the inadequacy of knowledge understood as the comprehension of Being. Ultimately, the relation to Being is not primarily comprehension, but mystery. It is mystery not mastery which guides subjective spirituality, and Rahner's reduction is finally a *reductio in mysterium*.

Levinas expresses this relationship with true alterity or absolute exteriority as a relationship with infinity. Using the idea of the infinite which Descartes recognises as being placed within the cogito, but having its origin beyond the cogito, Levinas deepens the Husserlian phenomenological reflection to show that the idea of the infinite is a thought which breaks the unity of consciousness, for the idea of the infinite is an idea excessive to representational consciousness, and an idea to which the evidence of the cogito is inadequate. Husserl may have recognised this in pointing to the inter-subjective reduction, but unfortunately failed to pursue this thought.

Now, this idea of the Other in me finds its parallel in Rahner's understanding of grace as an ineffable content implanted in the finite subject from the very first, and which gives the subject significance. Transcendental experiences are experiences of transcendence 'in virtue of the content implanted in them right from the very first by grace, the content in which their ultimate significance consists, and which is nothing less than the ineffable reality of God himself, and of his world permeated with himself.'²³⁷

²³⁷K Rahner, Unity - Love - Mystery, p.239

5

Desiring the Other

To relate to the utterly excessive and absolutely other may seem impossible, on account of the 'theoretical incoherence of the notions of pure infinity and absolute otherness, or exteriority,' as Derrida has indicated. Indeed, Blanchot describes such a relationship as an 'impossible relationship.' Given the inability of comprehension to comprehend and mediate the immediate, how is a relationship with what is beyond mediation possible? Nonetheless, Levinas maintains the possibility and the significance of this 'impossible relationship.' To enter into a relationship with what is and remains beyond is to enter into an impossible relationship. It is a relationship which, for Levinas, is to be situated within the ethics of Desire, a relationship in which the power and possibility of the subject is called into question by the impossible relationship with infinity.

For Levinas, the ontological relationship which Heidegger evidences in Being and Time is a relationship of power. "I think" comes down to "I can" - an appropriation of being and an exploitation of reality. Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power.¹ However, the ontological relationship is not the original relationship but is itself subjected to the ethical relationship with the other, who remains absolutely other. Insofar as the relationship with the absolutely other, the ethical relation, is primary then it is the premise of all being's possibilities.²

5.1 *Transcendence as Desire*

Levinas expresses transcendence towards Infinity in terms of the dynamic of 'Desire.' Whereas Rahner understands human subjectivity as a dynamism of knowing and willing towards Being, Levinas deliberately views transcendence as an orientation beyond being.³ Knowledge, says Levinas, is always interested, that is, it is an interest in *esse*; desire, on the other hand, is disinterest; it has no concern for *esse*.

'The negativity of the *In* of Infinity... hollows out a desire which cannot be filled... It is a Desire that is beyond satisfaction, and unlike a need,

¹ E Levinas, TI, p.46

² cf. *ibid.*, pp.45-48

³ One will have to enquire whether Rahner and Levinas operate with the same understanding of Being. In brief, Levinas views the tradition as employing the concept of Being univocally; for Rahner, operating within his Thomistic perspective, Being can surely only be used analogously.

does not identify a term or an end. This endless Desire, for what is beyond Being is *dis-interestedness*, transcendence - desire for the Good.⁴

Now, Levinas sees in the Cartesian notion of the idea of the Infinite 'a relation with a being that maintains its total exteriority with respect to him who thinks it,'⁵ a 'contact with the intangible... which does not compromise the integrity of what is touched,'⁶ which does not render the Absolute relative through the contamination of contact. 'The absolute exteriority of the exterior being "absolves" itself from the relation in which it presents itself.'⁷ This may seem to present the impossible paradox of infinity in proximity, but the paradox produces itself as Desire. 'The infinite in the finite, the more in the less, which is accomplished by the idea of Infinity, is produced as Desire - not a Desire that the possession of the Desirable slakes, but the Desire for the Infinite which the desirable arouses rather than satisfies.'⁸ It is a disinterested desire, a relationship with the Other in which the Other constantly absolves himself from the relationship, refusing possession, and thus maintaining the relationship.

5.11 *The Dynamic of Desire*

Desire demands separation as the condition for the non-fulfilment of desire, and thus as desire's own condition, for just as the answer brings the question to a close and is, as Blanchot says, *le malheur du réponse*, so the satisfaction of desire is its own extinction. Levinas contrasts the dynamic of eating with that of loving. Eating

'is significant for us because of the place it occupies in everyday life, but especially because of the relationship between desire and its satisfaction which it represents, and which constitutes what is typical of life in the world. What characterises this relationship is a complete correspondence between desire and its satisfaction. Desire knows perfectly well what it wants. And food makes possible the realisation of its intention. At some

⁴ E Levinas, God and Philosophy, p.135

⁵ idem, TI, p.50

⁶ ibid.

⁷ ibid.

⁸ ibid.

moment everything is consummated.⁹

Hunger is a drive towards consumption; empty stomachs need filled with food. For Levinas, eating provides a model for that structure of solipsistic or pagan existence which often characterises life. A lack is felt, and in filling that lack we feel satisfied. Consumption is sincere; need targets and attains its object, with a complete correspondence between the intention and its fulfilment. But this economic model, with its language of interest and return, is ultimately destructive. Its ingestive approach envelops and swallows up what is other, *incorporating* it and destroying it by reducing it to the same. Eating, as the satisfaction of need, is 'the first movement of the Same.' The economic approach to the world is essentially centripetal, drawing what is other towards the self. 'The first movement of economy is in fact egoist.'¹⁰ It is a life without transcendence, a pagan existence. 'In economy... there is brought about the totalisation of absolutely singular beings.'¹¹ Economy is 'the human totality.'¹²

But, says Levinas, while it is true that '[n]o human or interhuman relationship can be enacted outside of economy...',¹³ ultimately, human life 'occurs beyond economic activity and the world,'¹⁴ and the economics of need finds its limit in the approach of the

⁹ idem, EE, p.43

Edith Wyschogrod, points out that whereas in his later works Levinas uses the term 'desire' to 'designate an effect inadequate to its object' (op. cit., p.20) in his earlier works, such as *Existence and Existents*, 'desire', like need' is satiable. For a fuller treatment of the contrast between the consumptive approach to the Other and the Other's transcendence, see my article, *Nec Tamen Consumebatur: Exodus 3 and the Non-Consumable Other*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 48, 1, (1995), pp.79-95

¹⁰ E Levinas, TI, p.157

¹¹ idem, *The Ego and Totality*, in CPP, p.44

¹² *ibid.*, p.45

¹³ idem, TI, 172

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.43

Even money, the symbol of economics, has a significance beyond the economic sphere, says Levinas. In economy, every object has a price, and what is of value (always to the self and never inherent in the object) can be costed. Money is the 'universal power of acquisition,' but it is also that power by which the reification and quantification of the person is effected within a system of exchange. The subject becomes a factor in an economic equation whose value and cost is derived from within that equation. 'In transactions there occurs the action of one freedom on another. Money, whose *metaphysical* significance has perhaps not yet been measured... corrupts the will by the power it offers it, and is thus a middle term par excellence. At the same time it maintains individuals outside of the totality, since it disposes of them, and includes them in the

other who is only attainable in Desire.

'Compare eating with loving, which occurs beyond the economic activity of the world. For what characterises love is an essential and insatiable hunger. To shake hands with a friend is to express one's friendship for him, but it is to convey that friendship as something inexpressible, and indeed as something unfulfilled, a permanent desire. *The very positivity of love lies in its negativity*. The burning bush that feeds the flames is not consumed.'¹⁵

At a fundamental level, the dynamic of need and its fulfilment ultimately fails to satisfy, for what the human person is oriented towards is a reality which cannot satisfy our hunger, not because that reality is inadequate to our emptiness, but because it is so much beyond our capacity to bear it. The other is not the satisfaction of all our hungers, but the pleasure (*plaisir*) of being continually hungry. The Other who can never be attained, who refuses every consumptive advance, actually feeds our desire by the very negativity of his or her presence.

'The trouble one feels before the beloved does not only precede what we call, in economic terms, possession, but is felt in the possession too. In the random agitation of caresses there is the admission that access is impossible, violence fails, possession is refused.'¹⁶

It is important to distinguish between desire and need. Desire (*Le Désir*) is not geared towards sensual enjoyment (*la jouissance*) but to pleasure (*plaisir*). Enjoyment, the first sign of subjectivity, flows from the satisfaction of need. Enjoyment can thus be viewed as an egoism, in which the subject is understood as the site of a manifold of sensual experience, a point made by Aristotle in *Metaphysics, 1* when he notes that the human desire for knowledge can be seen, at a first level, in "the delight that we take in our senses; quite apart from the use we make of them, we take delight in them for their

totality, since in commerce and transactions man himself is bought and sold; money is always to some extent wages. As exchange value of product it acts on the will it flatters, and gets a hold of the person. *It is thus the abstract element in which is brought about the generalisation of that which has no concept, the equating of that which has no quantity*' (idem, *The Ego and Totality*, pp.44-45).

But, says Levinas, '[w]hat is possessed in money is not the object, but the possession of objects. A possession of possession...' (ibid., p.45), and here lies the redemptive possibility of money, whereby it assumes the character no longer of being, as Sartre might say, 'pour soi' but 'pour l'autrui'. The other, by contesting money's power of possession and acquisition and rendering it powerless, redeems money from its solely economic and subjective circle. It can then become a refusal of my possession, and its worth derived from others.

¹⁵ idem, EE, p.43

¹⁶ ibid.

own sake...."¹⁷ In enjoyment I am completely caught up with the object, which satisfies me, and this satisfaction is enjoyment. Levinas himself says: 'In enjoyment, I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egotist and alone... entirely deaf to the Other... without ears, like a hungry stomach.'¹⁸

But, human living is not simply enjoyment; it is pleasure and delight. The enjoyment of eating is complemented by the pleasure of good company. Whereas need is the anxiety which the 'I' has for itself (*'l'anxiété du Moi pour soi'*), desire is being called beyond our subjective concern by an Other. It is, as Valéry says, a 'flawless desire' (*'désir sans défaut'*), referring to Plato, who in his analysis of pure pleasures, discovers an aspiration which is unconditioned by any lack. This is *desire*,¹⁹ and it is a desire for what is beyond, a metaphysics, a movement towards an alien outside-of-oneself (*hors-de-soi*), towards a yonder that is termed *other* in an eminent sense. 'The metaphysical desire tends towards *something else entirely*, toward the *absolutely other*.'²⁰ It is a desire which, unlike 'hedonism or eudaemonism which would actually attain the Desirable and find satisfaction or fulfilment - an intention fully realised,²¹ cannot be satisfied,²² for it has another intention; 'it desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness - the Desired does not fulfil it, but deepens it.'²³

¹⁷ Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 1

¹⁸ E Levinas, TI, p.134

¹⁹ See idem, HAH, p.49

²⁰ idem, TI, p.33

²¹ idem, God and Philosophy, p.135

²² idem, TI, p.34

²³ *ibid.*

'Le Désirable ne comble pas mon Désir mais le creuse, me nourrissant, en quelque manière, de nouvelles faims.'

One can see this dynamic of constant deepening in Simone Weil's reflection on the relationship between desire and the good, which Blanchot adverts to in The Infinite Conversation. Commenting upon the 'disquieting rapidity' of such statements of Weil's as, 'Therefore, God exists because I desire him: this is as certain as my own existence,' Blanchot explains that what Weil understands by this is 'that the desire for the good, being pure, is not a desire to possess it but only to desire it.... I am thus filled by my very desire: I constantly have the good when I desire it, since I desire only to desire it and not to have it' (IC, p.113). Now, there is some equivocation in Weil's understanding, notes Blanchot, for she speaks at the same time of desiring not to possess the good, but also of 'having the

Unlike the privation of need, 'the Desired does not fill it, but deepens it.'²⁴ Desire feeds on itself, bringing, as it were, new hungers. It cannot satisfy itself for its term is 'unanticipatable alterity.'²⁵ The more we come to know and appreciate the Beloved, the more we can call the Beloved our own, then the more is our desire fed. Love is an insatiable force, ever deepening itself. In this sense, it is absolute. The desiring being is mortal; the Desired invisible. 'To die for the invisible - that is metaphysics.'²⁶ One can perhaps hear echoes here of Augustine who, in his Confessions, enquires, "What do I love when I love my God?"²⁷ and then replies:

'Not material beauty or beauty of a temporal order; not the brilliance of earthly light, so welcome to our eyes; not the sweet melody of harmony and song; not the fragrance of flowers, perfumes or spices; not manna or honey; not limbs such as the body delights to embrace. It is not these that I love when I love my God.'

Augustine, like Descartes at the beginning of the *Third Meditation*, excludes from consideration those things which appeal to his senses and bring him enjoyment. His desire does not seek these.

'And yet, when I love him, it is true that I love a light of a certain kind, a voice, a perfume, a food, an embrace; but they are of the kind that I love in my inner self, when my soul is bathed in light that is not bound by space; when it listens to sound that never dies away; when it breathes fragrance that is not borne away on the wind; when it tastes food that is never consumed by the eating; when it clings to an embrace from which it is not severed by fulfilment of desire. This is what I love when I love

good,' as is indicated in such statements as: '*If desire for the good equals possession of the good, desire for the good is productive of the good, that is to say, it produces the desire for the good. Outside me there is a good which is superior to me and which influences me for the good every time I desire the good. As there is no possible limit to this operation, this external good is infinite; it is God.*' The contradiction is that if I am certain with regard to my possession of the Good, then by that very fact of grasping it, I have violated it, and it is no longer capable of being the lure to my disinterested desire, just as 'thought of the truth alone is enough to falsify the truth,' or 'knowing the rules required for salvation is enough to make one no longer capable of observing them' (IC, p.113). The resolution to the problem is that the good is not possessed in itself, but rather is possessed as desire. Just as my relationship with the Other will be articulated as responsibility, so my relationship with the good is expressed as desire.

²⁴ E Levinas, *Signature*, in *Difficile Liberté*, p.185

²⁵ idem, T1, p.34

²⁶ ibid., p.35

²⁷ Augustine, Confessions, X, 6

my God.'

For Augustine, the object of his desire is something which he can never possess or make his own: a food that can never be consumed, a desire which is never fulfilled. Such a desire finds its terminus in God, the infinite who can never be possessed or consumed by the one desiring. Elsewhere, he writes, 'You called me; you cried aloud to me; you broke the barrier of deafness. You shone upon me; your radiance enveloped me; you put my blindness to flight.... I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am inflamed with love of your peace.'²⁸

The same privileging of a speaking which overcomes the deafness of solitary subjectivity, or 'pagan existence' finds similar witness in Aquinas²⁹ who, when writing of the eucharistic mystery of Christ's presence, needs to make the point that '*Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur, Sed auditu solo toto creditur,*' and that faith, as Paul says, which comes from hearing (*fides ex auditu*) makes up for the defect of the senses. *Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui.*

5.12 *The disinterestedness of Desire*

Interest is an interest in *esse*. Need is interest; it has a care for its own being. '*Le besoin s'ouvre sur un monde qui est pour moi - il retourne à soi. Même sublime, comme besoin du salut, il est encore nostalgie, mal du retour. Le besoin est le retour même, l'anxiété du Moi pour soi, égoïsme, forme originelle de l'identification, assimilation du monde, en vue de la coïncidence avec soi, en vue du bonheur.*'³⁰ To be in the world is to be interested; intentionality directs itself towards a world, and as such, 'has already broken with this dis-interestedness,³¹ which characterised the insomnia before there is world.

Disinterest, on the other hand, disregards *esse* in favour of transcendence beyond essence; it is '*au-delà de l'essence.*' It is desire. Levinas writes,

'The negativity of the *in* of the Infinite - otherwise than being, divine

²⁸ *ibid.*, X, 27

²⁹ See the liturgical distillation of Aquinas' theology in his eucharistic hymns, *Adoro te devote* and *Pange lingua gloriosi*

³⁰ E Levinas, *Signification et le Sens*, in HAH, p. 48

³¹ *idem*, *God and Philosophy*, p. 156

comedy - hollows out a desire which cannot be filled, nourishes itself with its very augmentation, and is exalted as a desire, withdraws from its satisfaction in the measure that it approaches the desirable. It is a desire that is beyond satisfaction, and, unlike need, does not identify a term or an end. This endless desire for what is beyond being is *disinterestedness*, transcendence - desire for the Good.¹³²

Levinas asks though, 'Is not the *disinterestedness* of the desire for the Infinite an *interestedness*?'¹³³ For how can *interestedness* be excluded from desire? The human relationship with the other is a full of ambiguity and duplicity. 'It is the apotheosis of concern for self, yet is concern of the other pushed to its paroxysm.'¹³⁴ It may seek to be disinterested, but who can believe such disinterest, for morality is not self-forgetfulness, nor uncompensated prodigality, nor symbolic and gratuitous generosity, nor an offering. Rather every gift is predatory, all our paths lucrative, and what we consider spontaneous and the transparent actually unmasks the omnipresent reality of egocentrism.¹³⁵ The human person is not self-donation, but appropriating. 'The love of neighbour defines man as he ought to be, or as he will be tomorrow, once history has rid itself of its oppressive past.'¹³⁶ But, despite the apparent pessimism which the past engenders, Levinas maintains that 'it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality.'¹³⁷ Despite interested humanity, there are still 'people who spend their whole lives together; yet they could not explain what they desire of one another.'¹³⁸ What it is that one loves when one loves the other; 'why can the lovers themselves not say what they ask from one another beyond pleasure?'¹³⁹

³² *ibid.*, p.163

³³ *ibid.*, p.164

³⁴ See A Finkielkraut, *La Sagesse de l'amour*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp.11-12

³⁵ For a consideration of the economic structure of the gift and giving, see Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, Peggy Kamuf (tr.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁶ A Finkielkraut, *op. cit.*, p.12

³⁷ E Levinas, *TI*, p.21

³⁸ Plato, *Symposium*, 192c; quoted by Levinas, in *God and Philosophy*, p.164

³⁹ E Levinas, *God and Philosophy*, p.164

5.2 Proximity

The proximity of the other is a prerequisite of the desire which characterises our love for the other, and is at the heart of Levinas' attempt to lay out 'the exposition of the ethical signification of transcendence and of the Infinite beyond being... beginning with the proximity of the neighbour and my responsibility for the other.'⁴⁰ But that proximity is not to be understood in terms of the exteriority of the other which presents itself to me and which I can thereafter represent to myself. 'The proximity of beings of flesh and blood is not their presence "in flesh and bone," is not the fact that they take form for a look, present an exterior, quiddities, forms, give images, which they eye absorbs (and whose alterity the hand that touches or holds, suspends easily or lightly, annulling it by the simple grasp, as though no one contested this appropriation.)'⁴¹ Proximity, rather, is an experience of the *face*, which, as we have shown, is linked to the irreducible illeity of the Other.

'The face is not the mere assemblage of a nose, a forehead, eyes, etc.; it is all that, of course, but takes on the meaning of a face through the new dimension it opens up in the perception of a being. Through the face, the being is not only enclosed in its form and offered to the hand, it is also open, establishing itself in depth and, in this opening, presenting itself somehow in a personal way. The face is an irreducible mode in which ~~which~~ being can present itself in its identity.'⁴²

Flesh and blood may be the prerequisite for the giving of the other, but this does not mean that is it 'more originary than the origin.'⁴³ Nor is proximity to be construed as derived from spatial contiguity or coincidence, for then it would be relativised. Rather, spatiality and contiguity, like height, are rendered intelligible by their relation to the "humanity" they presuppose.⁴⁴ We do not have first space and nature, and thereafter human culture.⁴⁵ Proximity refuses the spatial reduction of the subject. Nor can

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.166

⁴¹ *idem*, OB, p.78

⁴² *idem*, *Difficult Freedom*, p.8

⁴³ *idem*, OB, p.78

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, p.81

⁴⁵ For Levinas' thinking on the relationship between meaning and culture, see *Signification et le Sens* in *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, where Levinas speaks of the ontological status of culture. See also, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* where Levinas outlines Husserl's criticism of the naturalistic theory of being and the

proximity be viewed in terms of intentionality. It is not a "consciousness of..." 'Not all spirituality is that of theoretical, voluntary or affective representation in an intentional subject.'¹⁴⁶ Just as *Dasein* breaks its fascination with objects in the world by interrupting its involvement to know them, a reductive move whereby they are rendered *Vorhanden* rather than *Zuhanden*, so to be conscious of proximity is already to have destroyed proximity and to have annulled its 'non-indifference or fraternity.' Rather, proximity arises in the other's approach to me and the establishment of 'a relationship in which I participate as a term, but where I am more, or less, than a term,'¹⁴⁷ and in which the subject-object relation, in which I am a subject, is overcome. The other approaches in fraternity, but to make the relation conscious is to destroy that fraternal relationship, like the embarrassment of the embrace in which the caress becomes conscious of touching and being touched, and so becomes the subject's repossession of self. Consciousness of closeness is already a loss of proximity for it has already withdrawn and 'repressed in itself a subjectivity older than knowing or power.'¹⁴⁸ Proximity refers to humanity, and consciousness, as ego and self-knowledge, is not the first mark of that humanity. Subjectivity is not primarily located in the 'indeclinable transcendental consciousness, which effects syntheses straightaway before itself, but is itself excluded from these syntheses, is implicated in them only through the detour of incarnation....'¹⁴⁹ In other words, my subjectivity is neither original nor originary. It is the subjectivity of the other who approaches me in proximity that is 'preliminary, anarchic, prior to consciousness, an implication, a being caught up in fraternity.'¹⁵⁰ Consciousness 'arises only on the ground of this antecedent relationship of obsession, which no consciousness could annul, and of which consciousness itself is a modification.'¹⁵¹ This means that proximity is never mutual; it is not a conjuncture in being, nor a reflection in the unity of

method of philosophy.

⁴⁶ idem, OB, p.82

⁴⁷ ibid.

⁴⁸ ibid., p.83

⁴⁹ ibid., p.85

⁵⁰ ibid., pp.82-83

⁵¹ ibid., p.87

transcendental apperception but 'is in two times, and thus is a transcendence.'⁵² And this is the very impossibility of the relationship of which Blanchot speaks,⁵³ and which Derrida takes up in his consideration of the madness of economic reason, a gift without present.⁵⁴ 'It temporalises itself, but with a diachronic temporality, outside, beyond or

⁵² *ibid.*, p.85

⁵³ For Blanchot, *La pensée (de) l'impossible* opens up the other relation (*l'autre rapport*), whose measure is the *other (autre)* (*Entretien*, p.61). What characterises the *impossible* relation is that there is 'not only the negative character of the experience that would make it perilous, but also the "excess of its affirmation" (what in this excess is irreducible to the power to affirm)' (IC, p.45), and thus, rather than being a negativity, impossibility exceeds every positivity. Secondly, impossibility is not a withdrawal from experience but rather the experience of 'what no longer allows itself to be withdrawn' (*ibid.*) yet is radically different such that what is disclosed in this movement of non-withdrawing withdrawal is the very obscurity of what is other. Thirdly, "presence" 'is intimacy as the Outside, the exterior become an intrusion that stifles, and the reversal of both one and the other' (*ibid.*, p.46). Impossibility 'indicates what in being has always already *preceded* being and yields to no ontology' (*ibid.*, p.47). It is in desire, that an impossible relation with the Other who is excessive to my power is achieved. Recalling Simone Weil's words - '*La vie humaine est impossible. Mais le malheur seul le fait sentir*' (*ibid.*, p.47) - Blanchot interprets them not as denouncing the absurdity and unbearability of life, but rather as 'recognising in impossibility our most human belonging to immediate human life' (*ibid.*), that is, 'the naked presence of the other' which gives rise to an infinite passion of desire. This, says Blanchot, is what Simone Weil means when she goes on to say '*Le désir est impossible,*' for desire is precisely a relation to impossibility, to 'impossibility become relation;' in other words, it is a relationship with that which radically exceeds our capabilities; desire demands the unattainability of its object; it is an intentionality towards the infinite, which understanding cannot adequately render as concept, and it is precisely this excess to comprehension which feeds our desire, making the desired ever more desirable; in other words, with respect to the self and its possibilities, desire manifests a relationship with impossibility, an impossibility which actually founds and sustains the relation. It parallels what Levinas terms the thought of the infinite. 'The thought which thinks more than it thinks is Desire' (*ibid.*, p.53). Unlike need, which is a lack waiting to be filled and satisfied,

'[t]he desire that one might call metaphysical is a desire for what we are not in want of, a desire that cannot be satisfied and that does not desire union with what it desires. It desires what the one who desires has no need of, what is not lacking and what the one who desires has no desire to attain, it being the very desire for what must remain inaccessible and foreign - a desire of the other as other, a desire that is austere, disinterested, without satisfaction, without nostalgia, unreturned, and without return' (*ibid.*).

⁵⁴ Derrida opens his reflection by saying, '[a]t the same time we are thinking the impossible, and it is at the same time' (*Given Time*, p.34). He lays out the difficulty by asking, '[w]hat does "at the same time" mean to say? Where could one ever place oneself in order to say "at the same time"? And to say what is meant, for example in some language or other, by "at the same time"' (*ibid.*). The characteristic of the gift is that it can never be offered in the same time. It is *alogical*, *anomical*, and also *atopical* because its inner

above, the time recuperable by reminiscence, in which consciousness abides and converses, and in which being and entities show themselves in experience.¹⁵⁵

Now, since it is the proximity of the other in his approach that evokes the subjectivity of the subject as response, for '[s]ubjectivity is not antecedent to proximity, in which it would later commit itself,¹⁵⁶ proximity's signification is the experience of responsibility in which the subject is 'one-for-the-other' - which means that no longer can subjectivity be spoken in the nominative, but is, from the first, 'set up as it were in the accusative form, from the first responsible and not being able to slip away.¹⁵⁷ It is the '*me voici*' spoken in response to other. 'The proper signification of subjectivity is proximity, but proximity is the very signifyingness of signification, the very establishing of the-one-for-the-other, the establishing of the sense which every thematised signification reflects in being.¹⁵⁸

dynamic is essential outwith symmetry and synchrony. The gift introduces time as diachrony into the relation; it is '*impossible* simultaneity of two times, of two events separated in time and which therefore cannot be given *at the same time*' (ibid.). It is looking for *midi à quatorze heures*. Derrida expands: 'The gift is not a gift, the gift only gives to the extent that it *gives time*. The difference between a gift and every other operation of pure and simple exchange is that the gift gives time. *There where there is gift, there is time*. What it gives, the gift, is time, but the gift of time is also a demand of time. The thing must not be restituted *immediately and right away*. There must be time, it must last, there must be waiting - without forgetting [*l'attente - sans oublier*]' (ibid., p.41).

⁵⁵ E Levinas, OB, p.85

⁵⁶ ibid., p.86

⁵⁷ ibid.

⁵⁸ ibid.

5.3 *Rahner on Desire*

The natural dynamism of the human spirit towards the absolute in knowing and willing which Rahner exposes through transcendental reflection finds its articulation in terms of desire when he addresses the relationship between nature and grace. This transposition to the theological helps bring to clearer focus the priority and initiative of the Other in Rahner's schema, a priority obscured when the philosophical propaedeutic of the knowing subject is taken as the phenomenological starting point. The often acrimonious debate regarding the relationship between nature and grace between those who held to the traditional view and those who, like de Lubac, espoused *la nouvelle Théologie*,⁵⁹ provoked response by Rahner.

The traditional division between nature and grace whereby, on the one hand, grace is understood extrinsic to nature, 'a mere superstructure... imposed upon nature by God's free decree,'⁶⁰ communicated by Revelation, and, on the other hand, nature is understood as 'that which we know about ourselves without the word of revelation,'⁶¹ found its critics among those who espoused *la nouvelle Théologie*. Rahner, too, criticises '[t]he correctness or adequacy of the standard view' and notes 'how an apparently minor thesis in St. Thomas' - namely, the human subject as one who is to be considered 'in the inmost heart of his being as "*desiderium naturale visionis beatificae*"⁶² - becomes, under the influence of Maréchal, 'the essential and central concept for the understanding of a spiritual nature.'⁶³ Rahner, however, also criticises *la nouvelle Théologie* for its failure to sufficiently safeguard the gratuity of grace, since to posit a natural desire for the beatific vision within the human subject is to compromise the unexacted character of grace.

⁵⁹ For a fuller exposition of the relationship between Rahner's understanding of the relationship between nature and grace and its possible expression in terms of Desire, as understood by Levinas, see my article, 'The Natural Desire for the Beatific Vision: Desiring the Other in Levinas and "*La Nouvelle Théologie*",' in Philosophy and Theology, 10, 1-2, (1996).

⁶⁰ K Rahner, Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace, p.298

⁶¹ idem, Nature and Grace, p.167

⁶² *ibid.*, p.169

⁶³ *ibid.*

5.31 *Desire as Intellectual Dynamism*

Maréchal had raised the question of man's supernatural destiny in *Cahier V* of *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique*. The subject's perfect beatitude consists in the intuition of absolute Being, but, in the light of Kant's Critique, the subject faces the embarrassing situation whereby his 'absolutely ultimate end depends upon the free bestowal of supernatural grace.'⁶⁴ The nature of the human intellect is such that, in itself, it is incapable of attaining absolute Being as its ultimate end for, though the desire is real, '[t]he fact that we desire an end is not an evident sign of its real possibility.'⁶⁵ '[T]he full satisfaction of our higher faculties cannot be discovered in the offer of our purely natural possibilities,⁶⁶ but 'stands in total dependence on.... the free bestowal by the absolute Being of the intuitive knowledge of himself,'⁶⁷ which is only made known through Revelation. What, then, can a rational critique gather from desire?

According to Maréchal, Thomas offers some positive indications regarding the supernatural destiny of man when he writes,

'Supra probatum est quod omnis intellectus *naturaliter desiderat* divinae substantiae visionem. Naturale autem desiderium non est inane. Quilibet igitur intellectus creatus *potest* pervenire ad divinae substantiae visionem, non impediante inferioritate naturae' (*Contra Gentiles*, III,57; cf. S.T., I, 12, 1 c).⁶⁸

Although only faith can inform us as to whether or not God wishes to become our supernatural beatitude, nonetheless, 'we deduce legitimately, from the radical disposition of our faculties, *the absolute (positive) possibility* of this beatitude, that is, *the existence of the remote objective causes which render its realisation possible*.'⁶⁹ Given the scholastic axiom, '*Desiderium naturae non potest esse inane*,' and, since 'it would be logically contradictory to hold that a *natural* impulsion should move a being towards something which is *impossible in itself*,' for then 'being would strive towards

⁶⁴ J Maréchal, *Le point de départ*, V, p.419

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.420

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.419

⁶⁸ 'Every intellect *desires naturally* to see the divine substance. Now the natural desire cannot be void. Therefore, every created intellect *can* arrive at the vision of the divine substance, the lowliness of its nature being no obstacle.'

⁶⁹ J Maréchal, *Le point de départ*, V, p.421

nothingness' and non-being would become the principle of being, man's natural finality 'reveals at least the *possibility in se* of the end towards which it strives.'⁷⁰ Once this principle is accepted, two hypotheses remain:

firstly, natural dynamism might be occasioned by *blind and necessary* forces, which would mean that, other extrinsic factors notwithstanding, the ultimate end would not only be possible but also be *realised*; or secondly, natural dynamism is effected by a *free agency*, which would mean that, although there might be an initial orientation within the subject, a further free intervention would be required in order for the initial orientation to be fulfilled.⁷¹ Thus desire's fulfilment is in the realm of the possible rather than the actual, being dependent on '*the existence of all the factors required for this possibility*.'⁷² It is to this second category that the 'natural desire' for the vision of God belongs. Maréchal thus preserves the gratuity of grace while, at the same time, insisting upon a natural desire, by stressing a double gratuity on the part of God whereby he freely creates and thereafter, but not necessarily, freely grants the fulfilment of the desire in the vision of God. As Maréchal writes, 'No *logical* incompatibility exists between the "possibility in itself" of the ultimate end, towards which our desire orients us, and the absence of every proximate possibility of realising this rigorously supernatural end, without an entirely free and gratuitous gift on the part of God. Further, there is moreover no *moral* incompatibility...'⁷³

The question remains, however, how our 'desire for the vision of God' can be properly called a 'natural desire,' or, in Rahner's terminology, how man's 'existential' can properly be called 'supernatural.' Maréchal seeks the answer in the intrinsic dynamism of the intellect. However, as Thomas indicated, one must distinguish between the implicit dynamism of our intellect, which can only find its ultimate satisfaction in the vision of God, and the explicit interpretation of this dynamism. Thomas, having asked whether every person truly aspires towards beatitude, replies,

'Respondeo dicendum quod beatitudo dupliciter potest considerari: uno modo secundum *communem* rationem beatitudinis, et sic necesse est quod omnis homo beatitudinem velit. Ratio autem beatitudinis communis est ut sit *bonum perfectum*, sicut dictum est... Cum autem bonum sit obiectum voluntatis, perfectum bonum est alicuius quod totaliter eius voluntati satisfacit. Unde

⁷⁰ ibid.

⁷¹ cf. ibid.

⁷² ibid.

⁷³ ibid.

appetere beatitudinem nihil aliud est quam appetere ut voluntas satiatur: *quod quilibet vult*. Alio modo possumus loqui de beatitudo consistit: et *sic non omnes cognoscunt beatitudinem*, quia nesciunt cui rei communis ratio beatitudinis conveniat...! (S.T., Ia, IIae, 5,8, c; cfr. Ibid, ad 2)⁷⁴

Thus, following Thomas, Maréchal concludes

'that the natural impulsion of our intellectual faculties drives them towards the immediate intuition of the absolute Being. It is true that this intuition exceeds the power and the exigencies of every finite intelligence, left to its sole natural resources. Yet the radical impulsion which drives it to this intuition is not conceivable without the objective, at least remote, possibility of reaching it.'⁷⁵

And this implies two necessary conditions, firstly, '*the existence of an absolute Being*, capable of communicating itself, and secondly, '*the capability of our intelligence* for receiving this communication.'⁷⁶

Rahner sums up Maréchal's thought thus:

'[t]his desire is conditional and so there is no necessity for the actual call to the vision by grace. But it is a real longing for the absolute being and one which is present in every spiritual act as its *raison d'être*. Without being expressly and conceptually present, it is the *a priori* condition of all knowledge where a finite object is grasped.'⁷⁷

Rahner, however, develops Maréchal's thinking, and proclaims his own kerygma on grace. 'God wishes to communicate himself, to pour forth the love which he himself is. This is the first and the last of his real plans and hence of his real world too.'⁷⁸ To achieve this, God creates a creature not only whom he can love but also who *can* receive this Love which is God himself, and who can and must accept it as 'the unexpected, unexacted gift.' In other words, the capacity for grace *as* grace in man is a hypothetical necessity of his nature. Put theologically, Rahner argues that a perduring ability and

⁷⁴ 'Beatitudo can be considered in the abstract and in the concrete. Take it in its *general* meaning, then everybody is bound to wish for happiness. For it signifies, as we have said, *complete goodness*. Since the good is the object of the will, the perfect good is that which satisfies it altogether. To desire to be happy is nothing else than to wish for this satisfaction. *And each and everyone wishes it*. Take it, however, to the point where happiness lies, *then all do not recognise it*, for they are ignorant about the object which gathers all good together.'

⁷⁵ J Maréchal, *Le point de départ*, V, pp.423-424

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.424

⁷⁷ K Rahner, *Nature and Grace*, p.169

⁷⁸ *idem*, *Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace*, p.310

congeniality for grace belongs to man as an absolutely defining existential, but that grace can only be accepted *as* grace, that is *as* supernatural, when the existential itself is accepted as unexacted.

'Where man knows of the *visio beatifica* by the word of revelation, and experiences it as a marvel of the free love of God in his longing for it, he has to say that it is not due to him (by nature), even as an existing nature - so that the gratuitousness of creation, as a free act of God, and grace as a free gift to the creature, as something already existing, are not one and the same gift of God's free act.'⁷⁹

Again, '[t]he possibility of experiencing grace and the possibility of experiencing grace *as* grace are not the same thing.'⁸⁰ In other words, it is one thing to affirm a natural orientation or desire for absolute Being, a supernatural existential, but quite another to identify that with the gratuity of God's self-communication *as* grace. As a *potentia oboedientialis*, man has 'an inner ordination' or 'an openness for this supernatural existential' which is not merely a non-repugnance, but, '[t]o be ordained to grace, and to be so constituted that there is an exigence for grace which would render the whole ordination to grace futile if grace were not actually imparted, are by no means the same thing.'⁸¹

5.32 *Natural Desire in de Lubac*

Now de Lubac agrees with Maréchal that, 'in the context of his time,' Thomas had to 'defend the possibility of the beatific vision,' and 'to explain above all else how the order of grace envelops and completes the order of nature.'⁸² However, while admitting that Maréchal, along with Rousselot, initiated a new era in scholastic thinking, he criticises them because 'the position that they hold or that they suggest appears to us... a little too timid, founded on a historical enquiry which is insufficient.'⁸³ Further, the adoption of Kant's transcendental critique as a basis of enquiry means that this

⁷⁹ idem, Nature and Grace, p.185

⁸⁰ idem, Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace, p.300

⁸¹ idem, Nature and Grace, p.186

⁸² H de Lubac, Le mystère du Surnaturel, p.49

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.236

approach remains 'a little too dependent on conceptions or points of view which are too modern.'⁸⁴ 'It happens frequently that one reasons as if the whole mystery was on the side of God, while nothing in man escaped being grasped in common experience or natural reason. All our nature would be in us, at least in right, transparent, and we would hold the key to all that manifests itself to us.'⁸⁵ This is some (transcendental) illusion! Nonetheless, de Lubac recognises the value of Maréchal's return to the tradition, and proposes his own study 'undertaken from a theological point of view and on an enlarged base [which] can lead more quickly to more complete results,' 'not to contradict such an effort, but to help accomplish it.'⁸⁶

De Lubac notes 'a certain deficit of method' in the Maréchal school, for, although, fortuitously, they generally hold to the Thomistic axiom "*desiderium naturae nequit esse inane*" 'the interpretation which they give to it is only half exact.'⁸⁷ In their critical concern, the problem of the desire for the beatific vision 'was less studied for itself, than as a function of problems of another nature, and one was forced to discover an intellectual dynamism apt to found the absolute value of our knowledge, more than to place in relief and analyse directly the desire of the spirit: an enterprise perfectly legitimate, but which imposed a perspective a little narrow.'⁸⁸ De Lubac points out that Maréchal rightly could say that "'the Absolute has placed its mark on the basic tendency of our intelligence," "the natural impulsion of our intellectual faculties orients them towards the immediate intuition of absolute Being," since this intuition "goes beyond the powers (*puissances*) and exceeds the demand of every finite intelligence given over to natural resources;" but de Lubac wants to add, but not by way of contradiction, that the legitimate deduction of the need of the absolute from the radical disposition of our faculties 'considerably limits the plan of knowledge.'⁸⁹

De Lubac, therefore, seeks to go further. Like Maréchal, he argues that the human subject is constituted as a natural desire for God, which is absolute, and not mere velleity. The finitude of the human spirit, however, means that the subject is radically

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.259

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.236

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.237

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*; cf. J Maréchal, *Le point*, V, p.421

incapable by itself of realising its own intention. The desire, then, must be, not the work of the subject, but the work of God, and so can rightly be called supernatural. But since it is a desire which is found in human nature, it can also rightly be termed 'natural.' God fulfills the desire which he has implanted in us, and in so doing, he responds to his own call. The problem of the unexactedness of grace is a pseudo-problem which rests on the false dilemma created by an extrinsicism of first positing a desire for God, and thereafter a supernatural calling.⁹⁰ The reality of concrete human experience is otherwise, however. A purely natural existence devoid of supernatural finality is an abstraction. One does not first of all live a natural existence and then uncover a desire for the supernatural. One already lives in the midst of this desire.

5.33 *Rahner's Criticism of "La Nouvelle Théologie"*

Rahner criticises de Lubac's position, fearing that it compromises the teaching that 'grace is absolutely unexacted,'⁹¹ and the theological value of the concept of pure nature. It seems to Rahner that de Lubac too readily identifies the experience of human transcendence as the experience of the supernatural, failing to recognise that such experience remains transcendental, and as such, is 'never to be absolutely and exhaustively analysed.'⁹² Although grace permeates human experience, nonetheless it retains a certain transcendentality with respect to human experience's representation of itself. For Rahner, '[t]he only question then is whether this axiom [the absolute unexactedness of grace] is objectively consistent with the theorem of an unconditional reference to grace in virtue of *nature* as such.'⁹³ The 'new theology' espoused by de Lubac, which regarded a supernatural orientation 'as on the one hand an intrinsic, inamissable constituent of man's nature, and on the other so conceived that the withholding of the end of this directedness was expounded as being incompatible with God's wisdom and goodness and in this sense unconditional' is inconsistent, and so, says Rahner, '[w]e hold that... grace and beatific vision can no longer be said to be

⁹⁰ cf. H de Lubac, *Surnaturel*, pp.486-487; 489, n.1

⁹¹ K Rahner, Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace, p.303

⁹² *ibid.*, p.300, n.1

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.304

unexacted.¹⁹⁴

This dilemma perdures, says Rahner, even when one tries to understand the paradoxical relationship between nature and grace on the model of inter-personal love. One might argue that the human person cannot be understood as being fulfilled other than in a loving, personal communion with God, which, by its nature, cannot be coerced but can only be freely given and received. One might argue that the *essence* of a person is that he 'must accept personal love as unexacted if it is not to lose its own meaning, and that hence its unconditional ordination to this love and the unexactedness of the love not only do not exclude each other but mutually condition each other.'¹⁹⁵ To such arguments, however, one must reply, and decisively so, says Rahner, that 'that person, who has *himself created* such an ordination to the personal and intimate communion of love between two persons (in our case man and God)' ... [cannot] ... 'once this has been presupposed still simultaneously refuse this communion without offending against the meaning of this creation and his very creative act itself.'¹⁹⁶ But if this is so, then 'it follows that on the supposition of such an ordination (*in sensu composito* with it) the actual granting of the end of this ordination can no longer be free and unexacted. Thus if the ordination cannot be detached from the nature, the fulfilment of the ordination, from *God's* point of view precisely, is exacted. And, as all admit, just this is false, and so must the presupposition be.'¹⁹⁷

In other words, one can say, given the operation of grace in man's innermost life, that either this disposition to grace is impossible in terms of man's nature, or that the disposition already belongs to the supernatural order. But one cannot say both that the disposition is natural and that grace remains unexacted.

De Lubac had sought to bridge the gulf between nature and grace in terms of the paradoxical nature of the natural desire for the supernatural. This is conceivable, says Rahner, if one understands desire as 'openness', a *potentia oboedientialis*, for the supernatural (though this has often been interpreted in theology in a 'too purely formal and negative way as a mere non-repugnance.'¹⁹⁸ However, 'a "desire" which is natural

⁹⁴ ibid.

⁹⁵ ibid., p.306

⁹⁶ ibid.

⁹⁷ ibid.

⁹⁸ ibid., p.309

and at the same time, even if only objectively, inevitably attracts grace to itself (the desire itself, not just God's wisdom and his promise but the latter through the former!), is a desire which "demands" grace, demands precisely because it would otherwise be meaningless. But this is incompatible with the unexactedness of grace.⁹⁹

5.34 *De Lubac's Criticism of Rahner*

Now, Rahner criticises de Lubac on account of his 'ontological presuppositions and conceptions,' but do these criticisms not flow directly from his own 'ontological presuppositions and conceptions' which, as indicated, de Lubac has himself already pointed out in his criticism of the inadequacy of the critical approach adopted by Maréchal?

First of all, with regard to the notion of the 'unexactedness' of grace, de Lubac observes that

'he [Rahner] believed himself to be discussing us [de Lubac], in the study here mentioned, while he discusses an article in German which not only is not by us, but whose very existence we have long ignored. It seems moreover that he has not read (other than in an article of 1949) what we have ourselves written on the subject. Let us be equally clear that we have only 'scorned' the concept of 'oboediential potency' in the precise sense which he himself resolutely takes distance from it.¹⁰⁰

Rahner says in the same article, that his concern was chiefly with D., 'because his essay is perhaps the clearest, and also the most extreme position of the standpoint here rejected.'¹⁰¹ 'Apart from H de Lubac's essay, *Le mystère du surnaturel* in RSR XXXVI (1949), pp.80-121, most of the essays from this circle were primarily historical in character, and consequently not easily to be interpreted as regards their theoretical and

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.309-310

¹⁰⁰ H de Lubac, *Le mystère du Surnaturel*, p.142, n.1; Cf. Rahner, *Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace*, p.315) The article in question is *Ein Weg zur Bestimmung des Verhältnisses von Natur und Gnade, Orientierung, 14 (1950), 138-141*, by the anonymous 'D.' whom U Kuhn, in *Natur und Gnade: Untersuchungen zur deutschen Katholischen Theologie der Gegenwart*, (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlaghaus, 1961, 116,) identifies as Pierre Delaye.

¹⁰¹ K Rahner, *Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace*, p.304, n.3

systematic intentions.¹⁰² Rahner maintains that D. applies the same thinking to the created order as to grace, although the gift is by far greater. Creation is unexacted, insofar as God had no obligation to create and *so* to create. Having so created, according to D., God is under no similar obligation to endow the creature with his grace. As Rahner points out, for D. 'grace is distinguished from other created things only in respect of the greatness of the gift but not in respect of the unexactedness itself; for these other created things may also be said in a certain sense to be "unexacted," in so far as they arise out of God's freedom.'¹⁰³

More constructively, De Lubac points out that Rahner himself recognises the insufficiency of the world for the human spirit, which opens out onto the horizon of absolute being. By its very nature, spirit possesses an 'unlimited transcendence,' which gives 'an infinite character' to the human horizon, and this kind of infinitude constitutes precisely the 'definition' of man and his 'frontier.' Rahner questions the scholastic concept of 'nature' as being modelled on 'what is less than human,' indicating that human nature cannot be assigned an end which is perfectly defined materially. 'One has only to ask why a supernatural end can be set for man without annulling his nature, and why God cannot do this with the nature of something below man. Then it becomes apparent at once that however universally the formal ontology of nature, end etc. may extend, these concepts can only be pursued in a highly analogical way.'¹⁰⁴ The reality, however, says de Lubac, is that 'the "scholastic" concept of nature, too much copied on the model of the infra-human, is more the concept of a modern scholasticism,¹⁰⁵ and the analogical corrections desired by Rahner are already to be found in Thomas, who did not content himself with the universal aptitude for knowledge, but, instructed by faith and the tradition, understood the human soul to possess "'a centre from which the spiritual faculties pour out, a tendency towards the whole of being and towards God, to the vision of which it is also wholly naturally incapable of attaining."¹⁰⁶ Whereas natural being displayed a vestigial and distant reflection of divinity, human being resembles God "'by way of image," and this image, which is "the intellectual nature

¹⁰² ibid.

¹⁰³ ibid., p.305

¹⁰⁴ ibid., p.317; cf. H de Lubac, *Le mystère du Surnaturel*, p.142

¹⁰⁵ H de Lubac, *Le mystère du Surnaturel*, p.142

¹⁰⁶ ibid.

itself" in him, is drawn towards its Model: "fertur, vel nata est ferri in Deum (S.T., I, q.93, a.8)"¹⁰⁷ 'Sic igitur in homine invenitur Dei similitudo per modum imaginis secundum mentem, sed secundum alias partes eius per modum vestigii' (S.T., I, q.93, a.6). 'Cum homo secundum intellectualem naturam ad imaginem Dei esse dicatur' (S.T., I, q.93, a.4) - 'id in quo principaliter ratio imaginis consistit, scilicet quantum ad intellectualem naturam' (ad 1m).

Now, if we hold on to Thomas' notion of 'the intellectual nature in itself *being drawn* towards its model, and juxtapose to this Rahner's claim that 'a "desire" which is natural and at the same time, even if only objectively, inevitably attracts grace to itself... is a desire which "demands" grace, demands precisely because it would otherwise be meaningless,' and that 'this is incompatible with the unexactedness of grace,'¹⁰⁸ then we can perhaps begin to see that the problem of the unexactedness of the divine gift centres on the interpretation of desire. De Lubac argues that God creates in the creature a desire for its fulfilment in the beatific vision, a fulfilment which cannot be refused. Rahner maintains that this amounts to an exigence for grace. However, the very character of desire, as Levinas has already shown, is that Desire is Desire precisely because it is incapable of being satisfied, not on account of an incapacity of the one who experiences the desire, but on account of the absolute otherness, or infinity, of the Desirable. De Lubac gives some indications for this aspect of Desire when he writes,

'As "natural" and as "serious" as it is, the desire for the divine vision is in no way something which would determine the effective gift on the part of God. God is not regulated by our desire! Between the two terms, the relationship can only be inverse: it is the free will of the giver which awakens the desire in the one who wants to attain it. This point is beyond contest. All question of demand on the part of the creature is banished. But it remains nonetheless, one might say, that such an existing desire in the creature becomes the sign, not only of a possible gift on the part of God, but of a certain gift. It is the attestation of a promise, inscribed and read in being itself. In the knowledge acquired of this desire, would it not be right to conclude to the effective reality of this gift?'¹⁰⁹

Further, one must also say that '[o]nce the natural desire for the vision... has been able to be recognised, discerned, analysed, its term is never known other than "aliquo

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.143

¹⁰⁸ K. Rahner, Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace, pp.309-310

¹⁰⁹ H de Lubac, Le mystère du Surnaturel, p.257

modo".¹¹⁰ It is no longer that it is never truly desired 'in a sufficient manner;' rather, it is not conceived in a truly adequate manner.¹¹¹ The sufficiency of desire is that it is the very insufficiency and inadequacy of the Desire to the Desirable which sustains the Desire and renders it sufficient - like the very positivity of love lying in the negativity of possession of which Levinas speaks¹¹² - but its conceptualisation inadequate. Contrast this with Levinas who writes, 'desire is an aspiration that the Desirable animates; it originates from its "object"; it is revelation - whereas need is a void of the Soul; it proceeds from the subject.'¹¹³ Like the inversion of the relationship of which de Lubac speaks, Levinas argues that '[t]he same and the other at the same time maintain themselves in relationship and *absolve* themselves from this relation, remain absolutely separated.'¹¹⁴ As previously indicated, there is no coming together into an ensemble, nor any notion of desire being the result of any lack or privation in the subject which would demand fulfilment. Desire, as we have said, is 'the need of him who lacks nothing, the aspiration of him who possesses his being entirely, who goes beyond his plenitude, who has the idea of Infinity,'¹¹⁵ but that idea takes its origin beyond the subject. The problem with the narrow intellectual approach which, according to de Lubac, is adopted by Maréchal and sustained in Rahner is that Desire is interpreted in terms of finite spirit which opens on to the dilemma of reconciling a natural desire with a supernatural object, whereas, according to Levinas, '[w]hat is essential to created existence is not the limited character of its being, and the concrete structure of the creature is not deducible from this finitude. What is essential to created existence is its separation with regard to the Infinite.'¹¹⁶

How, then, can the '*desiderium naturale visionis beatificae*' be interpreted within Levinas' ethical understanding of Desire?

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.271-272

¹¹¹ *cf. ibid.*, p.272

¹¹² *Cf. E Levinas, EE, p.43*

¹¹³ *idem, TI, p.62*

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.102

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.103

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.105

5.4 *Levinas on Desire, and graced existence*

'Creatures, and more especially humans, are the grammar of God's potential Self-utterance,'¹¹⁷ remarks Stephen Duffy. Levinas' exposition of desire enables the language of grace to be spoken not in the language of ontology and logical coherence, but rather in the language of proximity, ethical summons and responsibility.

Levinas distinguishes between 'pagan existence,' devoid of a transcendent reference, and life as transcendence. "'The true life is absent." But we are in the world.'¹¹⁸ Pagan existence is, for Levinas, 'an existence which takes itself to be natural, for whom its place in the sun, its ground, its *site*, orient all signification - a pagan *existing*.'¹¹⁹ It is concerned for itself, 'building and cultivating, in the midst of a familiar landscape, on a maternal earth.'¹²⁰ Levinas, of course, is attacking Heidegger and his understanding of *Dasein* as care, concern, and comprehension; *Dasein* as the 'ultimate "for-the-sake-of-which" in the light of whose project and possibilities all else is comprehended. What characterises *Dasein*, for Levinas, is essentially a lack of transcendence, an atheism. *Dasein* has its own preoccupation with itself. Care for its own Being - a solitary solicitude for self - is its existential. 'In Heidegger atheism is a paganism.'¹²¹

Such an existence, we want to argue, however, functions, for Levinas, like Rahner's understanding of pure nature as a *Restbegriff*, or 'remainder concept,' whose function serves to safeguard the gratuity and unexactedness of grace, as can be seen in Levinas' invitation to perform a notional, imaginative removal of 'all beings, things and persons' until there is nothing left but the impersonal no-thing-ness of the *there is (il y a)*. 'The impersonal, anonymous, yet inextinguishable "consummation" of being, which murmurs in the depths of nothingness itself we shall designate by the term *there is*. The

¹¹⁷ S J Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought*, p.98

¹¹⁸ E Levinas, TI, p.33

¹¹⁹ idem, *Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity*, p.52

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.53

Levinas points out that 'Heidegger's *Miteinandersein* also remains a collectivity of the *with*, and it is *around* truth that its authentic form is found. It is a collectivity formed around something common. And like in all philosophies of communion, in Heidegger sociality is completely found in the solitary subject. The analysis of *Dasein*, in its authentic form, is carried out in terms of solitude' (EE, pp.94-95).

there is, inasmuch as it resists a personal form, is "being in general".¹²² It is against this background of anonymous, impersonal 'being in general' that Levinas' subject emerges and, as if waking,¹²³ overcomes bare existence to posit itself at a first level in the happy enjoyment of the world - 'the very pulsation of the I,¹²⁴ - and affirm itself as an existent, as a *hypostasis* of existent and existence such that one can say that 'it is not just that one is, one is oneself (*on n'est pas, on s'est*).¹²⁵ Hypostasis, however, is an act without transcendence, for, although it is the assertion of the mastery, power or virility of the existent over the *there is*, nonetheless the existent still carries the weight of existence as a definitive ontological burden. 'Transcendence is not the fundamental movement of the ontological adventure; it is founded in the non-transcendence of position.'¹²⁶ Because the subject still has a foothold in existence, it

'finds itself again to be a solitude, in the definiteness of the bond with which the ego is chained to its self.... The *I* always has one foot caught in its own existence.... It is forever bound to the existence which it has taken up. This impossibility of the ego not to be a self constitutes the underlying tragic element in the ego, the fact that it is riveted to its own being.'¹²⁷

Again,

'The enchainment to oneself is the impossibility of getting rid of oneself.... To be an ego is not only to be for oneself; it is also to be with oneself.'¹²⁸

However, Levinas' subject does not remain at this first level of awakening to pagan, 'natural' existing. Like Rahner's historical subject whose 'nature' always and already has a history in which grace is offered, Levinas' subject is already and always constituted as transcendence towards what is excessively other, and to which there is no prior claim. Pagan existence, as a notional first level of awakening, has the function of preserving

¹²² *ibid.*, p.57

¹²³ A Levinassian consideration of the nature-grace debate can also be developed employing the notion of a two-fold waking whereby the subject first awakens to 'pagan existence' and thereafter to a relationship with alterity. See my article, Gloria Dei, Homo Vigilans: Waking up to Grace in Rahner and Levinas, *Louvain Studies*, Autumn, 1996.

¹²⁴ *idem*, TI, p.113

¹²⁵ *idem*, EE, p.28

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p.100

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p.84

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p.88

the utter initiative of the other in respect of the subject. The transcendence of intersubjectivity is not the work of the subject which might be achieved through some Pelagian effort, but the utter initiative of the Other, as grace and glory. Like the thought of infinity, its 'movement proceeds from what is thought and not from the thinker.'¹²⁹

Now, although Levinas presents the relationship with alterity within a chronology of need and desire, the actual situation is that need and enjoyment already operate within an implicit, ethical horizon of alterity, that is, of desire. 'Let us note again,' he says, 'the difference between need and Desire: in need I can sink my teeth into the real and satisfy myself in assimilating the other; in Desire there is no sinking one's teeth into being, no satiety, but an uncharted future before me.'¹³⁰ He continues, '[i]ndeed the time presupposed by need is provided me by Desire; human need already rests on Desire. Need has thus the time to convert this *other* into *the same* by labour.'¹³¹ In other words, it is because the personal other has opened up a time ahead of me that the present time of need and enjoyment is possible. Paradoxically, my attempt to create a place for myself and enclose the home as my own totality within which I can be happily shut up in my self, demands an openness to what is other, which, in turn, is the possibility of an egress beyond the world towards the *real* infinity of the absolutely Other; '*within this very interiority* hollowed out by enjoyment there must be produced a heteronomy that incites to another destiny than this animal complacency in oneself.'¹³² If one might render this in terms more theologically familiar, the finite spirit is not such that its dynamic orientation towards what is other originates in its own lack, but because it always and already operates within the transcendental horizon of an absolute - a 'supernatural existential,' as Rahner expresses it - which evokes transcendence, and because it is 'so' constituted as an 'openness,' a *potentia oboedientialis*, to alterity. Transcendence is not an act of the subject; it is a responsive move towards alterity. Indeed, this is why Levinas can describe the relationship with the other as *liturgy*, for any work which I might undertake, or any expression I might make, presuppose an other, 'independent of my initiative and my power,¹³³ to whom the work is offered.

'Said otherwise, expression, before being a celebration of being, is a

¹²⁹ idem, TI, p.61

¹³⁰ ibid., p.117

¹³¹ ibid.

¹³² ibid., p.149

¹³³ ibid., p.51

relation with the one to whom I express the expression and whose presence is already required in order that my cultural gesture of expression might be produced. The Other (*Autrui*) who opposes me (*me fait face*) is not included in the totality of expressed being. He rises up beyond an assembling of being, as the one to whom I express what I express. I find my self facing (*en face*) the Other. He is neither a cultural signification, nor a simple given. He is, primordially, *meaning*.¹³⁴

In other words, my existence as a separated being implies 'a first revelation of the Other'¹³⁵ by which my place in the sun is opened in hospitable welcome to the Other. Simple, though sincere, enjoyment of the elemental world is not yet habitation, nor is it transcendence. '[T]he idea of infinity, revealed in the face, does not only *require* a separated being; the light of the face is necessary for separation.'¹³⁶ What is ontologically definite for the existent, namely the relationship with Existence which manifests itself in need and enjoyment, is acted out within the context of the ethical relation with alterity. As 'unanticipatable alterity,'¹³⁷ eminently *other*, ungraspable (*insaisissable*) and infinite, the Other provokes Desire. The text of Being is always to be read within the *context* of ethics. In terms of a natural desire for the absolute, one can perhaps say that in his pagan existing the subject already experiences the *gracious* summons to ethical responsibility, but just as Maréchal indicates no logical or moral incompatibility between a natural desire and the failure of its fulfilment, one can say that there is no ethical incompatibility between the summons and the failure of response. Ethical imperatives do not thereby become ontological necessities.

One must further say that Desire distinguishes itself from need in terms of responsibility, both in its primordial sense of an *a priori* openness - an oboediential potency - which enables response, and in the sense of assuming responsibility for the needs of the other. 'Before the Other (*Autrui*) the self is infinitely responsible.'¹³⁸ In other words, Desire, as an experience of utter alterity, manifests itself in the fact of the self being rendered as responsible by the Other for the Other. The idea of the Infinite finds its correlate not in the Infinite but in the infinite responsibility which the self experiences in the presence of the infinite Other. Whereas objects within the world can

¹³⁴ idem, HAH, p.50

¹³⁵ idem, TI, p.151

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p.151

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p.34

¹³⁸ idem, HAH, p.54

satisfy my intentional appetite, as in need and enjoyment, the Other, though I am related to him, is always able to slip out of the relationship, to extricate himself from its demands, whereas I experience all the weight and obligation of him on my shoulders. The signification of self is the excess of responsibility felt in the presence of the excessiveness of the other; it is as if the whole of creation rested on my shoulders. Such a responsibility is humbling. Its weight bends me. 'In front of the face I always demand more of myself.'¹³⁹

5.5 Summary

The possibility or otherwise of sustaining a relationship with the absolute, and of experiencing that absolute is the question which has been addressed in this chapter. While Heidegger understands *Dasein* in terms of its own possibilities which are brought to an end in death, the final impossibility, but to which nonetheless authentic *Dasein* can comport itself resolutely, thereby making death its own possibility, Blanchot returns to the notion of *impossibility* and affirms it as the sustaining ground of all human possibilities. The subject is ultimately impossible, and all its possibilities are to be seen against this background. The subject is constituted by an *impossible relation* which is a relationship of transcendence and desire.

Both Rahner and Levinas view the subject as a transcendence towards the absolute. For Rahner, this is absolute Being which is both source and goal of human transcendence; for Levinas, the absolute lies beyond Being and its categories and is encountered in the ethical relationship with the Other. Both Rahner and Levinas share the conviction that this aspiration towards the absolute is not the work of the subject but is inspired by the Other who is original. *Spiro - Spero*. Both in their own way express this transcendence towards the Other in terms of Desire. For Levinas, what characterises Desire is an insatiable longing for the Other who, on account of his excess, sustains the Desire as radically and always unfulfilled and unfulfillable; for Rahner, although his language is often the language of spiritual dynamism in knowing and willing, the subject is also to be understood in the grammar of grace as a natural desire (*desiderium naturale*) for the beatific vision.

Now, such an impossible relation with the absolute is criticised by Derrida when

¹³⁹ idem, *Signature*, in *Difficult Freedom*, p.186

he accuses Levinas of an incoherent thought. Nonetheless, the paradoxical relationship of proximity with the Other and the ethical challenge which issues from that defies the logic of contradiction. Just as the phenomenon of suffering discloses a self which has been rendered devoid of the power and mastery which accompanies subjectivity, and just as the phenomenon of fear and panic reveals an object devoid of form, so the relationship with the Other is a situation in which both the position of the subject as origin and initiative is placed in question, and the Other, though proximate, is affirmed as infinitely distanced from the subject, not simply on account of an incapacity of comprehension, but primarily because of the positive excess or infinity of the Other with respect to the Same. Such a relationship, though seemingly impossible for thought, is nonetheless experienced as Desire and as Responsibility, and expressed as Language. Like the experience of grace, the Other draws close in proximity, but maintains himself as absolute mystery.

6

The Face and its Sacramentality

Desire is aroused in the relationship with an absolute alterity which defies possession, and it is sustained in its very insatiability. As we have said, the relationship with this absolute, unanticipatable alterity is experienced as *desire*. The absolute draws near, in paradoxical proximity, *as* desire. There is another revelation of the Other in proximity, and this is in the experience of obligation. Desire reveals my subjectivity to be obsessed by the neighbour to whose difference I cannot remain indifferent.¹ The neighbour is different, but, as Levinas points out, in the face of the neighbour my difference from him 'shudders as non-indifference.'² Desire becomes demand, and in respect of the neighbour, my 'community with him begins in my obligation to him.'³ It is a relationship of responsibility. Before ever I am able to designate the other as other than myself, which would be an act of a self-constituted and self-conscious self entering into a subsequent relationship with alterity, I am already assigned by him as responsible for him, and 'this is a modality not of knowing but of an obsession, a shuddering (φρικτη) of the human quite different from cognition.'⁴

Now, this summons towards responsibility issues from the face which, in its proximity, speaks, and, hearing, I am constituted as responsible. How then does the face speak? Such a question can perhaps find its initial response in a consideration of the notion of *image* which takes us to the heart of the philosophical questioning of the privilege of presence. Sign, image and reality, for finite beings who, as Rahner expresses it, are essentially symbolic, are each implicated in the other, and the relationship between them raises a variety of problems, philosophical and theological, which have a relevance in the present discussion. Theologically, there is the distinction between *sacramentum* and *res sacramenti* - 'the duality of sign and what it signifies'⁵ - between mystery and its ikon; philosophically, there is the problematic of immediacy and its mediation, of spirit and matter, of act and concept. In terms of the ethical relationship with the Other which Levinas privileges, such a problematic translates into the relationship between the Saying (*le Dire*) and the Said (*le Dit*). For Rahner, it will be a question of symbol and sacrament.

¹ cf. E Levinas, OB, p.84

² *ibid.*, p.83

³ *ibid.*, p.87

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ K Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments, p.34

6.1 *Sign, Image and Reality*

Blanchot questions our understanding of *image*. Using the language of poetry as a model, he notes that poetry is often compared with ordinary language 'as the image compares to the thing.'⁶ Poetry is deemed to be full of images. Yet, its 'particular character is that nothing in it functions as an image.'⁷ One can note here Rahner's article on Poetry and the Christian. What the poetic word gives, says Rahner, is forever repeatable, or supplementary, for although it does have the power to express, designate, distinguish, demarcate, define, compare, determine and arrange, it nonetheless, in so doing, opens on to what is silent and nameless. Words fall and fail before the mystery which is beyond naming. Calling us 'into the strangeness of the night that is our real home they all speak of the unknown God, who only reveals himself to give himself as the abiding mystery.'⁸ Rahner notes the distinction between signified and signifier, reality and its sign, and speaks of 'recognising the inexpressible mystery *in* the word... inseparable from the word but not confused with it.'⁹ However, the word, as incarnate reality, that is, a signifier, and possible even *first* signifier, is not so much placed at a distance from its signified such that it has the character of 'a sort of silently signalling finger, pointing away from what it delimits and illuminates into the infinite distance.'¹⁰ Rather, the incomprehensible itself belongs to the word. 'In the region encompassed by the human word, infinity has built itself a tent, infinity itself is there in the finite.'¹¹ In other words, it is of the nature of the poetic word to be sacramental - it effects what it signifies, though its signified is beyond any signification. The poetic word 'evokes and presents the eternal mystery which is behind expressible reality... it conjures up the inexpressible in its utterance... it fascinates and sets free... it does not speak about something but creates in its utterance what it calls....'¹² Rahner concludes - like Blanchot who sees the role of poetry not as clarification or the 'closure of a name' but as response

⁶ M Blanchot, SL, p.34, n.3

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ K Rahner, Poetry and The Christian, p.359

⁹ *ibid.*, p.361

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.361-62

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.362

¹² *ibid.*, p.363

to impossibility which leaves questions unsatisfied¹³ - that it is 'no accident, but in the nature of things' that great human poetry is obscure, and mostly dismisses us with our question unanswered' for '[p]oetry must speak of the concrete... [b]ut the individual and the concrete is a mystery which will only be unveiled by the judgement, which is God's and God's alone, but which the poet presents *as mystery*.'¹⁴

Compare this with Blanchot's reflection on Mallarmé's experience of "digging into the verse" ("*En creusant le vers*") which, says Blanchot, is 'that time of distress caused by the gods' absence.'¹⁵ To enter into poetry is no longer to enjoy the certainty of Being, but is to encounter 'the absence of the gods,' which is the renunciation of all idols, the images of hidden reality. It is the same experience which Hölderlin undergoes: the poetic time is 'the time of distress when the gods are lacking,'¹⁶ but it is the very the fall of God, his default, which helps the work; *Gottes Fehl hilft*. Blanchot writes,

'when art is the language of the gods, when the temple is the house where god dwells, the work is invisible and art unknown. The poem names the sacred, and men hear the sacred, not the poem. And yet the poem names the sacred as unnameable; in this silence it speaks the unspeakable.... The poem shows, then; it discloses, but by concealing, because it detains in the dark that which can only be revealed in the light of darkness and keeps this mystery dark even in the light which the dark makes the first dawn of all. The poem is effaced before the sacred which it names; it is the silence that brings to the word the god that speaks in silence - but since the divine is unspeakable and ever speechless, the poem, through the silence of the god which it encloses in language, is also that which speaks as poem, and shows itself, as a work, at the same time that it remains hidden. The work is thus both hidden in the god's profound presence and visible through the absence and obscurity of the divine.'¹⁷

Now, Blanchot's insistence that nothing in poetry functions as an image raises, he says,

¹³ Cf. M Blanchot, *Entretien*, p.68

¹⁴ K Rahner, *Poetry and The Christian*, in TI, IV, p.366

¹⁵ M Blanchot, SL, p.38; EL, p.34

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.177

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.230

Foucault identifies the same in the various forms of negative theology and recognises in their speaking of the absence of God a 'thought from the outside.' Hölderlin's poetry, he says, 'manifested the shimmering absence of the gods and pronounced the new law of the obligation to wait... for the enigmatic succour of "God's failing". Hölderlin had discovered that 'the gods had wandered off through a rift in language as it was in the process of losing its bearings' (M Foucault, Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside, p.17).

a further question of whether any language functions as an image representing presence, and 'which issues from its own absence, the way the image emerges upon the absence of the thing,'¹⁸ for if the nature of language is to be image then, says Blanchot, it would seem that the happily abandoned position 'which used to define art as imitation, a copy of the real' is regained. Blanchot notes,

'According to the common analysis, the image comes after the object. It is the object's continuation. We see, then we imagine. After the object comes the image. "After" seems to indicate subordination. We really speak, then we speak in our imagination, or we imagine ourselves speaking. Wouldn't poetic language be the copy, the dim shadow, the transposition - in a space where the requirements of effectiveness are attenuated - of the sole speaking language? But perhaps the common analysis is mistaken. Perhaps, before going further, one ought to ask: but what is the image.'¹⁹

A similar critique is taken up by Derrida who, like Levinas, recognises the logocentrism and phonocentrism of the tradition and the need to take distance from it, and expresses a 'foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*.²⁰ According to Derrida, the tradition privileges *logos* which finds its first expression as *phonè*, the essence of which is 'immediately proximate to that which within "thought" as *logos* relates to "meaning", produces it, receives it, speaks it, "composes" it,²¹ - like the voice which, according to Aristotle, produces words as the first symbols of mental experience, and is thus the 'first signifier'²² because it enjoys the transparency of 'a relationship of immediate and essential proximity with the mind.'²³ 'In every case the voice is closest to the signified...,' wed 'indissolubly to the mind.'²⁴ Levinas, in fact, also recognises the link between *logos* and *phonè* when he notes the recovery of the verbal *sonority* of being by Heidegger, an

¹⁸ M Blanchot, *SL*, p.34, n.3

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ J Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.12

²¹ *ibid.*, p.11

²² See Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, I, 16a 3

²³ J Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.11

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.11

ontology become otology.²⁵ In a tradition which had fallen out of Being and reduced it to its substantial expression,²⁶ Heidegger, says Levinas, enables us once again to hear the *sound* of Being.

Now, Derrida's concern is the relationship between speech and writing; in relation to speech, he says, writing assumes an instrumental relation of secondarity, being the 'signifier of the signifier,' the 'translator of a full speech that was fully *present* (present to itself, to its signified, to the other, the very condition of the theme of presence in general), technics in the service of language, *spokesman*, interpreter of ordinary speech itself shielded from interpretation.²⁷ Writing is 'a sign signifying a signifier itself signifying an eternal verity, eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos.'²⁸ Compared with *phonè*,

'[t]he written signifier is always technical and representative. It has no constitutive meaning. This derivation is the very origin of the notion of the "signifier". The notion of the sign always implies within itself the distinction between signifier and signified.... This notion remains therefore within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and ideality of meaning.'²⁹

Now, this has implications for the understanding of sign, for '[t]he sign is always a sign of the Fall.'³⁰ As soon as one asks: 'what is the sign?' the inevitable response is that '[t]he formal essence of the signified is *presence*, and the privilege of its proximity to the logos as *phonè* is the privilege of presence.'³¹ Further, since the signified is the

²⁵ Levinas writes, '*Avec Heidegger, dans le mot être s'est réveillée sa "verbalité", ce qui en lui est événement, le "se passer" de l'être.... C'est à cette sonorité verbale que Heidegger nous a habitués*' (*Ethique et Infini: Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo*, Paris, 1982, p.34).

Heidegger himself links *logos* and *phonè* when he reflects on the concept of the *Logos* in *Being and Time*. He writes, '[w]hen fully concrete discoursing (letting something be seen) has the character of speaking [Sprechens] - vocal proclamation in words. The λογος is φωνη, and indeed, φωνη μετα φαντασιας - an utterance in which something is sighted in each case' (p.56).

²⁶ Heidegger writes, 'With all our effort, with all our chasing after the essent, we have fallen out of Being' (*Introduction of Metaphysics*, p.37).

²⁷ J Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.8

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.15

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp.11-12

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.283

³¹ *ibid.*, p.18

intelligible face of the sign, '[t]he "formal essence" of the sign can only be determined in terms of presence.³² It is this formal element which renders the sign intelligible: before its 'fall' and expulsion into the exteriority of the sensible, the sign refers to the signified in its intelligibility. There is here the notion of what Blanchot has already pointed out, namely, that of the sign or the image coming 'after' the reality.

'Fallen secondarity', however, is not only a characteristic of writing, says Derrida, but is at the heart of the understanding of all language. The notion of a fall from a prior situation of immediacy into language 'as mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning'³³ needs to be re-thought, which 'strictly speaking, amounts to destroying the concept of "sign" and its entire logic.'³⁴ It is to contest a metaphysics which privileges presence. As Hart comments on Derrida's project,

'A discourse is metaphysical, then, if the concept is fashioned as a moment of pure presence, and the sign as representing the concept in its absence. Within these terms, the sign *fails* to represent the concept purely and simply; it introduces the complicating elements of materiality and difference which serve to delay and defer the expected recovery of the concept. This, accordingly, is the basis of the case for valuing the concept over the sign. However, argues Derrida, the sign's failure is structurally determined, and this is the starting-point for his case against

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*, pp.12-13

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.7

Kevin Hart (*The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)) recalls the encounter between Dante and Adam (*Paradiso, Canto XXVI*, 106) in which prelapsarian Adam is presented as a 'model of perfect understanding' (*ibid.*, p.3), the master of language who recovers intentions directly and enjoys immediate knowledge within the limits set by God, and without any hermeneutical difficulty; he stands outside language, the determiner of language who himself escapes those determinations. Adam, however, desired immediate knowledge outwith the God-imposed limits, and fell. The significance of this fall, however, was not only its moral trespass, but also its 'trespass of the linguistic sign' (*ibid.*, p.3), which thereafter is forever mutable. Postlapsarian Adam 'is no longer the master of signs but is frequently mastered by them' (*ibid.*, p.3). The world now is 'a chiaroscuro of presence and absence' (*ibid.*, p.4); God has withdrawn and is now revealed only through signs which must be interpreted. It is here that philosophy's original fall takes place, for the interpretation of signs presupposes that 'timeless truths wait behind them and can be separated from them' (*ibid.*, p.4), that behind the concept of "sign" lurks the concept of presence such that '[t]he sign is always a representation of a presence which precedes it, a passage from one presence to another, from infinite to finite mind' (*ibid.*, p.4). Thus, the rudiments of a common theory of communication are evident: 'a presence represents itself by means of signs which are then recovered by another presence.

the metaphysics of presence.¹³⁵

The consequence of this, says Hart, is that the repeatability of the sign is a structural characteristic, and its meaning is 'what it is in the absence of its animating presence.'¹³⁶ Now, Derrida focuses on the materiality of the sign whose meaning can never be isolated independently of context. In so doing, he forges a distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, and recuperates intelligibility on the side of expression. Hart notes that '[s]ince it always functions in the absence of a presence, the sign has no self-presence by which its intelligible content can withstand the accidents of empirical differences.'¹³⁷ But does this not compromise the absolute intelligibility of the Other, and reassert experience as the source of meaning? While a person must necessarily express himself symbolically, or while Saying must always issue in a Said, it is not the signification of the Said which sustains the ethical relationship, but the encounter with the Other beyond his expressed image. It is this we must now explore.

6.11 *The Ambiguity of the Sign*

Blanchot continues his reflection in an appendix, 'Two Versions of the Imaginary';³⁸ at the heart of the relation between the object and its image is distance. To say that the image comes "after" the object means that the object must remove itself some distance to be grasped.

'But this remove is not the simple displacement of a moveable object which would nevertheless remain the same. Here the distance is in the heart of the thing. The thing was there; we grasped it in the vital movement of a comprehensive action - and lo, having become image, instantly it has become that which no one can grasp, the unreal, the impossible. It is not the same thing at a distance but the thing as distance.'³⁹

Citing the example of death, and the tripartite relation between corpse, deceased, and mourners, Blanchot reflects that '[t]he quiet that must be preserved in the room when someone dies and around the death bed gives a first indication of how fragile the

³⁵ Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign*, p.12

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ M Blanchot, *SL*, pp.254-264

³⁹ *ibid.*, pp.255-56

position par excellence is.⁴⁰ The presence of the corpse witnesses a strange ambiguity - in its solitude, it becomes the appearance of 'that which has disdainfully withdrawn from us'⁴¹ so as to destroy the sense of human relationship. But, at the very moment 'when the cadaverous presence is the presence of the unknown before us, the mourned deceased begins to *resemble himself*.⁴² A doubling of person and image takes place such that the deceased *himself* is 'more beautiful, more imposing... already monumental and so absolutely himself as if he were *doubled* by himself, joined to his solemn impersonality by resemblance and by the image.'⁴³ As cadaver, 'he is... perfectly like himself: he resembles *himself*. The cadaver is its own image.... the likeness, like to an absolute degree, overwhelming and marvellous.'⁴⁴ But it is like..... nothing. It is for this reason, says Blanchot, that no living person can bear any resemblance to self, for image and self relate as distance.⁴⁵

What the strangeness of the cadaver's resemblance teaches is that to say a person is made in his image needs first to be understood as '*man is unmade according to his image*.'⁴⁶ In other words, the image is beyond signification and sense as they are usually understood philosophically or 'by the world's existence,' for the *image* is not the object's sense, nor does it offer access to understanding; rather, the image is that which separates or withdraws the object from understanding by maintaining it purely as 'a resemblance which has nothing to resemble.'⁴⁷ Although the image can be captured and presented to support some truth, this is to reverse the relationship and once again establish the image as 'after' the object.

It seems, then, that the image has two possibilities, that 'there are two versions

40 *ibid.*, p.256

41 *ibid.*, p.257

42 *ibid.*

43 *ibid.*, p.258

44 *ibid.*

45 Or the tool which is hidden in its use, and which, when damaged becomes its *image*, being brought into relief, its readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*) being transformed into presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*). Or art, in which the object abandons itself to the image.

46 M Blanchot, SL, p.260

47 *ibid.*

of the imaginary.¹⁴⁸ In its ambiguity, the image is that which can with all duplicity present an ideal reality beyond the object presented, but it can also exclude us, relegating us to a place outside its presence, to its absence as presence. But this duplicity 'refers us back to a still more primal double meaning.'¹⁴⁹

At one level, the ambiguity of the image shows itself in the perpetuation of double meanings, whereby one meaning gives way to another meaning, and thus 'misunderstandings serve comprehension by expressing the truth of intelligibility which rules that we never come to an understanding once and for all.'¹⁵⁰ Yet, a more primal meaning is that what speaks in the image "sometimes" speaks of the world, "sometimes" introduces us into 'the undetermined milieu of fascination;' "sometimes" gives us the power to control absent things, "sometimes" removes us to a level where signification and affection do not hold. In other words, ambiguity "always", to some extent, says both one thing and another. Although in fascination it is significant, its meaning

'does not escape into another meaning, but into the *other* of all meaning. Because of ambiguity nothing has meaning, but everything *seems* infinitely meaningful. Meaning is no longer anything but semblance; semblance makes meaning becomes infinitely rich. It makes this infinitude of meaning have no need of development - it makes meaning immediate, which is also to say incapable of being developed, only immediately void.'¹⁵¹

6.2 *The Symbolism of the Face*

The relation between image and reality and the failure of the sign to realise presence purely and simply is relevant to a consideration of the face as trace in Levinas. Although the Other expresses himself phenomenally, one cannot move from the phenomenon back to the Other who is its principle. The exact meaning of the phenomenon is 'the being that appears, but remains absent' from its apparition.⁵² Thus, 'the phenomenon is not deduced from him; one does not rediscover him by tracing back from the sign the thing would be to the interlocutor giving this sign, in a movement

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.261

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.263

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² E Levinas, *TI*, p.181

analogous to that leading from the appearance to the things in themselves.¹⁵³ The Other's expression in the sign remains 'forever indecipherable.' 'He who signals himself by a sign qua signifying that sign is not the signified of the sign - but delivers the sign and gives it.'¹⁵⁴ 'Expression does not manifest the presence of being by referring from the sign to the signified; it presents the signifier. The signifier, he who gives the sign, is not signified.'¹⁵⁵

Like Derrida, Levinas says,

'[t]he signified is never a complete presence; always a sign in its turn, it does not come in a straightforward frankness. The signifier, he who emits the sign, *faces*, despite the interposition of the sign, without proposing himself as a theme.... The Other, the signifier, manifests himself in speech by speaking of the world and not of himself; he manifests himself by proposing the world, by *thematizing* it.'¹⁵⁶

Levinas uses the term "face" to indicate '[t]he way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*.¹⁵⁷ The face, as the expression of the Other, goes beyond, or even trespasses, its phenomenal image in the same way that the Cartesian idea of the infinite exceeds its *ideatum*. The face is $\kappa\alpha\theta' \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}$. Although the face 'expresses itself,'¹⁵⁸ that expression is not a phenomenal representation which the I might give to itself, like some 'plastic image' which can be assigned its place as a theme in the world. The face presents the beyond (*l'au-delà*), but the *au-delà* is not "another world" behind the world, but the *au-delà* of the "world", beyond any disclosure. '*Autrui est un pur trou dans le monde. Il procède de l'absolument Absent*.¹⁵⁹ The face signifies, beyond signification, a relation with an absolutely absent, an '*au-delà de l'être*' and it does this as a trace. '*L'au-delà dont vient le visage signifie comme trace. Le visage est dans la trace de l'Absent absolument révolu, absolument passé, retiré... dans... "profond jadis, jadis jamais assez" (Paul Valery)....*¹⁶⁰

Levinas describes this in terms of the trace. The face signifies as a trace. Now,

⁵³ *ibid.*, p.92

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp.181-82

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.96

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.50

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.51

⁵⁹ *idem*, HAH, p.63, quoting Sartre

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.64

a trace is essentially ambiguous; it is duplicitous; it is an enigma. Although in the face the other person seems to present himself, and place himself under my own gaze and my own power of looking, nonetheless, enigmatically, the face presents the infinite, the nonoriginal and anarchic, which has no present nor historiography. Although a physiognomy which indicates a signified, the face is not 'an appearance or sign of some reality . . . present as an invisible theme,'⁶¹ but a sign of departure. It is not the sign of some hidden reality which would hide behind it, and which would be open to ontological interpretation. Although it plays the same role as a sign the trace is not a sign like any other. Signs refer to persons absent, like the detective who seeks the evidence of presence. The trace, however, does not relate to an absent which can be presented; rather it refers to what is beyond all intention and project. It breaks up the order of the world. Its original significance is that it seeks to remove the signs of its having been present, like the thief who leaves a sign of his presence in the very act of removing signs. In this sense, the face carries its own effacement, just as all signs are traces, not of a present now past, but of a past that has never been present. *'Dans la trace a passé un passé absolument révolu.'*⁶² *'La trace est l'insertion de l'espace dans le temps, le point où le monde s'incline vers un passé et un temps.'*⁶³ Only a being capable of transcending the world is capable of leaving a trace, only an absolute being. The trace is the presence, properly speaking, of that which has never been there, who is always past. *'La trace comme trace ne mène pas seulement vers le passé, mais est la passe même vers un passé plus éloigné que tout passé et que tout avenir, lesquels se rangent encore dans mon temps - vers le passé de l'Autre où se dessine l'éternité - passé absolu qui réunit tous les temps.'*⁶⁴

⁶¹ idem, OB, p.93

⁶² idem, HAH, p.67

⁶³ ibid.

⁶⁴ ibid., pp.68-69

6.3 *Sacramentality*

In a way which seems to fly in the face of Levinas' distinction between the dynamic of desire which has love as its prototype, and the dynamic of need whose model is consumption, we find in the Christian tradition an act of eating which is proclaimed as the source and summit of its life. As Aquinas hymned it, *O Sacrum convivium in quo Christo sumitur*.⁶⁵ It is as if, in order to sustain itself, the Christian community embarks upon an *agape* of eating, and sees this as a necessity for its own life. Eucharist is destructive and assimilative, yet, by a strange logic, the hope is not that the otherness of the Sacrament will be reductively incorporated into the Same, but that the one who eats will become other than he is.

The convergence between Rahner and Levinas can be brought into clearer relief if we take the eucharist, the 'great sacrament,' as a focus for our consideration between sign and reality, *sacramentum* and *res sacramenti*. To recap somewhat: we noted that, for Levinas, eating corresponds to the fulfilment of a need; it is a relationship in which there is complete correspondence between an intention and its fulfilment, an 'intuitive fulfilment (as) the accomplishing of a teleological intention....'⁶⁶ This in fact forms the basis of Levinas' criticism of Husserl, for 'despite the extension which phenomenology gives the word *intention*, intentionality bears the trace of the voluntary and the teleological. Signification as signifying out of a lack, a certain negativity, an aspiration which aims emptily, like a hunger, but in a determinate way, a presence which is to satisfy it.'⁶⁷ Eating is an essentially totalising act in which the alterity of what is other is destroyed and incorporated into the same; and, flowing from this elementary model

⁶⁵ In *Foundations*, Rahner indicates the same themes which Aquinas pens in *O Sacrum Convivium*: "The reality which is designated by the term "Eucharist" has its foundation in the Last Supper of Jesus...[*O Sacrum Convivium*]. There, according to his own words, Jesus gives his "body" and his "blood" to be eaten and drunk under the appearance of receiving bread and wine...[*in quo Christo sumitur*]. The idea of death is of decisive importance: Jesus accepts his fate consciously and connects it with the central content of his preaching [*Recolitur memoriam passionis eius*]. Moreover, Jesus understands this meal in an eschatological way as an anticipation of the joy of the final and definitive banquet [*Pignus futurae gloriae nobis datus*]. Finally, at this meal with Jesus, the idea of community is constitutive, that is the union of Jesus with his friends and the foundation of the community of these friends among themselves [*Mens impletur gratia*]' (p.425). (*Italicised comments added*).

⁶⁶ E Levinas, OB, p.96

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

of alimentary epistemology, one can say that '[i]n conformity with the whole tradition of the West, knowing, in its thirst and its gratification, remains the norm of the spiritual, and transcendence is excluded both from intelligibility and from philosophy.'⁶⁸ Loving, on the other hand, contests this tendency, being constantly thwarted in its consumptive attempt upon the Other for the Other, as other, is always in excess of the subject's power of appropriation. Occurring 'beyond economic activity and the world,'⁶⁹ love is characterised by 'an essential and insatiable hunger'⁷⁰ whose '*very positivity... lies in its negativity*.'⁷¹ At a fundamental level, the dynamic of need and its fulfilment ultimately fails to satisfy, for what the human person is oriented towards is a reality which cannot satisfy our hunger, not because that reality is inadequate to our emptiness, but because it is so much beyond our capacity to bear it, which, says Levinas, is to suggest that there is 'a signification where the *for* of the-one-for-the-other, outside of any correlation and any finality, is a *for* of total gratuity, breaking with interest,'⁷² a proximity 'which does not turn into knowing'⁷³ nor form 'an ontological conjunction of satisfaction.'⁷⁴ Yet, paradoxically, the Christian community, each time it gathers for its eucharistic *agape*, celebrates a Lord who gives himself to be eaten as food. Rahner writes, '[p]art of the constitution of the sign, under which alone Christ is present, is the relationship of the bread and wine to a meal, their character of nourishment,'⁷⁵ and, while Trent rejects the presence of Christ only *in usu, dum sumitur*, it concedes readily that the sacrament was instituted *ut sumatur*.

A further seeming divergence between Levinas and Rahner presents itself. The eucharist is understood as the memorial of the salvific event of the passion and death of the Lord, rendered sacramentally present. Yet, according to Levinas, memorial as a

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *idem*, EE, p.43

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² *idem*, OB, p.96

⁷³ *ibid.*, p.97

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ K Rahner, The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, q.292

recollection of a past into a representable present must always fail for the Other, absolutely other in itself and not simply with respect to me, is beyond all representation, revelation and dissimulation and only gives itself in a trace of itself which is absolutely past, Valéry's '*profond jadis, jadis jamais assez*,¹⁷⁶ an immemorial past. But, since as has already been said, pure presence has only ever been given to consciousness as a trace of presence, what is given is 'a trace of a trace.'¹⁷⁷ The ability of consciousness to recuperate the presence of the Other into the present of its own time is always and already contested by the Other who is anachronistic with respect to consciousness, and with whom, therefore, any relationship is necessarily diachronic. The 'recuperable time of history and memory in which memory continues'¹⁷⁸ is sundered. The approach of the Other always belongs to a past in the face of which my present welcome is always late and delayed, and by which I am accused and accusative. 'The past is not *in* the present, but is a phase retained, the past *of* this present, a lapse already lost which marks ageing, escaping all retention, altering my contemporaneity with the other.'¹⁷⁹ In so far as the face in its trace is 'anachronous immediacy',¹⁸⁰ its proximity is a disturbance of the rememberable time.¹⁸¹

However, evoking the priority of the word which is addressed to us (*le Dire*), Levinas speaks of proximity as 'hearing a command come as though from an immemorial past which was never present.'¹⁸² But the notion of Word is at the heart of Sacrament, and, in particular respect of the eucharist, it is fidelity to a command which justifies the action. Might the eucharistic presence of Christ be understood primarily in his perduring words of institution, coming from that immemorial past, which command the *hoc fecit in meam commemorationem*? And going further, since, as Levinas says, '[a]

⁷⁶ E Levinas, OB, p.64

⁷⁷ See Kevin Hart, The Trespass of the Sign, p.14

⁷⁸ E Levinas, OB, p.88

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.91

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.89

⁸² *ibid.*, p.88

face is not an appearance or sign of some reality,⁸³ nor 'the absence of a yet non-revealed,'⁸⁴ 'an invisible theme' awaiting ontological interpretation, nor a 'sign of a hidden God who would impose the neighbour on me'⁸⁵ but is 'the anarchy of what has never been present, of an infinity which commands in the face of the other,'⁸⁶ then might its proper interpretation be not so much the strictly theoretically theological interpretation of sign and meaning, but rather the practical and ethical response which finds its Christian articulation in the Johannine *mandatum*?⁸⁷

6.31 *Sacrament as Word*

Rahner explains the significance of the Sacrament in terms of its similarity to the word to which it is essentially related. 'We are,' he writes, 'accustomed to consider the "word" as a constitutive and indeed formal, that is to say, decisive element of the sacramental sign.'⁸⁸ The Eucharist is to be considered as 'word' because it is the presence of the incarnate Logos; firstly, it is the absolute proclamation of the entire mystery of salvation as anamnesis, which, secondly, actualises the presence here and now of God's gift of himself in the Son and our acceptance of that gift, and which, thirdly, anticipates sacramentally as *pignus futurae gloriae* the *coming* of Christ in glory.⁸⁹ God's "verbal" communication of himself, however, cannot be adequate alone for its acceptance by the human subject, for, in its immediacy, it would render reflective consciousness redundant. 'For if the verbal communication of God was already complete within the inner world of grace, in the "illumination" by interior grace alone, then man would always and essentially accomplish his salvation only in the non-reflective, unobjectivated transcendence of his being, while the dimension of worldly objects and

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.93

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.97

⁸⁵ E Levinas, OB, p.94

⁸⁶ E Levinas, OB, p.97

⁸⁷ In *La trace de l'autre*, Levinas draws attention to the *liturgical* sense of *Œuvre* which ultimately expresses itself as *diakonia*. See DEHH, p.194 ff.

⁸⁸ K Rahner, *The Word and the Eucharist*, p.254

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, p.281

categories remained outside the scope of salutary acts....⁹⁰ The word, then, demands expression, and indeed, the supreme realisation of the word is 'the sacrament and only the sacrament.'⁹¹ This means that sacraments are essentially verbal. 'A sacrament is and remains an efficacious *word*.'⁹² 'The sacramental action has the character of a word. It designates something, it expresses something, it reveals something that is of itself hidden.'⁹³ If one can use Levinas' terminology, one can cautiously say that the sacrament is the Said (*le Dit*) in which an original Saying (*le Dire*) is expressed as inexpressible mystery.

Now, if one accepts the priority of the Word and the essentially verbal nature of the sacrament - the sacrament as the supreme realisation and expression of the word, one might ask whether Rahner is not in fact part of that logocentric and phonocentric heritage criticised by Derrida in which there is 'absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and ideality of meaning'⁹⁴ and, in which the sign, in its materiality, is 'fallen secondarity,' the signifier of the first signifier, which is

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.258

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.261

⁹² *ibid.*, p.267

⁹³ *ibid.*, p.266

Rahner outlines the historical justification for understanding the nature of sacrament as word. The Council of Trent affirms that 'Christ is present by virtue of the *panis viniq̄ue benedictio*' (Denzinger 874). The Council of Florence, in its 'Decree for the Armenians, affirms that *forma huius sacramenti sunt verba salvatoris, quibus hoc fecit sacramentum*,' where *forma* is not the *efficient* cause of the sacrament *in fieri* but its permanent constitutive element 'by which the sacrament exists and abides.' Pesch, he says, also confirms this thinking when he writes, '*nun verba sint forma constitutiva huius sacramenti. Species eucharistiae per se non significant quod continent, i.e., Christum, nisi in quantum ad hanc sanctificationem determinatae sunt per verba. Neque enim intelligimus has species esse consecratas et signifiare Christum, nisi in quantum scimus circa eas prolata esse verba. Unde relatio signi est in speciebus, ut sunt determinatae verbis et hoc sufficit ut verba dicantur in genere signi constituere hoc sacramentum*' (Praellectionis, VI, n.785). 'Are the words the constitutive form of ~~the~~ this sacrament? The Eucharistic species do not signify what they contain, Christ, except in so far as they are given this signification by the words. We do not know that the species are signified and signify Christ except in so far as we know that the words have been pronounced about them. Thus the species contain the relation of the sign, in so far as they are determined by the words. With this it can be said that the words, being in the nature of a sign, constitute this sacrament' (See: K Rahner, The Word and the Eucharist, TI, IV, pp.283-84).

⁹⁴ J Derrida, Of Grammatology, p.12

the word dwelling in the immediate presence of a transcendental signified which safeguards and guarantees the intelligibility of the signifier in its 'absolute and irreducible' difference from the signified. Derrida grounds the difference between signified and signifier in the difference between the sensible and the intelligible, a difference at the core of Rahner's metaphysics and epistemology. Before its 'fall' and expulsion into the exteriority of the sensible, the signifier refers to the signified in its intelligibility, and the sign, 'as the face of pure intelligibility' 'remains turned towards the word and the face of God.'⁹⁵ Thus, says Derrida, '[t]he age of the sign is essentially theological.'⁹⁶ Now, Rahner admits the importance of the intelligibility - the signified - of the sign when he says that 'it is not true and cannot be true that the material element of the sacrament (water, ablution etc) is decisive.... a purely natural thing in the nature of an *object* can never function as a sign in such a way that the supernatural reality could be attained through it alone.'⁹⁷ Signs only indicate supernatural reality for man in his spiritual transcendence to the infinite which becomes 'an intrinsically constitutive element of this sign.'⁹⁸ In other words, a sign requires the intelligible word in order that it be able to function as sign. However, it would be a mistake to interpret Rahner's emphasis on the spiritual or intelligible pole of reality as a devaluing of the material element of the sign and its relegation to the level of secondarity. The spirit's immersion in the world of sensibility is not a fall from a more original state but is a transcendental necessity for finite spirit. One need only recall Rahner's positive deduction of sensibility which confirms the worldliness of the finite spirit not as limitation and restriction, but as an ontological necessity for a finite spiritual nature. Spirit is not finite because it is worldly; it is worldly because it is finite. 'Man is spirit in such a way that, in order to become spirit, he enters and has ontically always and already entered into otherness, into matter, and so into world.'⁹⁹ In other words, the *conversio* is an *ontological* necessity. Spirit, as power to know, can only realise its nature through a receptive

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.13

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.14

⁹⁷ K Rahner, The Word and the Eucharist, TI, IV, p.267

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ K Rahner, HW, in A Rahner Reader, London, 1975 p.51

On the priority accorded the material world by Rahner, see, Christology within an evolutionary view of the world, (TI, V, p.163).

letting-self-be-encountered by another which 'is essentially conceivable only as... sensibility.'¹⁰⁰ Receptivity demands materiality through which the subject is 'essentially and ontologically being-away-from-itself-with-the-other (*Weg-von-sich-beim-andern-Sein*).'¹⁰¹ Translating this framework of understanding to Rahner's understanding of sacrament, one can say that the word which is uttered achieves its fullest expression not merely *in* sacrament but *as* sacrament, and rather than viewing the symbolism of the sacrament as the necessity of fallen secondarity, the result of human finitude and sensibility, the sensibility of sacrament participates in its meaning. Whereas Derrida emphasises the *difference* between the intelligible and the sensible, Rahner, like Heidegger before him, stresses a *difference in unity*; for Heidegger, *Dasein* is the *unitary phenomenon* of Being-in-the-World; for Rahner, the human person is the *unitary phenomenon* of Spirit-in-World. Now, it is the sundering of the relationship between the intelligible and the sensible which enables Derrida, focusing on the materiality of the sign, to say that 'there is a mode of repetition which is held to be prior to presence,'¹⁰² and that, therefore, since presence is no longer the ground upon which the sign functions, then the transcendental condition of both sign and concept is modified in a determined way.¹⁰³ Because the sign transgresses its assigned limits, any qualitative distinction between the intelligible and the sensible becomes impossible. Meaning is not fixed but is forever contextualised. Now, this has a positive advantage. The inherent repeatability of the sign ensures that what it signifies can take root and be inculcated in a variety of contexts, which can, recursively, modify the signified in a determined way. Hence, theology is essentially open and responsive to new situations which prompt it to new and deeper reflection. More negatively however, the inherent repeatability of the sign allied to its lack of grounding in the intelligible - Derrida's refusal of a

¹⁰⁰ idem, SW, p.80

¹⁰¹ ibid., p.81

¹⁰² Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign*, p.14

¹⁰³ The problem here is that Derrida repatriates meaning on the side of the subject. Rather than emphasising the repeatability of the sign, Blanchot's notion of ambiguity is perhaps more theologically useful; the sign, rather than escaping into another meaning, relative to the subject, escapes into the *other* of all meaning, into an infinity of meaning, or meaning as infinite. This has the advantage of retaining meaning on the side of the object. See M Blanchot, SL, p.263

'transcendental signified'¹⁰⁴ - means that contextualisation risks becoming totalisation, for, cut off from the possibility of an absolute meaning, as Levinas understands it, the sign is forever relativised. The reduction of the sign to its context also constitutes a reduction in its meaning. With Rahner we would want to say that the meaning of the symbolism of the sign becomes apparent when it is first appreciated that the word "symbol" has no clear and definite meaning; 'the concept is much more obscure, difficult and ambiguous than is usually thought.'¹⁰⁵ However, this is not only on account of its inherent repeatability, but also on account of the transcendental signified to which it points, and with which it is united. One sees this in Rahner's understanding of the Church as the fundamental sacrament, 'the one abiding symbolic presence, similar in

¹⁰⁴ The notion of a 'transcendental signified' is important here. Derrida, differentiating between the sensible and intelligible, notes the expulsion of intelligibility 'into the exteriority of the sensible here below' (*Of Grammatology*, p.13). In its fallenness, the sign points to the intelligible which, before its fall, was an absolute self-presence. The sign, '[a]s the face of pure intelligibility... refers to an absolute logos to which it is immediately united.' This absolute logos, 'an infinite creative subjectivity,' is the 'transcendental signified,' 'an imagined fixed point outside the system of signification,' as Hart explains it (Hart, op. cit., p.8, n.9). This point, Derrida argues, has historically been taken as God. Thus, 'the intelligible face of the sign remains turned towards the word and the face of God' (*Grammatology*, p.13). 'The sign and divinity have the same place and the same time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological' (ibid., p.14).

Now, Derrida later argues that meaning and sign are related. 'From the moment there is meaning there are nothing but signs. *We think only in signs*' (ibid., p.50). No sign, however, is absolute. It is, as noted, repeatable. The sign can be played again and again, but this '*play*' - 'though as the absence of the transcendental signified' (ibid.) - is given limitless scope by the very absence of the transcendental signified. The 'destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics' of presence means that no path is closed off to the game. And here the opportunity and the danger.

Hart points out that, for Derrida, as for Levinas, God can function as a totalising concept, a transcendental signified, the paradigmatic instance of 'a purported Archimedean point outside all textual determinations' (Hart, op. cit., p.47). Deconstruction, in its criticism of philosophies of totalisation, must, therefore, with regard to this particular transcendental signified, adopt an atheistic stance. (Cf. E Levinas, TI, p.58) In this sense, it can become *liberator theologiae* as Hart points out by freeing God from a fixed theological apparatus which constrains him. However, Levinas argues that God is only ever given with the ethical relationship with the Other, 'as the other of the Other.' The refusal of God as a transcendental signified might be philosophically significant, but ethically may not be very consequential. The refusal of any transcendental signification in relation to the Other, however, while possibly opening on to the inexhaustibility of the Other, also relativises the meaning of the Other, and, once relativised, renders him vulnerable to the extremes of whatever totality is operative in a particular time and place.

¹⁰⁵ Karl Rahner, *The Theology of the Symbol*, TI, IV, p.222

structure to the incarnation, of the eschatological redemptive grace of Christ; a presence in which sign and what is signified are united inseparably but without confusion.¹⁰⁶ And again, when, outlining his understanding of the symbolic nature of sacrament, he writes of natural symbols in which 'the sign or symbol as a phenomenon is intrinsically linked to what it is a phenomenon of, and which is present and operative, even though really distinct.'¹⁰⁷ Derrida's criticism does have value: the age of the sign is essentially theological inasmuch as it belongs to an onto-theological epoch which privileges presence. However, if one inverts this and affirms, with Rahner, that theology is essentially the age of the sign, then rather than the sign being reduced in the onto-theological tradition to an instrumental secondarity with respect to the word which enjoys close proximity to the signified, (which is Derrida's criticism of the onto-theological tradition which responds to the question of the sign by affirming '[t]he "formal essence" of the sign can only be determined in terms of presence',)¹⁰⁸ or the common analysis in which the image is seen as coming 'after' the reality as its continuation, (which is Blanchot's criticism of the 'happily abandoned previous position,) it assumes a priority. Its relevance is its ability to bear a plenitude and diversity of signification; its privilege, however, is that it indicates a transcendental signified, which is accessible not as a sign, but only ever as a trace within that sign. For Levinas, it is to be called *face*; for Rahner, it is *sacrament*. This is, of course, to deconstruct the sign, and although this is at the heart of Derrida's project, it is a task no less evident in Rahner's own thinking.

6.32 *Symbolic Reality*

Rahner begins by arguing the ontology of symbolic reality in general, and sets his task as discovering, from the formal ontological perspective, 'the highest and most primordial manner in which one reality can represent another,¹⁰⁹ or, in other words, the essential relationship between a signified and its signifier. Such a relationship 'in which

¹⁰⁶ idem, The Church and the Sacraments, in RR, p.280

¹⁰⁷ ibid., p.286

¹⁰⁸ J Derrida, Of Grammatology, p.18

¹⁰⁹ Karl Rahner, The Theology of the Symbol, p.225

one reality renders another present (primarily "for itself" and only secondarily "for others")¹¹⁰ is at the heart of an understanding of symbol.

Now, '[a]ll beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily "express" themselves in order to attain their own nature.'¹¹¹ But this means that a being, in its nature, is not to be considered as *simplex* and homogeneous but as different and distant from its self, and it is this which gives the possibility of symbol. Because finite creatures are by nature multiple, they 'are or can be essentially the expression of another in this unity of the multiple and one in this plurality, by reason of its plural unity.'¹¹² However, this situation, says Rahner, is not simply a characteristic of a finite spirit being placed at a distance from itself in some delusory post-lapsarian fall from full presence, which preceded any difference, into exile of sensibility.¹¹³ The plurality of being is at the core of infinite being, as a theological consideration of the 'traces' and 'reflexions' within the Trinity shows. Plurality is not the consequence of finitude; 'being is plural in itself,'¹¹⁴ and the plurality of the finite is 'an allusion - disclosed only in revelation - to a plurality which is more than indistinguishable identity and simplicity.'¹¹⁵ This plurality is already shown in the transcendence of God who nonetheless draws mysteriously close to us in proximity. 'It is therefore true: a being is, of itself, independently of any comparison with anything else, plural in its unity.'¹¹⁶ However, since, as Aquinas says, *non enim plura secundum se uniuntur*, inner agreement among the pluralities is called for in order that there be a true unity and not simply a

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p.224

Rahner writes, 'Really genuine symbols' or 'symbolic realities' which are expressive are to be distinguished from 'merely arbitrary "signs" or "symbolic representations" which have no intrinsic relation to their signified and hence any reality can stand for any other reality. However, 'it is not easy to say where the function of being merely a sign and indicator so predominates over the "function of expressiveness" that a symbol loses its "overplus of meaning" (Fr. Th. Vischer) and sinks to the level of a sign with little symbolism' (*ibid.*, p.225).

¹¹² *ibid.*, pp.225-26

¹¹³ See Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign*, p.10

¹¹⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Theology of the Symbol*, p.227

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

'subsequent conjunction of separate elements which once stood only on their own.'¹¹⁷

Rahner argues his understanding of plural unity thus: 'the "one" develops, the plural stems from an original "one", in a relationship of origin and consequence; the original unity, which also forms the unity which unites the plural, maintains itself while resolving itself and "dis-closing" itself into a plurality in order to find itself precisely there.'¹¹⁸ And this original unity is not abstract or merely apparent, 'a hollow, lifeless identity'¹¹⁹ but is a differentiation which is in itself "perfectio pura"..., not provisional, but something absolutely final, an ultimate of the self-communicating unity itself as such, which constitutes this unity itself.'¹²⁰

This means that each being, as a unity, 'possesses a plurality' in agreement with its original unity and expressive of it. 'Since this holds good for being in general, we may say that each being forms, in its own way, more or less perfectly according to its degree of being, something distinct from itself and yet one with itself, "for" its own fulfilment.'¹²¹ Unity and distinction are correlatives. 'And this differentiated being, which is still originally one, is in agreement because derivative, and because derivatively in agreement is expressive.'¹²² Hence, Levinas assertion of existence as a duality and a lack of simplicity in existence seems to be confirmed in Rahner. The verb 'to be' is a reflexive verb. Being always and already and as such has a relationship to itself such that one can say that 'it is not just that one is, one is oneself (*on n'est pas, on s'est*).'¹²³ As Blanchot notes, no living person can bear any resemblance to self, for the relation between the ego and its self is always a relation of distance.

Rahner continues: it is this agreement with its origin that constitutes the derivative *as an expression*. 'Every being as such possesses a plurality as an intrinsic element of its significant unity; this plurality constitutes itself, by virtue of its origin from an original unity, as the way to fulfil the unity (on account of the unity already

¹¹⁷ ibid.

¹¹⁸ ibid.

¹¹⁹ ibid.

¹²⁰ ibid., p.228

¹²¹ ibid.

¹²² ibid.

¹²³ E Levinas, EE, p.28

perfect), in such a way that that which is originated and different is in agreement with its origin and hence has (at least in a "specificative", if not always in a "reduplicative" sense) the character of expression or "symbol" with regard to its origin¹²⁴ - which is to return to the opening statement: 'being is of itself symbolic, because it necessarily "expresses" itself.'¹²⁵

Now, although plurality often indicates finitude and deficiency, it also has a positive aspect which perdures at least as a "trace" in the formal givenness of the plurality. The positivity of being's plurality is 'the possibility of the possession of self in knowledge and love.'¹²⁶ But this does not only apply to self knowledge for it follows that 'if beings are of themselves symbolic, in so far as they realise themselves in a plurality, and possess themselves in this derivative agreement of the "other" with its primordial origin, the same holds good for the knowledge of these beings by others. A being can be and is known, in so far as it is itself ontically (in itself) symbolic because it is ontologically (for itself) symbolic.'¹²⁷ The primordial meaning of symbol and symbolic is thus: 'as a being realises itself in its own intrinsic "otherness" (which is constitutive of its being), retentive of its intrinsic plurality (which is contained in its self-realisation) as its derivative and hence congruous expression, it makes itself known.'¹²⁸ 'The symbol strictly speaking (symbolic reality) is the self-realisation of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence.'¹²⁹

Levinas, employing his own particular understanding of ontology as 'theory as comprehension of beings,'¹³⁰ recognises that the reduction of alterity and the construction of totality arises *ab extra*. He writes, 'This mode of depriving a known being of its alterity can be accomplished only if it is aimed at through a third term, a

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.229

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, pp.230-31

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p.230

¹²⁹ Karl Rahner, The Theology of the Symbol, TI, IV, p.234

¹³⁰ E Levinas, TI, p.42

neutral term, which is itself not a being.¹³¹ Again, '[w]estern philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.'¹³² Hence, for Levinas, communion with the Other, is not achieved 'around some third term.'¹³³ Rather, the relationship with the Other arises in the encounter with the symbolism of *face* of the Other. Now, the equivocity with which the term 'ontological' is used by Rahner and Levinas is problematical; the reality they seek to express, beyond the term, is similar. Human being is essentially self-relational. The human person is essentially symbolic; '*on n'est pas; on s'est.*'

Rahner further argues that, because a being comes to possession by expression, "symbol" is not to be understood as 'a secondary relationship between two different beings, which are given the function of indicating one another by a third, or by an observer who notes a certain agreement between them.'¹³⁴

This ontological understanding of symbol has theological implications. The thought of the mystery of the Trinity is the constant background to Rahner's ontological consideration of symbol, and express appeal to this mystery was made in his method. The Trinity reveals itself theologically as plural unity. 'The Father is himself by the very fact that he opposes to himself the image which is of the same essence as himself, as the person who is other than himself; and so possesses himself.'¹³⁵ This means that the Logos is the symbol of the Father - 'the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolised, which is constituted by what is symbolised, where what is symbolised expresses itself and possesses itself.'¹³⁶ 'It is because God "must" "express" himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly.'¹³⁷ Thus Christology is central to a theology of symbol.

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² *ibid.*, p.443

¹³³ *idem*, EE, p.85

¹³⁴ Karl Rahner, The Theology of the Symbol, TI, IV, p.230

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p.236

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

6.4 *Language as Responsibility*

Rahner acknowledges the disproportion between what is said and the person who is being spoken of when he writes that, in a pluralistic society,

'dialogue must bear the motto of Anselm of Canterbury: *consideratio rationabiliter comprehendit incomprehensibile esse*: reflection comprehends rationally that the incomprehensible exists and holds sway.... But the dialogue must remain surrounded by that silent respect for the fact that what is being spoken about transcends by far everything that is said: the man who, as Pascal says, infinitely transcends man, and his secret which is God.'¹³⁸

The conversation about the Other is, in Blanchot's words, 'an infinite conversation,' for the Other is utterly excessive to any thought or thematisation. The inscription of the infinite Other defies the descriptive ability of thought and the categories within which I would expose the Other, for the Other is essentially *ex-position*. For Levinas, the focus is not so much conversation *about* the Other - though this, too, for Levinas has the dimension of infinity and inexpressibility on account of the illeity which is the source of the alterity of the Other, - but conversation *with* the Other who, in his Saying (*le Dire*), is excessive with respect to what is Said (*le Dit*). For Rahner, then, the incomprehensibility of alterity derives from the relationship which a person has with the mystery of the divine to whose self-communication he is open, a relationship which, Rahner indicates, is 'a constitutive element of his being both in his natural state and in his supernatural elevation.'¹³⁹ Although, strictly speaking, only God is truly a mystery for the created spirit, 'all beings, and above all the created spirit in its transcendence towards absolute being, partake of the mysterious character of God, in so far as all beings are referred to God, and cannot be adequately understood without this relationship and hence in terms of this relationship.'¹⁴⁰ Thus, he can affirm that, because created by God, 'all understanding of any reality whatsoever is in the last resort always a *reductio in mysterium*.'¹⁴¹ Further, '[t]he mystery is self-evident,'¹⁴² communicating itself in the absolute proximity of grace. Grace, however, as 'the *nearness* of the *abiding*

¹³⁸ K Rahner, *Dialogue within a pluralistic society*, pp.41-42

¹³⁹ idem, *The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology*, p.49

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.62

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p.58

mystery,' does not remain at the level of the transcendental horizon of human transcendental but communicates inter-personally in the love of neighbour, a relationship, beyond reflection, in which a person finally 'catches up with himself' in the continual confrontation with 'the silent, absolute mystery which embraces his existence.'¹⁴³ The *potentia oboedientialis* of a person for grace 'is precisely the transcendental towards the other who is to be loved and who is first of all one's fellow man.'¹⁴⁴ Again, '[t]he love of neighbour is not something which everyone always already knows reflexively in the depth of his being; rather, it is that which is sent to man only through the experienced and suffered wholeness of life and still remains even then, indeed especially then, a nameless mystery.'¹⁴⁵ Further, the relationship with the mystery of the Other is the basis of human subjectivity. It is 'the all-embracing basic act of man which gives meaning, direction, and measure to everything else;¹⁴⁶ it is an act which, though exhibiting a transcendental towards the Other, is experienced concretely. The *a priori* openness of a person to what is other attains its fullness and fulfilment in an *a priori* openness to another human being, and this is always an experience of a concrete encounter with another person.

Now such an encounter in which the mystery of the Other affects the subject at the juncture with the concrete is described by Levinas when he writes that '[t]he dehiscence of proximity' acquires its force, not in any abstract or natural immediacy, but in the more determinate immediacy of contact, like the touch of skin or the look from a face, which in its closeness does not annul the alterity of the other nor a unification of myself in the Other, for contact always entails the separation of touching and being touched. But touch is already frustrated by distance, for '[i]n the random agitation of caresses there is the admission that access is impossible, violence fails, possession is refused,¹⁴⁷ for '[b]eyond disclosure and exhibition of the known alternate... an enormous presence and the withdrawal of this presence.'¹⁴⁸ As Blanchot has commented the Other

¹⁴³ idem, Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God, p.242

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.243

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.242

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.241

¹⁴⁷ E Levinas, EE, p.43

¹⁴⁸ idem, OB, p.90

(*autrui*) is 'strangely mysterious.' The force of the other's proximity does not derive from the plasticity of his form or image but is undergone as the experience of obligation, the experience of my being-assigned by the other as 'one-for-the-other', an assignation outwith any cognitional framework in which the phenomenon of the appearing of the other would arise as a noema of a noesis, for '[a]dequation is impossible.'¹⁴⁹ It is the obligation I experience, my experience of *having-been* assigned. The proximity of the Other obliges me; faced with the Other, I am obligated to respond, but to respond not to the plastic represented image, in which the Other as neighbour seems to draw near, for this is representation happening in common time, and can easily become an image made in my own image and likeness. Rather, the obligation I have towards the neighbour 'concerns me before or otherwise. Such is the sense of the non-phenomenality of the face;¹⁵⁰ it is 'inconvertible into forms,¹⁵¹ 'an anachronous immediacy,¹⁵² and is thus situated beyond my comprehending vision. Were I to relate to the face in its plastic form and image, then my activity as a subject and my possibility of domination would be established.

The significance of the diachrony of the Other is that the Other always precedes me and obliges me to respond. Proximity is the 'hearing a command come as though from an immemorial past which was never present.'¹⁵³ Before ever I take to myself the power to decide to be responsible, I am already assigned by the other as responsible for him. I do not even have the freedom to decide to welcome him for 'to take hold of oneself for a present of welcome is already to take one's distance, and miss the neighbour.'¹⁵⁴ Rather, I must undergo and suffer the neighbour through 'a surplus of passivity which is no longer conscious of...' but is.... 'as though I had heard before he spoke.'¹⁵⁵ And the response I make to this command does not flow from my freedom,

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.88

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.89

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.90

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p.91

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p.88

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

but is the context within which my freedom operates.¹⁵⁶ It precedes my freedom. I am not first free, and then responsible; I am responsible, then free, for both are diachronically opposed, and responsibility is prior. I am not 'condemned to be free,' as Sartre claimed when he wrote, '*L'homme, étant condamné à être libre, porte le poids du monde tout entier sur ses épaules: il est responsable du monde et de lui-même en tant que manière d'être*' (*L'Être en le Néant*). I am not responsible *en tant que* free. I am condemned to be responsible, and condemned because this is *my* responsibility, not one another can assume on my behalf. Condemned, because responsibility cannot be delimited. 'To be oneself, otherwise than being, to be dis-interested, is to bear the wretchedness and bankruptcy of the other, and even the responsibility that the other can

¹⁵⁶ Such a framework for freedom is not lost to Rahner's own thinking. Arguing from 'the *a priori* structure of the one whole man (in knowledge and will),' Rahner reminds us that knowledge is 'a return to oneself, and freedom is not simply the capacity to do this or that but (formally) a *self*-disposing into finality.' Because the subject is always concerned with itself (from a formal point of view), 'it must necessarily be the secret *a priori* law imposed on the multiplicity of the possible objects for man that they can be concerned with and ordered for man's knowledge and freedom' insofar as they serve this self-presence and self-disposal. But, from this it follows (against the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, we note, for whom the instrumentality of tools open onto the presence of other people) 'that the world of things can be a possible object for man's concern only as a moment of the world of persons' as is also evident in the axiom that 'being and good are identical,' and in the teaching that 'the objective *moral* good is given in a *personal* being.' But Rahner goes on: 'it must be added immediately that this formal nature of knowledge and freedom, understood as self-possession and self deed, refers to the *formal* nature from a certain point of view and must not be misunderstood in an egocentric sense.' Materially, the personal Other - (*a posteriori*) in this framework - is the 'necessary mediation of the knowing subject to itself and so... the known personal Thou is the mediation, the 'being-with-oneself' of the subject.' Further, '[t]his condition is even clearer and more radical in the case of freedom: the free self-disposal, when morally right and perfect, is precisely the loving communication with the human *Thou* as such (not as a mere negation of nor as something different from the 'ego' which wants merely to find *itself*, even though in the other.) Knowledge achieves itself only in the act of freedom 'and therefore must lose and yet keep itself in freedom in order to be completely itself.' Knowledge has a fully human significance 'only once it is integrated into freedom, i.e., into the loving communication with the Thou.' Rahner concludes, '[i]f this is correct, then the essential *a priori* openness to the other human being which must be undertaken freely belongs as such to the *a priori* and most basic constitution of man and is an essential inner moment of his (knowing and willing) transcendental. *This a priori* basic constitution... is experienced in the concrete encounter with man in the concrete' (See, K Rahner, *Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God*, TI, VI, pp.240-41). Now, as the *a priori*, basic constitution of the person, openness to the other is not only an *posteriori material necessity* for finite subjectivity, but belongs to its *formal* constitution. One is subject precisely and insofar as one is transcendental and concrete openness to the Other, before whom knowledge and freedom have significance.

have for me. To be oneself, the state of being a hostage, is always to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility of the other.¹⁵⁷ The self is *sub-jectum*, under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything. Condemned, because this responsibility cannot be other than *my* responsibility. Though I can substitute myself for the Other, and am called upon so to do, in my assignation of 'one-for-the-other' I cannot myself be substituted. Though my relationship with the Other is called to be one of vicarious substitution, my responsibility for him cannot be vicariously substituted, for 'the responsibility to which I am exposed in such a passivity does not apprehend me as an interchangeable thing, for here no one can be substituted for me; in calling upon me as someone accused who cannot reject the accusation it obliges me as someone irreplaceable and unique, someone chosen.'¹⁵⁸ Were I able to thematise the Other and clothe him in a form, not only should I be objectivating him and introducing him into an economical relation of commerce in which he might be traded, but it would also be possible to trade my own responsibility towards him since it would have been universalised and thus assumable by another than myself.

Thus Levinas concludes that, with respect to the Other, I am 'always late, and guilty for being late,'¹⁵⁹ not only addressed in the accusative, but also accused. The neighbour has always and already approached me as a past, and the present of my welcome always involves a lapse of time, an irrecuperable delay for which I stand accused, for when I confront his image, 'it is precisely in his image that he is no longer near.'¹⁶⁰

Now, it might be objected that this responsibility is too much of a condemnation, and the overturning of my freedom is too perilous. 'It is because I am wholly free that I am totally responsible and because I am truly responsible for every act and for others that my freedom is constantly in question and thus in peril.'¹⁶¹ It might be objected that a responsibility of such infinite magnitude is too much to bear, for no human person can

¹⁵⁷ E Levinas, OB, p.117

¹⁵⁸ idem, God and Philosophy, pp.138-39

¹⁵⁹ idem, OB, p.87

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.89

¹⁶¹ J Halperin, Liberté et responsabilité, in Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas, (Paris: F Laruelle (ed.), 1980), p.63

be charged with the task of Atlas shouldering the entire world. This is surely the point to which Derrida draws attention, when recognising that, in being *attentive* to the Other, 'at this very instant, you hear me, I have just said it:' "He will have obligated (*il aura obligé*)."¹⁶² But, having been obligated, the marches of this obligation are so discrete as to be illimitable. Derrida writes of the phrase, '*il aura obligé*,' that it overflows with discretion. 'But precisely, nothing surrounds it sufficiently to assure us of its limits. The sentence is not evasive but its border lies concealed.'¹⁶³ 'I myself no longer know where to stop them.'¹⁶⁴ This, though, is not because of the distance of obligation, but on account of its very excessive and weighty proximity. It is not because the Other, in his dimension of infinity, is so far distanced from me that I must pursue my obligation to the ends of the earth, but because, in his simple *me voici*, he is so proximate as to be inescapable. I cannot stand back enough so as to contextualise the Other, and not being able to contextualise the Other, I find my responsibility outwith all contextualisation also.

'Here at this very moment, when I am trying here to give you to understand, the border of a context is less narrow, less strictly determining than one is accustomed to believe. "Il aura obligé": there you have a phrase that may appear to some terribly indeterminate. But the distance that is granted to us here would not be due so much to a certain quite apparent absence of an edge., but rather because of a certain *inside* of what is said and of the saying of what is said *in* the phrase, and which, from within, if this may still be said, infinitely *overflows* at a stroke all possible context.'¹⁶⁵

Further, if all are responsible for all others - *and I, most of all* - then is responsibility not just a condemnation, but is also empty of meaning? For, if everyone is responsible, then no one is responsible. However, to limit the scope of responsibility seems a dangerous avenue to pursue. For, if the extent of my own responsibilities can be delimited, there will always be situations and individuals for whom I can say that I bear no responsibility, and to whom my world is closed - Auschwitz revisited, and the need in an other time for the inscription made by Levinas at the beginning of Otherwise than

¹⁶² J Derrida, At this very moment in this work here I am, R Berezdivin (tr.), in Re-Reading Levinas, R Bernasconi & S Critchley (eds.), p.11

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.12

Being: 'to the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-Semitism.' It may be that the ability to respond responsibly is curtailed through finitude and incapacity but, nonetheless, the obligation to be responsible remains. The ethical imperative may not be an ontological necessity and may not even be an ontological possibility for an individual, but it does remain nonetheless an ethical imperative. The choice, it would seem, is that we must either embrace Markel's insight in Dostoievsky's Brothers Karamazov that we are all of us responsible for one another in every way, *and I most of all*,¹⁶⁶ or deny that any of us is responsible for anything. But, does this not require a link between ethical metaphysics, which is the situation of responsibility, and ontology, as a structure wherein a responsible commitment to justice can be realised?

6.41 *Signification as the 'one-for-the-other' of substitution*

Now, for Levinas, the weight of responsibility I bear towards the Other is excessive because of the uniqueness and irreplaceability of the I. Responsibility to the point of substitution is the very meaning of subjectivity. To be subject is to be 'for you.' To say such is to give the self a eucharistic signification. One need only recall Paul's handing on of the eucharistic formula he himself received, 'τουτο μου εστιν το σωμα το υπερ υμων' (1Cor. 11:24). This signification of the self as 'for you' is not a transubstantiation whereby the self would simply become another identity. It is a substitution, 'the normative structure of intersubjectivity,'¹⁶⁷ which lies outwith the ontological order and 'rests on appeal and obedience rather than causation and comprehension.'¹⁶⁸ Levinas writes,

Signification, saying... cannot be understood as a modality of being; the disinterestedness suspends essence. As a substitution of one for another, as me, a man, I am not a transubstantiation, a changing from one substance into an other, I do not shut myself up in another identity, I do not rest in a new avatar. As signification, proximity, saying, separation,

¹⁶⁶ 'Chacun de nous est coupable devant tous pour tous et pour tout, et moi plus que les autres.' (*Les Frères Karamazov*)

¹⁶⁷ S Smith, Reason as One for Another, p.65

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.66

I do not fuse with anything.¹⁶⁹

He then goes on to ask, 'Must we pronounce the word expiation, and conceive the subjectivity of the subject, the otherwise than being, as an expiation?'¹⁷⁰

Signification always takes place in the ethical encounter between human persons, and since the intersubjective relationship is essentially diachronic, the structure of signification refuses the disposal of the truly transcendent originary agreement by intuition or the play of being. *Ceci* is not offered for *cela* in a representative or significative manner as in Derrida's structure of meaning as *ceci en tant que cela*, but as a personal, ethical signification which coincides with the moral event of *substitution* in which one is for the other. In the significative structure of this for that, my responsibility is the *for* of the relationship, one-*for*-the-other, 'the very signifyingness of signification.'¹⁷¹ The self "stands for" the neighbour as does the sign for the signified, one for another. Language as representation is only 'a mode of its primordial work of opening interlocutors to each other for mutual service.'¹⁷²

Now, by beginning with the experience of proximity, and its allied notions, Levinas avoids the quest for a consciousness which would be transcendental to thematising consciousness, and which would continue to understand ipseity as an essence modelled on the intentionality of the for-itself and yielding 'a new ipseity behind the ipseity that one would like to reduce.'¹⁷³ Such a transcendental reduction of thematising consciousness in order to discover the self behind the self which the for-itself expresses would yield a transcendental ego as 'first a non-quiddity, no one, clothed with purely borrowed being, which masks its nameless singularity by conferring on it a role.'¹⁷⁴ This ego, though a demand of speculative reason, would be 'an abstract point, the centre of a rotation, identifiable on the basis of the trajectory traced by this movement of consciousness.'¹⁷⁵ Levinas contends instead of this that a "subjective

¹⁶⁹ E Levinas, OB, p.14

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.100

¹⁷² S Smith, *op. cit.*, p.61

¹⁷³ E Levinas, OB, p.105

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.106

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

condition," other than 'an identity that one calls ego or I'¹⁷⁶ or the 'for-itself of consciousness'¹⁷⁷ already exists as the support for consciousness, saying that, if the return to self proper to cognition, the original truth of being, consciousness, can be realised, it is because a recurrence of ipseity has already been produced from without, an ipseity 'not having to identify itself in the present nor to state its identity, already older than the time of consciousness.'¹⁷⁸ In other words, the return to self is made possible because there is already a self constituted by the other than the self. What establishes the self, the very subjectivisation of the subject, is always and already other than the self, and cannot be identified in-itself by appropriating comprehension. How subjectivity happens is in 'an upsurge in me of a responsibility prior to commitment, that is, a responsibility for the other' ... [in which] ... 'I am one and irreplaceable, one inasmuch as irreplaceable in responsibility.'¹⁷⁹ The responsibility I experience (in my 'soul') when faced with the other in proximity, sensibility and vulnerability establishes my identity, not as a 'for-itself' but as *the* 'one-for-the other' - the definite article is important - and insofar as this responsibility is something which I can neither evade nor escape, but is a persecution, it provides my identity with its own constancy and recurrence. 'Persecution is not something added to the subjectivity of the subject and his vulnerability; it is the very moment of recurrence.'¹⁸⁰ This means, though, that the achievement of self as an active project of the ego in which the self posits itself *for* itself

¹⁷⁶ ibid., p.102

¹⁷⁷ ibid., p.103

¹⁷⁸ ibid., p.107

The continuity of the Same, the event of its recurrence, is not supported, says Levinas, by a transcendental ego, or by a consciousness which is able, independently of alterity, to link together the various moments of a subject's personal history. Joseph Libertson, in *La récurrence chez Levinas*, (*Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 79 (1981), pp.213 - 251), speaks of 'a latent differential moment in the economy of subjectivity' (*un moment différentiel latent dans l'économie de la subjectivité*). He argues that 'a positive unicity of the separate being is produced by the movements of differentiation and communication, although this unicity lacks totality. Subjectivity appears as an ontological event by virtue of the economy's inability to totalise its discontinuity' (ibid., p.251). At the core of subjectivity is a heteronomy which gathers the subject together under the *aegis* of responsibility. The subject is constituted as the one-for-the-other of responsibility, and perdures as the one-for-the-other of responsibility.

¹⁷⁹ E Levinas, OB, p.103

¹⁸⁰ ibid., p.111

becomes paralysed by its absolute passivity in respect of the other. The proper sense of the oneself, then, is the birth of the other in the self.

'The one is hypostatized in another one. It is bound in a knot that cannot be undone in a responsibility for others.... In the exposure to wounds and outrages, in the feeling proper to responsibility, the oneself is provoked as irreplaceable, as devoted to the others, without being able to resign, and thus incarnated in order to offer itself, to suffer and to give. It is thus one and unique, in passivity from the start, having nothing at its disposal that would enable it not to yield to provocation.'¹⁸¹

Consciousness is not the identity of ipseity. The subject rather is a term in a hypostasis with the other, and cannot be adequately expressed as an ego, an *I* or a oneself.

Responsibility, then, is an original experience; it is not to be derived from some underlying principle which would account for it, provide its justification and endow it with meaning. In this sense, the proximity which evokes the self as the one-for-the-other is an *an-archy* whose 'me-ontological and metalogical structure' takes form 'in a *responsibility that is justified by no prior commitment*, in the responsibility for another - in an ethical situation.'¹⁸² This anarchic ethics, however, is not disorder, 'the content of a consciousness gone mad,'¹⁸³ but rather 'an other order,'¹⁸⁴ in which 'the ontological play which, precisely as play, is consciousness,'¹⁸⁵ is brought to a halt. As original, responsibility is not of my own choosing, but 'is an assignation of me by another, a responsibility with regard to men we do not even know,'¹⁸⁶ 'an obligation, anachronously prior to any commitment,'¹⁸⁷ an anteriority "'older" than the a priori,'¹⁸⁸ a 'relationship with exteriority "prior" to the act that would effect it,'¹⁸⁹ and in which I find myself obsessed and persecuted.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.105

¹⁸² *ibid.*, p.102

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, p.101

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.100

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.101

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

Now, obsession and persecution are two moments of my relationship with the other. In obsession, 'a relationship with the outside which is prior to the act that would open up this exterior'¹⁹⁰ is opened up. Captivated by the other, obsession 'strips the ego of its pride and the dominating imperialism characteristic of it,'¹⁹¹ and declines it, as accused, in the accusative case, where such a declining (*de-clinare*) is not a turning away from a prior nominative to the accusative objectivity of verbal transitivity. The return to self does not yield an *I*, which can thereafter freely be declined as *me*. Rather the ego is from the start undeclinable in 'the irremissibility of the accusation.'¹⁹² I am already declined in such a way that, as accusative, *I* cannot decline the other. But captivation is also captivity. 'The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and for everyone.'¹⁹³ To be one's self is passively to 'undergo from the other,' where this undergoing 'from-the-other' is already the for-the-other of responsibility, or subjectivity. Of course, this means that responsibility for others can never mean a simple altruism, which is a decision by the self on behalf of the other. 'For under accusation by everyone, the responsibility for everyone goes to the point of substitution. A subject is a hostage.'¹⁹⁴ Like the vicarious suffering of the servant of whom Isaiah writes, subjectivity is always 'accused of what the others do or suffer, or responsible for what they do or suffer. The uniqueness of the self is the very fact of bearing the fault of another.'¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.110

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

¹⁹² *ibid.*, p.112

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p.114

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.112

This is a substitution which extends to the whole of humanity, for, since the Other can be indicated only as *il*, then, in the relationship with the *illeity* of the Other which is the source of his alterity, others (*autres*) who are other (*autre*) than the Other (*autrui*) and who also lay claim to my responsibility and also demand justice, are implicated. '[T]he epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity' (TI, p.213). '[T]he epiphany of the face . . . attests the presence of the third party, the whole of humanity, in the eyes that look at me' (*ibid.*).

¹⁹⁵ *idem*, OB, p.112; Cf. Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

6.5 *The face of the Other and the trace of God*

Now, the phenomenon of the face as an ethical happening has a theological significance, for it opens on to the mystery of the transcendent and infinite God.¹⁹⁶ In fact, the way of theology can only be pursued from within the situation of the ethical encounter with the Other. The step, however, is not to be undertaken hastily. Although representation and thematisation transform the trace into a *sign* of a departure, 'this,' says Levinas, 'opens the dangerous way in which a pious thought or one concerned with order, hastily deduces the existence of God.'¹⁹⁷ But the neighbour is not a 'sign of a hidden God who would impose the neighbour on me'¹⁹⁸ However, this is not to say that the movement from the Other to God is untraversable. On the contrary, the relationship with the Other and the relationship with God are intimately linked in the experience of transcendence which the ethical proximity of the Other evokes. The event of transcendence, writes Levinas, shows itself in a responsibility for the Other, but, in this very transcendence, 'the distinction between transcendence towards the other man and transcendence towards God should not be made too quickly.'¹⁹⁹

Levinas situates the way in which Infinity or God refers to the non-desirable proximity of Others in the detour of tertiality, or, as already indicated, 'illeity.' God is an excluded third, offered only as a trace in the relationship with the Other, 'a detour

¹⁹⁶ See A Dondeyne, *Inleiding tot het denken van E. Levinas*, Tijdschrift voor Filosofie, 25, 3 - 4, 1963

One can note here that Maréchal has been criticised in similar vein for making the leap from *esse commune* to *esse absolutum* too readily, a criticism which some also make of Rahner. See our earlier note on the shift between Spirit in the World in which the spirit intends *esse commune* and Hearers of the Word where its goal is *esse absolutum*, now identified with God. See particularly, with reference to Hearers, the criticism of W Hoyer who argues that the openness to being which Rahner's transcendental analysis concludes 'differs radically and unreconcilably from an openness to *divine* being.... What Rahner has disclosed in HW is equivalent to an openness merely to being in general (*ens commune*), not to absolute Being (*Sein, esse*) as it is legitimately predicated of God' (W Hoyer, art. cit., p.511). The difficulty, of course, as Hoyer presents it, flows from Rahner's limitation in Hearers of reality to cognitive reality, a limitation which we have hopefully shown is transcended in the wider Rahnerian corpus.

¹⁹⁷ E Levinas, OB, p.93

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.94

¹⁹⁹ E Levinas, La Philosophie et L'Éveil, in Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre p.104

from the face.²⁰⁰ 'The Desirable is intangible and separates itself from the relationship with Desire which it calls for; through this separation or holiness it remains a third person, the He in the depth of the You.'²⁰¹ God remains the absent third in the relationship between the self and the other. Thus Levinas can differentiate between 'God' and 'divinity'. 'Divinity' is always in the manner of a 'said,' the fruit of cognition and thematising consciousness, whereas 'God' is utterly other, eminently other. Atheism, then, is not a refusal of God, but of the God-concept.

'The atheism of the metaphysician means, positively, that our relation with the metaphysical is an ethical behaviour and not theology, not a thematisation, be it a knowledge by analogy, of the attributes of God. God rises to his supreme and ultimate presence as correlative to the justice rendered unto men. The direct comprehension of God is impossible for a look directed upon him, not because our intelligence is limited, but because the relation with infinity respects the total Transcendence of the other without being bewitched by it, and because our possibility of welcoming him in man goes further than the comprehension that thematises and encompasses its object.'²⁰²

God is inaccessible to thought, but accessible in the justice I show to the Other. Here is the truth of the anonymous author of the Cloud of Unknowing: 'By love may he be gotten and holden; by thought never.' But love is the doing of justice, and thus '[e]thics is the spiritual optics.'²⁰³ This is not to say that the Other is in some way the incarnation of God, or that God finds expression in the materiality and historicity of the Other to which we then respond. The trace of God offers itself in the face, which is supra-categorical, 'disincarnate.' The face is not the incarnation of the Other, but, in terms of illeity, rather the 'disincarnation' of the Other, his transcendence and infinity. And it is precisely on account of this that the Other offers the trace of God. 'The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed.'²⁰⁴ Thus, though the Other provokes desire in me, and is thus desirable, what draws me ever further into the infinite

²⁰⁰ Cf. M Faessler, L'Intrigue Du Tout-Autre, Dieu dans la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas in Les Cahiers de La Nuit Surveillée: Emmanuel Levinas, p.140

²⁰¹ E Levinas, God and Philosophy, p.137

²⁰² idem, TI, p.78

²⁰³ ibid.

²⁰⁴ ibid., p.79

relationship with him is that quality of tertiality, or illeity, which renders the Other appealing, his very non-desirability. The desired is referred to the non-desirable, and in this ethical reversal, 'GOD is torn up from objectivity, presence and Being.'²⁰⁵

'His absolute remoteness, his transcendence turns into my responsibility - non-erotic par excellence - for the Other. And this analysis implies that God is not simply the "first Other" or the "Other par excellence" or the "absolutely Other," but other than the Other (*autrui*), other otherwise, other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the Other, prior to the ethical bond with another, and different from every neighbour, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of a possible confusion with the stirring of the *there is*.'²⁰⁶

Because of this remoteness, God is only accessible in ethics, as the other of the Other.

Now, the proximity of God and the Other is also addressed by Rahner when he enquires whether my obligation towards the neighbour derives from a command issued by God, and whether the love of neighbour as *caritas* 'is ultimately only a secondary moral act (one among many) which more or less proceeds objectively from the love of God as an "*actus imperatus*".'²⁰⁷ Is God the motive for loving neighbour? 'Or is there a more radical unity between the love of God and of neighbour (taken as *caritas*) in such a way that the love of God itself is always also already love of neighbour in which our neighbour is really loved himself?'²⁰⁸ Indeed, Rahner affirms that the question of *caritas* 'must always be a question of real love and that it is therefore not just a matter of fulfilling a commandment which guards and defends the other against our brutal egoism.'²⁰⁹ Love of neighbour is not a secondary moral activity of man which is subsequent to the love of God which is primary. Rather, love of neighbour constitutes the basic moral activity of man. It is 'the basis and sum total of the moral as such.'²¹⁰ 'The act of love of neighbour is the only categorised and original act in which man

²⁰⁵ idem, God and Philosophy, p.137

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ K Rahner, Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God, p.247

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

Regarding the motive one has for loving our neighbour, see also again, Jacques Pohier's reflection on Aquinas' Summa Theologica, Ila Ilae, qq.25-26 in Dieu fractures, pp.337-350

²⁰⁹ K Rahner, Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God, p.244

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.239-240

attains the whole of reality given to us in categories, with regard to which he fulfils himself perfectly correctly and *in which* he always already makes the transcendental and direct experience of God by grace.²¹¹

Rahner believes that reflection on the unity between love of God and love of neighbour is a task which has assumed an urgency on account of the situation of contemporary philosophy which speaks of 'the end of metaphysics,' and questions 'the transcendental philosophy of the pure subject, with its openness to the Absolute,'²¹² and where philosophy itself is being subverted by the sociological move towards an ontology of intercommunication.

Rahner's interpretation of this seems to operate within a Heideggerian framework. The human environment is an environment of persons in which '[t]he world of things is of significance only as a factor for man and his neighbour.'²¹³ The other person, a *Co-Dasein* is thus part of the ontological disclosure which happens in the process of *Dasein's* concerned dealings with *Zeuge* which manifests *Dasein's* Being as *Mitsein*, and *Dasein* as *Mit-Dasein*. Rahner, however, reverses the relationship: the world of things does not lead on to the disclosure of the world of persons; rather, 'the world of things can be a possible object for man's concern only as a moment of the world of persons.'²¹⁴ This is because the subject is not simply constituted as knowledge but also as freedom which finds its disposition in 'precisely the loving communication with the human *Thou* as such,' which becomes 'the all-embracing basic act of man which gives meaning, direction, and measure to everything else.'²¹⁵ In other words, the *a priori* openness of the subject to what is other attains its fullness and fulfilment in an *a priori* openness to another human being, which is always an experience of a concrete encounter with another person. This loving commerce with the other, as *caritas*, is not restricted to the obviously and transparently ordinary everyday events but 'gives this act the quality of mystery.'²¹⁶ Love is not a 'regional' happening in the life of man but is an

²¹¹ *ibid.*, p.246

²¹² *ibid.*, p.232

²¹³ *ibid.*, p.240

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.241

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp.241-242

act which embraces 'the whole of himself in which alone he possesses himself completely, meets himself completely and falls into the ultimate abyss of his nature.'²¹⁷ '[T]he whole incalculable mystery of man is contained and exercised in this act of love of neighbour.'²¹⁸ In the light of reflection's failure to comprehend human reality, the love of neighbour confronts man with 'the silent, absolute mystery which embraces his existence.'²¹⁹ Further, this love of neighbour is not to be appreciated as a power of the subject; 'rather, it is that which is sent to man only through the experienced and suffered wholeness of life and still remains even then, indeed especially then, a nameless mystery.'²²⁰

To those who would argue that 'the *religious* act directed towards God is the basic act of human existence' rather than 'the love of neighbour as the one all-embracing basic act of human existence,'²²¹ Rahner would say that 'the categorised explicit love of neighbour is the primary act of the love of God'²²² and that they operate with a basic misunderstanding, for God is not thought as one object among others, whether in his own objectivity or in subjective human intentionality, but, prior to any reflection, is 'always given as the subjectively and objectively all-bearing *ground* of experience, a ground which is beyond this world'²²³ that is, as transcendent and transcendental with respect to the world. Because the human spirit realises itself incarnationally in the world as knowledge and love, it necessarily and must necessarily embrace other persons. It is only in this way that God is given, 'in and through man who has *already* (in logical priority) experienced the human Thou by his intramundane transcendental experience (of his *a priori* reference to the Thou) and by his categorical experience (of his concrete encounter with the concrete Thou) and who only *in this way* can exercise the (at least)

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.242

²¹⁸ *ibid.*

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

²²⁰ *ibid.*

²²¹ *ibid.*, p.244

²²² *ibid.*, p.247

²²³ *ibid.*, p.244

transcendental experience of his reference to the absolute mystery (i.e. God).¹²²⁴ The primary basic human act is love of neighbour, and 'in this the original love of God is realised in so far as in this basic act are also accepted the conditions of its possibility, one of which is the reference of man to God when supernaturally elevated by grace.'¹²²⁵ This is surely why Levinas can write that what is at stake in the relationship with the Other is not egoism or altruism, but the very 'religiosity of the self.'¹²²⁶

6.6 Summary

Derrida criticises the privilege of presence whereby the signifier, whether the spoken word or, more particularly for him, the written word is viewed in its fallenness or secondarity with regard to the signified. The sign has always, he says, been regarded as a fall from an original situation of full presence. Derrida's criticism of the devaluing of the sign invites a reflection on the relationship between signified and signifier, reality and its image, *res sacramenti* and *sacramentum*. The problem with Derrida's attentiveness to the signifier and his refusal of a transcendental signified to which this ultimately points as the intelligible face of the sign risks not only relativism but also opens a way towards totalitarianism.

Both Rahner and Levinas assert the transcendental value of the signified, refusing its compromise by the sign, while nonetheless affirming the necessity of the signifier. For Levinas, the face is the cipher of the alterity of the Other, which offers the Other as an ikon of mystery, beyond thematisation and excessive with regard to thematising or representative consciousness. The face effects its own effacement, and though it enables a relationship, the Other is discrete in his face, being present only in the illeity of the trace; for Rahner, the symbolism of the sacrament offers the reality of an absolute experience, effecting what it signifies, without thereby reducing it to the visible or audible expression in the signifier.

Neither Rahner nor Levinas devalue the sign by relegating it to a position of secondarity in respect of the signified. Rather, as Blanchot points out, the ambiguity of the sign may open on to a multiplicity of double meanings and the possibility of

²²⁴ *ibid.*, p.245

²²⁵ *ibid.*, p.246

²²⁶ E Levinas, *OB*, p.117

misunderstanding if not duplicity. However, the more primal meaning of the sign is that its meaning is reduced to a semblance; the sign is not the mediation of the meaning of the signified, but opens rather on to an infinity of meaning, and ultimately to the other of all meaning, namely, the Other who is his own meaning.

Derrida regards the age of the sign as essentially theological. Rahner, however, recognises that theology is essentially the age of the sign, and necessarily so on account of the symbolic nature of reality. Being, for Rahner, is multiple in itself and thus relational. One sees this clearly in finite being which must necessarily express itself in order to realise itself; hence the necessity of the *conversio*. But here, too, is the truth of Levinas' insight that it is not the case that one is, but rather that one is oneself; *on n'est pas; on s'est*. 'To be' is a reflexive verb (*s'être*). But Rahner continues. Relationality is also a mark of absolute Being as is seen in the Trinitarian relations immanent within the Trinity.

This theological dimension of the relational Being of the Godhead and its relation to finite being raises the question of the place of God within the philosophical and theological frameworks offered by both Rahner and Levinas. Both in their own and not irreconcilable ways bring the relationship with the personal other and the relationship with God together. For Rahner, 'the whole incalculable mystery of man is contained and exercised in this act of love of neighbour'²²⁷ who remains a nameless mystery. The relationship with God is realised in the love of neighbour. For Levinas, God is recognised in the tertiality of the Other. God is the other (*autre*) of the Other (*autrui*). Since God is accessible in the ethical encounter, that is, in justice, God remains uncontaminated by Being, and thus, for Levinas, Wholly Other.

Now this juxtaposition of God and neighbour brings us to a problem which has perdured throughout this ongoing enterprise. Levinas must, in order to safeguard the absolute alterity of the Other, absent the Other from the domain of Being and establish the relation in terms of an ethical metaphysics. This leads to the difficulty of, having managed an excedence from Being in the ethical encounter with the Other to find oneself summoned to responsibility, how then does one manage to *do justice* to the Other within the ontological structures which regulate human society? Rahner, however, risks conflating God and neighbour within the kingdom of the Same - a kingdom also inhabited by the subject - and so of compromising, not only God and neighbour in their

²²⁷

K Rahner, Love of God and Love of Neighbour, p. 242

relation to the subject, but also God and neighbour in their relation to each other. Rahner, however, affirms the *difference* between God and neighbour when he writes that God is not thought of as one object among others but is 'always given as the subjectively and objectively all-bearing *ground* of experience, a ground which is beyond this world.'²²⁸ Whereas Levinas fears ontological identity, Rahner affirms ontological difference and an analogical understanding of being. It is to the understanding of Being that we must now direct our attention.

7

The Goodness of Being

A recurrent difficulty which has accompanied this work so far is the question of the meaning of being. Heidegger may have sought to answer the question through overcoming the tradition's *Seinsvergessenheit*, awakening us once again to the sonority and the verblat of Being, and pointing to the ontological difference. For Levinas, however, such an answer is inadequate for it compromises alterity by emphasising *ontological* comprehension and comprehensivity. It fails to pay due regard to *infinity*, expressed in Totality, or to the *otherwise than being* of Otherwise the Being. Dondeyne, as we saw, stressed the importance of both totality *and* infinity, pointing out that, for Levinas, the philosophical road had to disclaim the disjunction of both concepts, and, rather than choosing between totality *or* infinity, strive to hold both concepts together without confusion. Both are indispensable for a genuine philosophical thinking if human experience is to be fully explained.¹ The significance of Heidegger, for Levinas, is not so much that he marks the beginning of a renewed understanding of ontology, but rather that, by allowing Being once more to speak clearly in his phenomenological clearing, he marks the closure of ontology and the possibility of, having heard, leaving such a climate. With Heidegger Being re-asserted itself as fundamental and absolute, such that, as Dondeyne points out, notions such as 'subjectivity,' 'interiority,' 'aseity as *aus sich und für sich sein*,' and 'infinity' are just so many ways of naming Being.² Thus, against the tradition which culminates in Heidegger, as Levinas writes in the Preface, Totality and Infinity 'will proceed to distinguish between the idea of totality and the idea of infinity, and affirm the philosophical primacy of the idea of infinity.'³

Now it is this very attempt to distinguish infinity *and* totality, without reducing the former to the latter which Derrida highlights as problematical, as we have seen. Levinas proposes an absolute alterity, but, according to Derrida, alterity, otherness, can only be understood in terms of being other *than*, that is, in its relation with the Same, a relation which Levinas is keen to exclude, for to be related to the Same, and to be judged other in terms of a relation to the Same is to be contaminated and compromised by the Same, and hence, not to be truly other. Derrida argues, however, that the

¹ A Dondeyne, *Inleiding tot het denken van E. Levinas*, in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 25, 3 - 4, 1963, p.555

² Dondeyne writes, 'In andere woorden: *subjectiviteit, interioriteit, aseitas* (= '*aus sich und für sich sein*') en *oneindigheid* zijn slechts zoveel manieren om het Zijn als dusdanig, het absolute en allesfunderende Zijn to noemen' (art. cit., p.556).

³ E Levinas, TI, p. 26

transcendence of which Levinas speaks demands 'as one of its essential meanings'⁴ that the self, as self-identical or *Same*, knows itself to be the other of the other, that the self is already implicated in the notion of alterity, otherwise the violence which the Same inflicts upon the other would not only be without a victim; it would be a violence without a perpetrator - 'the violence without victim would also be a violence without author.'⁵ Same and other, for Derrida, are in relation, and the only way in which absolution is achieved from the relation between them is if the other is the other not of the Same, but of the other, other than other; according to Derrida, for Levinas, 'the other is what it is only as the absolute infinitely other absolved of its relation to the Same.'⁶ Derrida illustrates the problem by way of a Parmenidean muse which is not just 'verbiage' or 'dialectical virtuosity in the play of the Same:'

'(1) The infinitely other... can be what it is only if it is other, that is, other than. *Other than* must be *other than* myself. Henceforth, it is no longer infinitely, absolutely other. It is no longer what it is. If it was absolved, it would not be the other either, but the Same. (2) The infinitely other cannot be what it is - infinitely other - except by being absolutely not the same. That is, in particular, by being other than itself (non ego). Being other than itself, it is not what it is. Therefore, it is not infinitely other, etc.'⁷

What this means, says Derrida, is that 'the expression "infinitely other" or "absolutely other" cannot be stated and thought simultaneously; the other cannot be absolutely exterior to the same without ceasing to be other.'⁸ The corollary is that 'the same is not a totality closed in upon itself'⁹ but includes, as part of its meaning, alterity. Further, in the wake of Levinas' ex-cendence from Being, and notwithstanding Dondeyne's stress on the need to hold on to totality *and* infinity, one still wants to ask Heidegger's question, 'How does it stand with being?'¹⁰ What we want to suggest is that the problem

⁴ J Derrida, Violence and Metaphysics, p. 126

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ M Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p.32

indicated by Derrida, namely the rejection of Being as foundational, and the assertion of an absolute alterity outwith Being, derives from Levinas' understanding of Being as univocal rather than analogical. And that, further, in the same way that Levinas helps us to draw Rahner beyond a purely cognitive understanding of Being, so Rahner, drawing on an analogical understanding of Being, enables us to overcome the Derrida's criticism of Levinassian incoherence.

7.1 *The Analogy of Being in Rahner*

Rahner, addressing the dilemma posed, on the one hand, by an understanding of knowledge as the self-presence of being with, on the other hand, the concomitant ignorance which accompanies human being, expresses the being/non-being polarity of human being in terms of analogy. An inquirer is in possession of being (*Seinshabe*), hence the possibility of the question, yet he also lacks being, hence the necessity of the question. This admixture of being and nonbeing, or presence and absence, gives rise to the doctrine of the analogy of being in which the 'fluctuating' nature of being is addressed.¹¹ Formally expressed, since knowledge is the self-possession of being, a being only knows itself, or is self-luminous, to the extent or degree that it possesses itself. Rahner writes, 'the luminosity of being applies only with the restriction that a being is self-present and constitutes a unity of knowing and being only to the extent that being belongs to it,'¹² an extent which is 'intrinsically variable.' Infinite or Absolute being in which a total coincidence of being and essence occurred would be absolutely self-luminous, in full possession of itself. Finite being, however, lacking complete self-presence, calls for otherness to complete itself. Thus, 'Being is an analogous concept.

¹¹ One can note here a nascent point of convergence with Levinas. Graham Ward, (Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology, Cambridge University Press, 1995), notes that Levinas castigates binary oppositions, and opposes the reconciliation of opposites in terms of analogy. Ward, however, indicates, despite Levinas' express refusal of the doctrine of analogy and participation, that Levinas nonetheless 'wishes to construct analogies through a presence-by-absence' (ibid., p.131). It is precisely on this point, as we hope to show, that he comes into contact with the neo-Thomistic theory of the analogy as proposed by such as Rahner and Norris-Clarke. The Derridaean problematic finds a resolution in the Thomistic doctrine of analogy. Levinas, however, fails to address properly Thomas's developed understanding of analogy, and therefore, dismisses analogy too readily.

¹² K Rahner, HW (RR), p.12

And this analogy shows in the purely analogical way in which each single being returns to itself.¹³

Now, W Hoye criticises Rahner on this very point, saying that the understanding of analogy presented in *Hearers* is inconsistent with the Thomistic doctrine of analogy. Rahner's philosophy of religion undertaken in *Hearers*, says Hoye, fails to distinguish between creature and Creator. 'God *is* no longer absolute *Sein*, but rather *has* absolute *Sein*. In other words... God is now quite explicitly regarded as a being, characterised as all beings (albeit in a unique fashion, *i.e.* as fulfilled) by the "ontological difference".¹⁴ God is the 'being of the absolute possession of Being.'¹⁵ Hoye continues, '[i]f God is to be located within reality, then Rahner is left with no alternative but to call him the being whose "ontological difference" culminates in absolute "ontological identity," in other words, the Aristotelian $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \nu\omicron\eta\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$.¹⁶ Rahner's notion of God thus fails to be true to Thomas who had perceived and expressed the notion of absolute Being (*esse*) 'as emergent intensive act and transcending every *formal* order, whether it be categorical or, indeed, transcendental.'¹⁷ For Hoye, Rahner's difficulty stems from his failure to distinguish the act of Being (*Sein, esse*) from beingness (*Seiendheit, entitas*), and so, consequently, fails to grasp adequately the thoroughgoing transcendence (and concomitant immanence) of God with respect to the world of beings.

The root of such a 'total obliviousness to the ultimate structure of reality'¹⁸ is, maintains Hoye, Rahner's commitment to cognitive reality (the Rahner of SW and HW). Taking as his starting point in *Hearers*, the metaphysical question about the Being (*Sein*) of beings, Rahner asks, 'What is the meaning of Being (*der Sinn von "Sein"*)?' and finds the answer in terms of the inherent knowability of Being. Between being known and the act of knowing, an original unity prevails, but, says Hoye, this unity is not beingness (*Seiendheit*), but Being (*Sein*). As Rahner writes, 'The essence of Being (*Sein*, not

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ W Hoye, *op.cit.*, p.527

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.527, quoting HW, 50, *et passim*; 'Gott das Seiende absoluter "Seinshabe" ist.'

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.527

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.512

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.511

Seiendheit) is knowing and being known in an original unity".¹⁹

Now, in view of this understanding of Being as *Sein*, Rahner runs into difficulties with the Thomistic doctrine of the analogy of Being, for '[i]n order to explain why any being whatsoever, by virtue of its Being, does not necessarily enjoy perfect self-consciousness (for Being has been interpreted as self-luminosity [*Selbstgelichtetheit*] and, more pointedly, why we can ask the question about Being without already possessing the response... Rahner resorts to the notion of analogy.²⁰ But, whereas in the first edition of HW, Rahner spoke of the analogy of Being, in the second he refers to an analogy in regard to the *possession* of Being (*Seinshabe*). Hoyer thus can say that: '[i]n one edition he [Rahner] can say that Being is analogical and in another that it is univocal.²¹ In other words, in the first edition *Being* is analogical, whereas, following Metz's revisions in the second edition, it is the *possession* of Being, or, if one might put it, Being's relation to itself which is analogical, with Being as such remaining univocal. Hoyer commends Rahner for the consistency of his thought, for, '[i]f being is understood as knowability, then it must be meaningless to conceive of it as analogical; thus it is not Being that is different, but the grades in which Being belongs to beings.²² He concludes,

"It is not 'Being' that is analogical," we read in a footnote appended by Metz with Rahner's expressed approbation (HW, 47-48, n.1), "but rather the rising of the difference between Being (*Sein*) and being (*Seiendes*) in their relationship to each other, in self-luminosity, in the cognition of Being, and in *this* sense in being's 'possession of Being.' Being 'is' not 'something' 'next to' or 'above' being, but rather being as relationship (and thereby also as 'ontological difference') to itself, as self-luminosity, as unity... of knowing and being known." Thus, being remains univocal, while the "ontological difference" is held to be variable.²³

The conclusion of the first edition which stated that "'Being must be considered basically not as a fixed quantity, having always and everywhere the same meaning..." becomes instead: "this 'adjunct of Being (*Seins-zukunft*) must be considered basically

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.514, quoting HW, p.38

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.515

²¹ *ibid.*, p.515

²² *ibid.*, p.516

²³ *ibid.*, pp.516-17

not...etc. (HW, 47).²⁴

Now, Hoye is correct both in drawing attention to Rahner's limitation of reality to the cognitive and to the shift from the terminology of the analogy of being to the analogy of *Seinshabe*, but is wrong to conclude from this that Thomas' analogical understanding of Being has given way to a univocal understanding of Being itself in Rahner. Hoye writes that, '[i]n reducing *Being* to knowing, Rahner has impoverished the very category that could have offered a solution to his succeeding endeavour.²⁵ But it is in his very development of the understanding of Being as involving an (analogical) relationship with itself that Rahner manages to overcome any univocity. Rahner does not fall away from the position of the first edition which refused Being as 'having always and everywhere the same meaning.' Rather, he points out that Being cannot be univocally considered because Being in itself is never simply the simplicity of the Same.

What we mean by this has already been seen in the understanding which Rahner gives to Being when he considers the nature of Symbol, the possibility of which derives from the plural unity of Being. At the core of finite Being is distance, not homogeneity - as one has already seen in Levinas' assertion that *on n'est pas, on s'est*. However, plurality is not only a mark of finitude. A consideration of the theology of the 'traces' and 'reflexions' within the Trinitarian plurality opens onto the cautious and candid assertion that 'being is plural in itself.²⁶ '[A] being is, of itself, independently of any comparison with anything else, plural in its unity.²⁷

Rahner then proceeds to argue thus: 'the "one" develops, the plural stems from an original "one," in a relationship of origin and consequence; the original unity, which also forms the unity which unites the plural, maintains itself while resolving itself and "dis-closing" itself into a plurality in order to find itself precisely there.²⁸ But this original unity, as a consideration of the Trinity shows, 'may not be reduced to an abstract and merely apparently "higher" unity and simplicity: it cannot be a hollow,

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.517, n.20

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.517

²⁶ K Rahner, The Theology of Symbol, p.227

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.227

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.227

lifeless identity.²⁹ One already sees this expressed in Hearers in the very footnote which Hoye quotes: 'When God is here designated as "pure being," it is meant in the sense that God is the existent of the absolute "having-being" and therefore pure self-clarification. The absolute identity of God may not be thought of as a lifeless indifference of that "being" with itself...; rather it must be thought of as the "ontological identity" of absolute "having-being," in which at the same time the "ontological difference" is perfected, in which, then, the existent relates "absolutely" to itself, stands totally before itself.³⁰ 'There exists a differentiation which is in itself "perfectio pura" . . . is not provisional, but something absolutely final, and ultimate of the self-communicating unity itself as such, which constitutes this unity itself.³¹

This means that each being, as a unity, 'possesses a plurality' in agreement with its original unity and expressive of it. 'Since this holds good for being in general, we may say that each being forms, in its own way, more or less perfectly according to its degree of being, something distinct from itself and yet one with itself, "for" its own fulfilment.³² Unity and distinction are correlatives. 'And this differentiated being, which is still originally one, is in agreement because derivative, and because derivatively in agreement is expressive.³³

Rahner goes further: although plurality often indicates finitude and deficiency, there is also a positive aspect which remains at least as a "trace" in the formal givenness of the plurality. The self-constitution of a being as plural is 'the condition of the possibility of the possession of self in knowledge and love.'³⁴ Using the language of symbolic expression, one can then say that, 'as a being realises itself in its own intrinsic "otherness" (which is constitutive of its being), retentive of its intrinsic plurality (which is contained in its self-realisation) as its derivative and hence congruous expression, it makes itself known.'³⁵

²⁹ ibid., p.227

³⁰ K Rahner, HW, p.50, n.7

³¹ idem, The Theology of Symbol, p.228

³² ibid., p.228

³³ ibid., p.228

³⁴ ibid., p.229

³⁵ ibid., p.231

This is given theological grounding in the very mystery of the Trinity, in which Being is revealed as plural unity. '[T]he Father is himself by the very fact that he opposes to himself the image which is of the same essence as himself, as the person who is other than himself; and so possesses himself.'³⁶ This means that the Logos is the symbol of the Father - 'the inward symbol which remains distinct from what is symbolised, which is constituted by what is symbolised, where what is symbolised expresses itself and possesses itself.'³⁷ 'It is because God "must" "express" himself inwardly that he can also utter himself.'³⁸

Now, one of Hoye's criticisms of Rahner is that he moves from an analogical understanding of Being in the first edition of *Hearers* to a univocal understanding in the second edition, and hence, in the present context, would fall under Levinas' criticism too. However, What Hoye fails to recognise is that Being is essentially relational, and that it is in terms of this relationality - the sense of *Seinshabe* - that analogy is to be understood. Rahner, critical of school philosophy's misunderstanding of analogy, emphasises that analogy is not a mid-point between univocity and equivocity, 'as a hybrid between univocation and equivocation.'³⁹ He notes that

'[i]n the school philosophy the so-called analogy of being is frequently presented as though it were a subsequent midpoint between univocation and equivocation. It is as though one had to say something about God, but then would see that he cannot really say that because the original understanding of the content of the statement comes from elsewhere, from something which has not much to do with God. Hence analogous concepts have to be formed which are a middle ground between the univocal and the equivocal.'⁴⁰

Rahner rejects such an understanding, however, indicating that the very notions of univocity and equivocity are already grounded in the prior experience of transcendence, that is, the relationship with the alterity of exteriority, which

'is precisely the condition of possibility, the horizon, and the basis and ground by means of which we compare individual objects of experience with one another and classify them. This transcendental movement of

³⁶ ibid., p.236

³⁷ ibid., p.236

³⁸ ibid., p.236

³⁹ K Rahner, *Foundations*, p.72

⁴⁰ ibid.

the spirit is the more original, and this is what is designated as analogy in another sense. Analogy, therefore, has nothing to do with the notion of a secondary, inexact middle position between clear concepts and those which designate two completely different things with the same phonetic sound.⁴¹

Rather, to be human is already to be in an analogical way, for, as transcendence, man already lives, as original analogy, the existential tension

'between a categorical starting point and the incomprehensibility of the holy mystery, namely, God. We ourselves, as we can put it, exist analogously in and through our being grounded in this holy mystery which always surpasses us. But it always constitutes us by surpassing us and by pointing us towards the concrete, individual, categorical realities which confront us within the realm of our experience. Conversely, then, these realities are the mediation of and the point of departure for our knowledge of God.'⁴²

The 'analogous statement signifies what is most basic and original in our knowledge.'⁴³ Human experience is not a univocal experience of Being, but rather the tension between totality and the absolute exteriority of infinity. Man *is* analogously, and is *originally* analogously.⁴⁴

Now, a number of things flow from this 'fluctuating' or analogical concept of being, and which help better to understand the relation between the same and the other. The notion of the *totaliter aliter* is an absurd notion, as Tallon, in line with Derrida's criticism, indicates.⁴⁵ According to Tallon, what Levinas must mean by 'same' when he speaks of the other being outwith the same is 'same person' not 'same nature'. 'Human solidarity is not denied by affirming the otherness of the other.'⁴⁶ By stressing the other

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pp.72-73

⁴² *ibid.*, p.73

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.72

⁴⁴ One can draw attention once again to Levinas' dictum in Existence and Existents that '*on n'est pas; on s'est.*' To be is to be relational, for 'to be' is a reflexive verb; 'is' relates one to oneself, a relation which, on account of its variability, is analogical; again, ultimately, subjectivity, for Levinas, is 'the-other-in-me' as responsibility, and the relationship which one has to one's responsibility is discreet rather than direct.

⁴⁵ A Tallon, Nonintentional Affectivity, in A T Peperzak (ed.), Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion, (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), pp.107-121

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.118, n.6

as absolutely other, *totaliter aliter*, Levinas is denying the possibility of encompassing the other within the same, and indicating that alterity is 'on another plane, having the intelligibility of judgements of existence rather than that of essence, concepts, definitions, that is, having the meaning of the saying not of the said, of actuality not possibility, of person not nature, of who not what.'⁴⁷ In other words, to affirm the other as absolute is not thereby to affirm it as non-relational. Rather, it is to situate that relationality outwith an ontology of the same, where the understanding of being which would sustain that ontology is univocal. Absolution, like relationality, is an analogical term.

Now, if one turns to Maréchal, one sees him argue for an analogical relationship between creature and Creator. Maréchal asks how it might be possible to attain God other than by an objective concept.⁴⁸ Human understanding is conceptually mediated, and, with regard to the human understanding of God, this must also be the case. But since God is supracategorical, any objective content of our concepts must be, when attributed to God subject to *correction*. But, since God is unknowable directly, nothing of God which would allow a comparison with the creature is available to thought in order to make the correction. The correction must, therefore, proceed by way of analogy, for, writes Maréchal, 'we can, in a very real sense, compare God to the creature without knowing him immediately in himself.'⁴⁹ Maréchal explains it thus: 'Let us suppose, in effect, that a definite relation attaches the creature to God, and that this relation, as such, manifests itself to us in its inferior term: well, knowing the inferior term *as relative*, we would have, by the very fact and in this very measure, some notion of the superior term: somewhat like seeing an arrow leave the bow, we find, from the very direction in which it flies, an indication of the position of the target. And so, in effect, we conclude: we know creatures *as relative* to an absolute Principle, as *contingent*, and by that - by that alone - we know God.'⁵⁰

But does such a way of speaking about God analogically not also hold for Levinas' thought of the absolutely other?

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Cf. J Maréchal, *Le point de départ*, V, p.257

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.258

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

7.2 *An Uncompromised Alterity*

Derrida recognises in Levinas a rigorous attempt to obviate the ontological compromising of alterity by Being and its aliases by liberating alterity 'from the Greek domination of the Same and the One.'⁵¹ Rather than embracing an ontological philosophy of original identity, Levinas 'will move toward a thought of original difference.'⁵² One is drawn to ask, 'different from what?' This daring plan to escape from Being, as one might dare to escape the perimeter of a totalising stalag to experience the beyond of exteriority again, is prefaced by Levinas in Existence and Existents, a preparatory study outlining 'a departure from Being and from the categories which describe it: an *ex-cendence*.'⁵³ The renewal of ontology which Levinas noted in contemporary philosophy in the 1940's was preoccupied with the burdensome 'relationship between the self and its existence' and as such, says Levinas, manifested a basic lack of transcendence, a forgetfulness of the other. Since the self's concern is an existence (*Existenz*) which is existentially *mine* (*Jeimeinigkeit*), and since this existence is finite, the self has within itself no possibility of escape; its project is beset with the tragic fact of ultimate failure, anxiety and death. Now, while Levinas notes the inspiration which Heidegger's concept of ontology provides in its working out of the relationship which man sustains with Being, and which is articulated in terms of the ontological difference, he is nonetheless convinced of 'a profound need to leave the climate of that philosophy,'⁵⁴ not by returning to a pre-Heideggerian situation but by going beyond it towards a relationship with true exteriority. The 'one sole thesis' of Being and Time, says Levinas, is that 'Being is inseparable from the comprehension of Being.'⁵⁵ The tradition has always valued Being and its relationship with knowledge. 'Knowledge or theory designates first a relationship with being such that the knowing being lets the known being manifest itself while respecting its alterity and without

⁵¹ J Derrida, op.cit., p.83

⁵² *ibid.*, p.90

⁵³ E Levinas, EE, The Hague, 1978, p.15

Levinas remarks at the beginning that study that it was written down 'for the most part' in the captivity of Stalag 1492.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.19

⁵⁵ *idem*, TI, p.45

marking it in any way whatever by this cognitive relation.¹⁵⁶ Such a respect, however, is transitory for 'theory also designates comprehension [intelligence] - the logos of being - that is, a way of approaching the known being such that its alterity with regard to the known being vanishes.¹⁵⁷ This deprivation of alterity is effected through the interposition of a middle, neutral term, whether concept, or sensation, or Being as such, 'that ensures the comprehension of being.¹⁵⁸ To affirm the primacy of the ontological relationship of a being with Being and the priority of *Being* within that relationship, however, is to fall prey to a forgetfulness of the *existent*, and to abandon or subordinate the ethical relationship with other people in favour of an ontological, gnoseological comprehension of the Being of the existent. It is to understand the existent in terms of its Being, and thus to subordinate the justice owed to the other to the freedom and power of subjectivity. Because '[o]ntology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power,¹⁵⁹ it is 'a philosophy of injustice'¹⁶⁰ deaf to the need and the cry of the other whose existence has been neutralised 'in order to comprehend or grasp [Being]. It is hence not a relation with the other as such but the reduction of the other to the same.'¹⁶¹ Levinas graphically illustrates the extreme outcome of such a subordination of ethics to ontology and his enduring fearfulness of ontological thinking, in his description of his own Stalag experience.

'There were seventy of us in a forestry commando unity for Jewish prisoners of war in Nazi Germany.... The French uniform still protected us from Hitlerian violence. But the other men, called free, *who had dealings with us (qui nous croisaient)* or gave us work or orders or even a smile - and the children and women who passed by and sometimes raised their eyes - stripped us of our skin. We were subhuman, a gang of apes. A small inner murmur, the strength and wretchedness of persecuted people, reminded us of our essence as thinking creatures, but we were no longer part of the world.... We were beings entrapped in their species; despite all their vocabulary, beings without language.... Social aggression... shuts people away in a class, deprives them of expression and condemns them to being "signifiers without a signified"

⁵⁶ ibid., p.42

⁵⁷ loc. cit.

⁵⁸ ibid., p.43

⁵⁹ ibid., p.46

⁶⁰ ibid.

⁶¹ ibid. pp.45-46

and from there to violence and fighting.¹⁶²

Then, Bobby, 'the last Kantian in Nazi Germany,'¹⁶³ a dog with an ethical sense but 'without the brain needed to universalise maxims and drives,' - and no doubt also lacking the capability of ontological comprehension, - appears and recognises, beyond the reductive totality of imprisonment, men with a language, exterior to the totality, and like the dogs who in Exodus (Ex.11,7) remained silent to aid the flight of the oppressed in Egypt, and for the same reason - the recognition of humanity - 'barked in delight.'

'And then, about halfway through our long captivity, for a few short weeks, before the sentinels chased him away, a wandering dog entered our lives. One day he came to meet this rabble as we returned under guard from work. He survived in some wild patch in the region of the camp. But we called him Bobby, an exotic name, as one does a cherished dog. He would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men....

He was a descendent of the dogs in Egypt. And his friendly growling, his animal faith, was born from the silence of his forefathers on the banks of the Nile.¹⁶⁴

Bobby, himself impervious to the totality, responded to the exteriority of others 'with a growl' and demonstrated that totality is not the ultimate situation. Exteriority undoes the totality. Philosophically, Levinas attempts to reverse the relationship between totality and exteriority. Ontology must surrender its comprehensive position of dominance in the face of the Other who, simply by his presence, contests the power of Being by being radically beyond being and its categories. Ontology presupposes (ethical) metaphysics.

Now, since the other is able to contest the power of Being by existing beyond its grasp, the relationship between the same and the other can be asked in terms of the relationship between being and beyond being. How does being relate to beyond being? How does being relate to the otherwise than being? This is the difficulty which Derrida has already indicated. Part of the problem, we contend, is the narrow understanding of Being which Levinas employs, and his apparent refusal of the notion of the analogy of being. The question we wish to highlight as the proper question centres on the difference

¹⁶² idem, *Difficult Freedom*, p.153. *Italics added*. Note the Heideggerian notion of having dealings (*Umgang*) with things in the world.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

between an otherwise than being and a *being otherwise*. What we wish to show here is that it is possible meaningfully to relate being and being otherwise in the context of the doctrine of the analogy of the concept of being, which is not so much an otherwise than being as an otherwise than knowledge, which ultimately is *to be* ethically.⁶⁵

7.3 *Alterity and Analogy*

In *Totality*, Levinas reacts vigorously against Heideggerian ontology, and, in one small phrase, dismisses analogy.⁶⁶ Ethics, not ontology, or even theology as ontology

⁶⁵ Levinas indicates, in *Autrement que Savoir*, (Paris: Editions Osiris, 1988), in response to a question from F Marty, that he takes distance from the philosophical notion of knowledge as foundational. He says, '*En évoquant la possibilité d'une pensée qui ne soit pas savoir, j'ai voulu affirmer un spirituel, qui avant tout - avant tout idée - est dans le fait d'être proche de quelqu'un. La proximité, la socialité elle-même, c'est "autrement" que le savoir qui l'exprime. Autrement que le savoir n'est pas le croyance. Ce à quoi mène une pensée qui "met en valeur" ce que j'appelle le visage est une vie spirituelle - mot dont on se méfie beaucoup - une vie de la proximité humaine. C'est être à plusieurs. Être par conséquent avec quelqu'un d'étranger, il y a là une non-indifférence.... C'est le fait de ne pas être indifférent à la mort de l'autre*' (ibid., pp.90-91). To be otherwise than knowledge is *to be* ethically. It is *to be* not-indifferent. To be otherwise is to be close to the other, proximate, social.

We recognise that Levinas expressly refuses this understanding when he notes that '[t]ranscendence is passing over to being's *other*, otherwise than being. **Not to be otherwise**, but *otherwise than being*' (OB, p.3). But this makes sense, strictly speaking, only if being is taken to be always and everywhere the same, that is, univocal, whereas, what we want to argue is, following Rahner's analogical understanding of being, is that being is not everywhere and always the same for, in its 'having-being' (*Seinshabe*), it is variable and can only be understood analogically. But does Levinas not perhaps indicate this when, speaking of language, he points out that 'to be' does not simply signify the nominalisation of a noun such that 'this' is identified with 'that.' Rather, the qualitative variations which sensibility introduces into the relations between the same and the other 'make the *how* of the verb stated in it understood?' (ibid., p.35). He continues, 'Do not the sensations in which the sensible qualities are lived resound *adverbially*, and, more precisely, as adverbs of the verb to be? *But then if they could be surprised on the hither side of the said, would they not reveal another meaning?*' (ibid., p.35). That is, to the extent that adverbs modify the verb 'to be,' does being not speak otherwise than in the language of essence, concept, definition, said, nature and what, as Tallon has already indicated above?

⁶⁶ For Levinas, analogy is grounded in a univocal understanding of Being as comprehension. Hence, along with Heidegger, it is to be rejected since it does not respect difference. However, what Levinas focuses on is the Heideggerian emphasis on the ultimate ontological identification between Being and beings, rather than a scholastic emphasis on the ontological difference which is at the heart of analogy. J B Metz notes in Heidegger 'an *ontological identity* between Being (ōv) and the

(for theology is the archetypal doctrine of relatedness), describes the relationship between the same and the other. 'Theology imprudently treats the idea of the relation between God and the creature in terms of ontology.'⁶⁷ Thus, Levinas argues, as Derrida indicates, for a 'metatheology, metaontology, metaphenomenology.' In place of the theism of theology, a relationship with absolute alterity calls for metaphysical atheism, that is, for a God divested of the trappings of Being, a God irrepresentable. 'Only an atheist being can relate himself to the other and already *absolve himself* from this relation.'⁶⁸ The absolution of the terms of the relation from the relation entails for Levinas the exclusion of any notion of participation which would achieve a union with the transcendent. 'The comprehension of God taken as a participation in his sacred life, an allegedly direct comprehension, is impossible, because participation is a denial of the divine, and because nothing is more direct than the face to face, which is straightforwardness itself.'⁶⁹ Theism is essentially a doctrine of participation, which, by vesting God in concept, brings God too close, and so avoids the ethical demand of the encounter with the face. The 'bonds of participation' must therefore be broken. If God is to be free to reveal himself, to speak, separation is required, an absolute separation which is an a-theism. 'Atheism conditions a veritable relationship with a true God *kath auto*,⁷⁰ a relationship 'as distinct from objectification as from participation.'⁷¹ In place of the ontotheological God, who is not the true God, Levinas seeks the relationship with

understanding of Being (λογος) in the specified sense of the transcendental phenomenologically developed "ontological concept" (Heidegger und das Problem der Metaphysik, in Scholastik, XXVIII (1953), p.1). A scholastic, analogical understanding of human knowledge, however, is based on ontological difference rather than identity. Metz writes, 'In the *ontic* identity of analogical identities the *ontological difference*, upon which the principles are established, "is" located "between" the actually existing entities and the principles of their ontological constitution. The analogical (finite) entity does not cease to exist in what is merely constituted formally and identically. Rather it "is" in the "difference" between the ontological foundation (which constantly predominates and cannot be abrogated) and that which is constituted' (ibid., p.18, n.16).

⁶⁷ E Levinas, TI, p.293

⁶⁸ ibid., p.77

⁶⁹ ibid., p.78

⁷⁰ ibid., p.77

⁷¹ ibid.

God in an ethics founded in a discourse which 'suspends participation'⁷² and is enacted in the social relation. The metaphysical relation with God cannot be accomplished 'in the ignorance of men and things.'⁷³ God can only be reached through the detour of illeity. 'The atheism of the metaphysician means, positively, that our relation with the Metaphysical is an ethical behaviour and not theology, not a thematisation, be it a knowledge by analogy, of the attributes of God. God rises to his supreme and ultimate presence as correlative to the justice rendered unto men.'⁷⁴

A first question presents itself. To what extent has Levinas been successful in Totality and Infinity in surmounting the Heideggerian concept of Being? Robert Manning points out that 'Levinas's philosophy is a constant attempt to answer differently and in his own way distinctively Heideggerian questions,'⁷⁵ and insofar as Heidegger is so often his point of departure one can ask whether his thought ever lifts itself from its necessary 'foothold in Being.'⁷⁶ E Feron notes that by applying such energy to the resolution of the profound ambiguity of being, and by concentrating on being as event, one can ask if Levinas really manages to extricate himself from the Heideggerian understanding of Being as *Ereignis* which, says Feron, is the concept, along with mineness, 'which allows the most adequate analysis of the critique addressed by Levinas to German philosophy.'⁷⁷ The possibility of taking the transcendental reduction of being further by working back to a situation in which being, as totality, breaks up is occasioned by the event (*Ereignis/événement*) of being in relationship with what is otherwise, that is in the face (*en face*) of the face (*visage*). The totalitarian *stasis* falls before the eventful dynamism of the encounter with the other. Whereas ontological totalitarianism tends to speak being univocally, its break up in the face of another being *being otherwise* shows the inadequacy of univocalism, and already suggests, in its place, not a meaningless and disparate equivocalism, but the possibility of an analogical

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*, p.78

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ R J S Manning, *op. cit.*, p.17

⁷⁶ cf. E Levinas, *EE*, p.15

⁷⁷ E Feron, *De l'idée de transcendance à la question du langage: L'itinéraire philosophique d'Emmanuel Levinas*, (Grenoble: Editions J Millon, 1992), p.169

relationship between the same and the other.⁷⁸

7.4 *Analogy in Levinas*

Feron's study is useful for it shows that, although Levinas disregards the universality of Being on account of his insistence on transcendence, and more specifically rejects the doctrine of the analogy of the concept of being, nonetheless Levinas actually operates with an analogical understanding of the concept of Being. In *Totality* he argues that the relationship with the Transcendent is achieved not by theology or thematisation 'be it a knowledge by analogy,' but as ethical behaviour.⁷⁹ Thus his summary criticism of the tradition when, at the end of *Totality*, he writes that '[t]hematisation does not exhaust the meaning of the relationship with exteriority.'⁸⁰ Since Aristotle, he says, the term of the analogy of being has been subject to thematisation or objectification, 'as a relation with the solid, with the thing.'⁸¹ One wonders what understanding of the analogy of being Levinas is employing in his refusal of it as a way to resolve the problem of the relationship between the same and the other in favour of the preferred schema of being and beyond being. Feron asks why Levinas does not make reference to Aristotle and the analogy of the concept of being rather than 'the astonishing Platonic idea of the Good beyond being', and finds the answer in Levinas' understanding of the analogy of being as essentially equivocal. Levinas writes, 'Across the theory of the analogous attributes of the Middle Ages this thesis [of the application of the term being to God and to creation in an equivocal sense] goes back to the conception of the only analogical unity of being in Aristotle.'⁸² Aristotle, in *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, addressed the problem of metaphysics of a science recognising that there are many senses in which a thing may be said to be, but that there can be no science of *homonymous* (equivocal) terms, for though they have a common name, there is no common definition, and the objects so named are disparate. But, nor can being be

⁷⁸ See E Levinas, TI, pp.28-29

⁷⁹ cf. E Levinas, TI, p.78

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.301

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*, p.80

synonymous (univocal) for the terms are not predicated *secundum unum*, that is, with a common meaning. If being is only homonymous or synonymous then ontology as the science of Being is excluded. Aristotle's solution is to say that all that 'is,' in its many senses, is related to one focal meaning, or *arche*, which lies somewhere between univocity and equivocity, and which brings about some kind of unity, namely, substance (*ousia*). All other meanings of being are related to this one primary sense of being as substance, and, on the basis of this, relate to one another analogically. Although there are many ways in which things may be said to be, all these ways of attribution depend on one basic kind of meaning: to be is to be substance. Now since being is understood substantially, the relations within Being and between beings are to be described categorially. This creates the difficulty, which Levinas rightly recognises, of relations which, like the relationship with a transcendent other, are supra-categorial. Aristotle's analogical unity of being tends towards a 'unity of number' and an integration into a totality, whereas '[t]he relations that the separated being maintains with what transcends it are not produced on the ground of totality'⁸³ - Being - for, were this the case and they crystallised into a system, the idea of transcendence would be compromised. It is this tendency towards totality which causes Levinas also to dismiss participation theories, as R te Velde indicates when he notes that 'Levinas speaks of participation in the sense of an entry into an undifferentiated totality.'⁸⁴ Feron notes, consequently, that only two possible avenues open up: firstly, the approach of Totality which, 'by way of an extreme schematisation,' limits the concept of being in order to accommodate an other transcendental meaning beyond being. Being is thus definitively divided and henceforth equivocal. Such a hypothesis, however, leads to the problem, already indicated by Derrida, of how to think being and beyond being, the same and the other, without employing a new, enlarged concept of being which would serve as a common measure but which would render the very idea of transcendence as 'infinitely other' or 'absolutely other' inconsistent. Secondly, the approach of Otherwise than Being which proposes a meaningful concept of being encapsulating the whole of reality and poses the beyond being as 'a hole or a fissure in being,' an enigma which defies the logic without being necessarily unreasonable.

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ R te Velde, *Repliek to V Kal, Van Participatie tot Self-limitatie: over Thomas' Filosofie van de Schepping*, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 57 (Juni 1995), p. 326

Now, Feron argues that, although Levinas seeks an excedence from Being towards the transcendent beyond being, 'the passage from the one to the other is commanded by a latent comprehension of being as "event".¹⁸⁵ Levinas presents a double understanding of being both as totality and exteriority but beneath this distinction there is 'an initial and global comprehension of being which renders this difference possible and, in some manner, measures it,¹⁸⁶ namely the event of Being. The impoverished and formal sense of Being as totality enables the convergence and identification of notions of the self, objectivity and history under the concept of the Same. But the second, fuller sense of Being as exteriority introduces a meaning of existence 'in another dimension than that of the perduration of the totality. It can go beyond being.¹⁸⁷ Being is not simply totality, nor is it totality simply. It is also exteriority. 'Being is exteriority: the very exercise of its being consists in exteriority.¹⁸⁸ Exteriority, however, is not to be understood according to 'a lateral view' whereby one being would simply be alongside another (exterior) being within the totality; the true meaning of exteriority is transcendence. Now, while Levinas seeks an egress from the totality of Being, Being nonetheless perdures not simply as totality but also as exteriority. It is not an undifferentiated *simplex*, but a *complex* of what can be grasped and what lies beyond reach. It is the affirmation of the self (totality), in the etymological sense of *affirmation*, as a movement of exteriority or transcendence. In other words, to be is already to be in an analogical sense.

⁸⁵ E Feron, op. cit., p.166

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.167

⁸⁷ E Levinas, TI, p.301.

Feron misreads the quote, substituting '*la production de la totalité*' for '*la perduration de la totalité.*' (Feron, p.166; Cf. *Totalité et Infini*, p.278) His point, however, is not compromised. One exists in the totality, with a foothold in being, and, without letting go, is able to go beyond being.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.290

Now, Feron carelessly but adventitiously links perduration in Being and production of Being; both are to be taken in an active, dynamic sense rather than as static accomplishments already enacted. Being *moves* as a totality inadequately realised towards an exteriority irrealisable adequately. Being's act is essentially incomplete, and so the drama of its dynamism perdures as a constant production. (It is difficult to refrain from an allusion to Thomistic transcendentalism and affirm the ontological relationship between finite being and the Transcendent beyond or horizon, the explanation of which can only proceed analogically!) Thinking Being produces itself (*se produire*); it is a process of *production*. Totality and Infinity 'will recount how infinity is produced in the relationship of the same with the other.'⁸⁹ Such a production, however, is not a matter of erecting the edifice of being as a voracious and consuming totality and thereafter opening the window onto absolute exteriority which becomes, as it were, food for thought. Rather, the ambiguity of the production of being is that it is both 'the effectuation of being' and 'its being brought to light or its exposition.'⁹⁰ Being's self-production is revealed as and in its relationship with infinity. In other words, as Feron says, 'the revelation of a being constitutes the very being of this being.'⁹¹ 'The event of the being of a being coincides with the revelation of this being.'⁹² All the descriptions of Totality display 'the more or less latent comprehension of being as revelation.'⁹³

Now, as indicated, the difference between being as totality and being as absolute exteriority, or infinity, finds its support in an implicit understanding of being as event, that is, being as the event of presence. Presence, however, is neither univocal nor equivocal, but is a matter of degree. When Levinas employs the notion of being, he does so in terms of an analogical use of presence. Like Aristotle's statement that 'being can be said in many ways' (*Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, 1003a21), being is said in many ways in the thought of Totality: Being is realised maximally in the community of beings in which the subjectivity of being 'exists for another'⁹⁴ in a relationship of exteriority rather than

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.26

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ E Feron, *op. cit.*, p.167

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ E Levinas, *TI*, p.182

being caught up within subjective interiority. This 'return to exterior being'⁹⁵ is, for Levinas, the univocal sense of being, 'the sense which hides no other sense,'⁹⁶ which situates a being's centre 'outwith that being,' beyond being. Likewise, Desire inverts the anteriority and interiority of a being's own spontaneity, placing its origin in exteriority, undoing a being's own process of identification by situating its source elsewhere.⁹⁷ Inspiration precedes respiration. In the Desire for the other the self 'exists' in an eminent sense,⁹⁸ above being, 'at the apogee of being.' In Desire, 'preoccupied with another being,'⁹⁹ a being is 'above being.' Now, when Levinas speaks of being beyond being, it is being as totality which is transcended. Transcendence, as transascendence, is a moving beyond the totality in which the self embarks upon the work of identification, to a relationship with the exteriority of the other, which is a relationship of metaphysics. The presence of the other augments impoverished interiority, lifting it from its foothold in the enjoyment of worldly being, and establishing it, not as an otherwise than being as such, but as an otherwise than totality, which is a being otherwise. It is the difference between being and being ethically. The point to be stressed is that ethical existence - the relationship with the absolute exteriority of the other - is not an otherwise than being, but a being otherwise. To be *ethically* is *to be* otherwise. The presence of the other, as face, is always a surplus of being, rather than surplus to being. Such a comparison of beings, in terms of their degree of presence, demonstrates, according to Feron, the manner in which 'Levinas remains faithful to the Aristotelian principle of the analogy of the concept of being.'¹⁰⁰ He writes,

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.183

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ One sees this in Aquinas who *In Ethicorum 1,1,9*, is guided by Aristotle's dictum that 'The Good is what all things desire' (*Nic. Ethics, I, i, 1094a*). Unknowable in itself, the good is experienced positively in the movement of the appetite or will, that is, in the phenomenon of desirability. Cf. Plotinus: 'The good must be desired; but it is not good because it is desirable; it is desirable because it is good' (*Enneads, VI, 7,25*). Thomas, however, wishes to proceed beyond the *ratio boni* by which the good is recognised to the *natura boni*, which is being considered in its *actuality* (S.T., I, 5, 1). For a study of the relationship between being and the good in Aquinas, see Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, (Leiden, New York, Köln: E J Brill, 1992), *passim*.

⁹⁸ E Levinas, *TI*, p.63

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ E Feron, *op. cit.*, p.168

'Consequently, all the positive terms of Totality and Infinity - face, desire, exteriority, infinity etc - still participate in a metaphysics of presence which, in the end, has no other option than to create a hierarchy of beings - the object, the self, the other as face, God - on the scale of presence with, at the basis of the hierarchy, the idea of a maximum or a plenitude of presence. In Totality and Infinity, then, the expression "beyond being" would only signify existing from the point of being, being maximally or possessing a plenitude of presence.'¹⁰¹

A second level of analogical thinking, hinted at by Derrida, can be mentioned in passing. The relationship between the same and other, between being and beyond being, is achieved through discourse. But, in Levinas, the concept of discourse is analogical. Levinas writes that '[d]iscourse is discourse with God and not with equals... Metaphysics is the essence of this language with God; it leads above being.'¹⁰² Derrida comments that 'the common root of humanism and theology' is to be found in 'the resemblance between man and God,'¹⁰³ and, on account of this, 'man's speech can be lifted up towards God, an almost unheard of *analogy* which is the very movement of Levinas's discourse on discourse. Analogy as dialogue with God.'¹⁰⁴ As Levinas notes, 'discourse is conversation with a god who is not our "fellow-servant".'¹⁰⁵ Inter-human discourse finds its prime analogue in the divine-human relationship. The other does resemble God, and this is 'the original metaphor'¹⁰⁶ on which Levinas founds his metaphysics: thus, 'on the basis of a doctrine of analogy, of "resemblance," the expression "human face" is no longer, at bottom, as foreign a metaphor as Levinas seems to wish.'¹⁰⁷ '[I]t is the analogy between the face and God's visage that, in the most classical fashion, distinguishes man from animal.... Man's substantiality, which permits him to be face, is thus founded in his resemblance to God, who is therefore both The Face and absolute substantiality.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ ibid. A Plenitude which is, however, enacted ethically.

¹⁰² E Levinas, TI, p.297

¹⁰³ J Derrida, op. cit., p.108

¹⁰⁴ ibid.

¹⁰⁵ E Levinas, TI, p.72

¹⁰⁶ J Derrida, op. cit., p.143

¹⁰⁷ ibid.

¹⁰⁸ ibid., p.142

7.5 *The event of Being*

The Thomistic doctrine of the analogy of being offers a context for Levinas' beyond being without subjecting his ethical perspective to ontological compromise. A number of points can be usefully highlighted.

First of all, as Feron claims, being as event is the overarching understanding of Being in Levinas which holds together being as totality and being as exteriority in their difference. Being is constituted in its totality as a drive for absolute exteriority. This means that the 'system' of Being has always and already been disrupted. As Levinas has said, the Reduction of Being, as totality, has already taken place. Such a dynamic resonates with Aquinas' stress on *actus essendi*, within which context he develops his own understanding of participation. For Thomas, *esse* is *actus essendi*. The act is a perfection *in se*, and potency, therefore, becomes a capacity to receive a perfection. Further, by stressing *esse* as *actus essendi*, the notion of *esse* as simply signifying being as presence is overcome. *Esse* is also a *virtus essendi*, a dynamic 'presence-with-power' in virtue of which a being is able to be present, to perfect its own potential according to its own degree of being. As Rahner points out, '*Esse* is no longer mere presence (*Vorhandensein*), the indifferent ground, as it were, upon which identical and indifferent ground the different essences must stand, if in addition to their real ideal being they also wish to be really. *Esse* is not a "genus," but appears rather as intrinsically variable, not as statically definable, but oscillating, as it were between nothing and infinity.'¹⁰⁹ Now, since being is the first perfection, the *ratio boni*, and the act of all acts (S.T., Ia, 4.1, ad 3,2), then pure perfection must be unique, that is, one, and this is to be equated with God 'whose essence is to be.' In relation to this pure *actus essendi*, creatures, 'whose essence is not to be,' have a relationship of participation; they share in the life of the other.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ K Rahner, SW, p.162

¹¹⁰ Levinas rejects Aristotle's principle of analogy but this is a rejection of the analogy of proportionality which, he says, developed from Aristotle to the Middle Ages (see TI, p.80), and which, under the influence of Cajetan continued as the central understanding of analogy in Aquinas for some four hundred years. W Hill notes, 'the prejudice of Cajetan [is] that analogy is ultimately proportionality' (W J Hill, Knowing the Unknown God, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971), p.122). However, after *De Veritate* (1256) the analogy of proportionality is abandoned by Aquinas in favour of an analogy of participation. (cf. P A Rolnick, Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), p.46). Rolnick takes as his guide G Klubertanz' chronological arrangement of Aquinas' teaching on analogy chronologically (St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960)). *De Veritate* seems to consider

Aquinas, therefore, relates the infinite and the finite by way of participation. But Levinas rejects participation. What exactly does he reject however?

Cornelio Fabro helps provide an answer. Fabro points out - and the similarity to Levinas is apparent - that '[t]he speculative tradition of the West has made of *ens* a "concept," in fact the concept of concepts, at the farthest limit of abstraction.'¹¹¹ Further, like Levinas, who recognises the great contribution of Kant's *First Critique* to modern philosophy as its lack of reference to being, and sees in this 'a meaning to the human without measuring it by ontology and outside of the question "What is there here...?"',¹¹² Fabro notes that 'what is surprising in the position of Kant is the absence of any interest in being as fundamental.'¹¹³ What interests Kant is the derived transcendentals: the one, the true and the good, and 'only much further on' and 'in passing,' says Fabro, when discussing the impossibility of the ontological argument for the existence of God, does Kant raise the question of being. The attraction which Kant's neglect of being has for Levinas is an attraction which is founded on an understanding of being which is not that

proportionality as the most important form of analogy. God's knowledge and human knowledge are predicated analogously according to an agreement of proportionality (*proportionalitatis*) (an agreement in the *likeness* of two proportions, as 6:4 because $6 = 2 \times 3$ and $4 = 2 \times 2$) rather than of proportion (*proportionis*) (2:1). Proportion involves a determinate relation between the terms of the analogy; hence, nothing can be predicated analogously of God and the creature according to the analogy of proportion. Proportionality, however, involves no determinate relation, and so the analogy of proportionality can be used of God and creature (cf. *De Ver.* II, 11, c).

'As the infinite is to the infinite, so the finite is... to the finite. In this way there is a likeness between the creatures and God, because as He is related to the things which belong to Him, so the creature is related to what is proper to it' (*De Ver.* XXIII, 7 ad 9).

The problem with the analogy of proportionality, however, is that it relates God and the creature in a trivial and extrinsic manner. According to Klubertanz' analysis, therefore, Aquinas drops proportionality completely after *De Veritate* (1256), although it persists in Cajetan's interpretation for a further 400 years. According to Rolnick, Klubertanz shows that Aquinas came to understand that 'analogy must express more than extrinsic attributions (as proportionality does) but must actually express some degree of intrinsic commonality (as the analogy based on participation does) (ibid., p.46). Chronological analysis shows that Aquinas turns to analogy based on participation, noting its incidence some 126 times in the entire span of the Thomistic corpus, 'in order to express a more profound relation between God and creatures' (ibid.).

¹¹¹ C Fabro, The Transcendentalism of *Ens-Esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics, in International Philosophical Quarterly, 6, (1966), p.389

¹¹² E Levinas, *OB*, p.129

¹¹³ C Fabro, *Ens-Esse*, p.391

of Thomas. It will be worthwhile to outline Fabro's argument.

Fabro argues that the Thomistic understanding of *ens* has been overlooked in the tradition and, on account of this, all being, possible and real, 'has slipped into transcendental subjectivity,'¹¹⁴ and has become a 'positing' in relation to the formal conditions of experience. This, says Fabro, constitutes a 'regressive or reductive explanation of knowing.'¹¹⁵ 'To define with Kant, and like Kant, that being is a "positing" is, despite all efforts to the contrary, to enclose oneself in a labyrinth without a way out.'¹¹⁶ It is when one returns to Thomas that one finds 'the authentic "radical beginning",'¹¹⁷ and 'an original doctrine, totally unknown to Kant who was the initiator of the new a priori transcendental.'¹¹⁸ Thomas, says Fabro, apprehends the real as *ens*, not as *essentia* or *esse*. '*Primum quod in intellectu est ens (De Pot. q.9, a.7, ad 15)*;' '*Primum quod cadet in intellectu est ens (S.T., I-II, q.55, a.4, ad 1)*;' '*Primum quod cadit in imaginatione intellectus est ens, sine quo nihil potest apprehendi ab intellectu... (In I Sent., d.8, q.1, a.3)*.'¹¹⁹ Avicenna, whom Thomas partly follows, insists, says Fabro, on the immediate and self-evident character of *ens*, 'that is, the absolutely first and immediate correspondence between the verbal sign and the "grasp of meaning" that is expressed in the adverb *statim*.'¹²⁰ It is in the light of this immediacy and self-evidence that the *reductio* follows thereafter. In other words, 'the *esse* of *ens* does not stand of itself,¹²¹ and so is not a founding principle. Fabro thus presents as the Thomistic

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.398

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.400

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.402

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.407

¹¹⁹ See B Mondin, *op. cit.* '*Ens* is the originary datum; it precedes all others' (p.21).

¹²⁰ C Fabro, *art. cit.*, p.405, referring to Avicenna: '*Dicemus igitur quod ens et necesse talia sunt quae statim imprimuntur in anima prima impressione quae non acquiritur ex aliis notioribus se, sicut credulitas quae habet prima principia ex quibus ipsa provenit per se et est alia ab eis sed propter ea.*' (*Metaphysica, Lib. I, c.5' ed. Venice, 1508, fol.72 rb*)

See, too, John Caputo: 'In Thomas' realism *ens reale* is the primary meaning of Being in reference to which every other mode is determined' (Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), p.199).

¹²¹ C Fabro, *Ens-Esse*, p.406

doctrine, three moments: 'the appearing of *ens*, the all-comprehensive activating of itself, and its intentional expansion both in the univocal predication and in the properly analogous transcendental sphere.'¹²²

Now, remaining with the principal meaning of being as *ens*, and not its conceptual derivation as *essentia*, or its intentional positing, as for example in Husserl's doxic thesis, one might say that the force of the Other, who is his own meaning, which strikes the subject is precisely the force of the Other as *ens*, the Other as *actualitas*, immediate and self-evident. Levinas' pursuit of the inter-subjective reduction is faithful to the method which Fabro says is proper to metaphysics - outwith the metaphysical-ontological distinction which Levinas employs - which does not indicate so much a merely logical process of clarification or explicative resolution (*resolvit*) as rather the "return to the fundament" and therefore a process of intensive and comprehensive foundation that the rationalistic tradition in the West has completely forgotten.¹²³ What needs to be stressed here is that comprehensivity and the intentional expansion in the transcendental sphere lies not on the side of a constituting transcendental consciousness, but on the side of being, as *ens*. As Fabro says of *ens* (against Heidegger): 'Note well: here, by means of the *esse* of *ens*, it is *ens* that makes itself present to consciousness and it is consciousness that is actuated as the presence of *ens*.'¹²⁴ In other words, *ens*, beyond the constituting consciousness of the subject, awakens consciousness, as has already been indicated in reference to Levinas' pursuit of the phenomenological reduction as an awakening to life. Thus, one can 'speak of a "transcendental efficacy" of *ens* as an activating ground of the whole intentional order.'¹²⁵ *Ens* is the absolutely

¹²² *ibid.*, p.407

¹²³ *ibid.*, p.407-408

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.419

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p.414

F O'Rourke notes, 'Being is the primary and ultimate object of knowledge; existence grounds all cognition. It is the foundation and horizon of the intentional order. What it is for something to be a cause is understood only because it is first affirmed that it is. *Quia est* is the first fruit of knowledge; *aliquid est* is the foundation and primary principle of all cognition: being is, and must be affirmed. Being is the cradle of all meaning and from it emerges the intelligibility of all subsequent objects of thought. To a phenomenology of desire, being is revealed, moreover, as the first goal of all pursuit. Existence, implicitly, is what is first sought by all things, a fact witnessed by the impulse of all things towards self-preservation and the actualisation of what is possessed in potency.... That "something should be" is the first principle in the order of desire, of the will in its encounter with reality. Being is good and is to be loved: such is the

primum cognitum, with 'a constitutive priority in every direction of intentionality and throughout the entire sphere of consciousness.'¹²⁶ The alterity of *ens*, the act and actuality of the Other, strikes us.¹²⁷ As Fabro says, '[j]ust as *loquens* is one who speaks... so, and primarily, the participle *ens* signifies the act of being.'¹²⁸

Elsewhere, Fabro outlines the development of the philosophical notion of participation. Plato, arguing that all things exist by participation, had used it to explain the relationship between contingent forms and eternal, unchangeable Ideas. Aristotle rejected such an understanding in which the forms would merely imitate a transcendental ideal, and stressed the concreteness of forms and the physical causality of particular causes on particular effects. Fabro summarises it when he writes that, '[t]he Platonic theory of vertical imitation and the Aristotelian theory of horizontal causality of universals and particulars tend to emphasise formal univocity.'¹²⁹ And again, 'Whereas Platonic vertical participation is actualised merely as imitation of the Idea and hence as a fall, as it were, into non-being and the phenomenon, the Aristotelian horizontal causality is like an endless repetition of universal essence in the singulars. The result is that both theories tend to emphasise formal univocity.'¹³⁰ As indicated it is precisely this tendency which Levinas criticises. Aristotle's analogy of being is ultimately grounded in the one, univocal meaning of being: substance (*ousia*). In the light of such formal univocity one can perhaps, then, understand Levinas' criticism of participation theories. Creator and creature are brought within the same ontological structure and relate by means of a causality. For Levinas, the prospect of relating the same and the other, the finite and the infinite, by means of some common feature, univocally comprehended,

principle in the dynamic order of ends and value' (op. cit., p.113)

¹²⁶ Fabro, art. cit., p.416

¹²⁷ cf. J Caputo's remark: 'To the structural quality of the real (*essentia*), the intellect responds by conceptual circumscription, with which it is entirely at ease. But to the active upsurge of the real, the intellect responds with affirmation, acclamation' (op.cit., 258).

¹²⁸ C Fabro, art. cit., p.412

¹²⁹ C Fabro, Participation, in New Catholic Encyclopaedia, X, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p.1044

¹³⁰ C Fabro, The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation, B M Bonansea (tr.), Review of Metaphysics, 27, (1973-74),

would compromise the utter and absolute alterity of the other and run the risk of reducing the other to the same. However, just as Levinas' own thought proceeds by way of a philosophical *via eminentiae* and has 'a superlative intention' expressed by way of superlation,¹³¹ so the relationship between Creator and creature, by which the one shares life with the other, can only be expressed analogically in terms of a *via eminentiae*.

Aquinas accepts neither the Platonic nor the Aristotelian understandings of participation. The creature does participate in the divine in a real way which is based on an ontological though *analogical* commonality between the analogates, a commonality which, says Rolnick, 'is warranted by God's causal eminence and its corollary, creaturely participation.'¹³² Since God is the perfection of Being, the pure *actus essendi*, and so unique, the creature can only share in this one perfection. 'God is the given perfection...., and the creature *has* the perfection to a relative degree.'¹³³ Fabro continues, '[t]he Thomistic notion of participation, founded in *esse* as supreme intensive act, makes it possible to pass from finite to Infinite Being through analogical discourse,'¹³⁴ 'which has in participation its beginning, middle, and conclusion.'¹³⁵ This 'vertical principle' becomes 'one in which finite and infinite can be meaningfully related.'¹³⁶

Now, what this means is that God and creature are related in a real way, a possibility realised in the Incarnation. As Rolnick points out, the language of analogy is underpinned by 'a prior ontological communication of God to his creation,'¹³⁷ namely, as Rahner indicates, incarnation and grace, in both of which God 'communicates himself, as himself, *ad extra*.'¹³⁸ What this does not mean, however, is that 'both God and the creature share being in the participation structure, or, that the creature participates in the divine *esse*,'¹³⁹ for this would open the way to univocal predication.

¹³¹ See S G Smith, Reason as One for Another, pp.62-63

¹³² P Rolnick, *op. cit.*, p.48

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ C Fabro, Participation, p.1045

¹³⁵ C Fabro, Intensive Hermeneutics, p.481

¹³⁶ P Rolnick, *op.cit.*, p.52

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p.42

¹³⁸ K Rahner, Nature and Grace, p.176. Rahner draws attention to the 'radically Christological nature of grace.'

¹³⁹ P Rolnick, *op.cit.*, p.63

'The divine essence itself remains uncommunicated... remains unparticipated; but its likeness, through those things which it communicates to creatures, is propagated and multiplied in creatures. In this way, therefore, divinity may be said to proceed into creatures and to be multiplied in them, that is, by likeness, but not by its very essence.'¹⁴⁰

The impossibility of univocal predication is further seen in the *actus essendi*, for finite being is never static and complete. Any attempt to delimit *esse* is confronted by the fact that it is already and always constituted as a movement or an *excessus* towards the infinite, and this means that *esse*, in its intrinsic variability, cannot be taken as a specific content nor as a limited concept, but as 'that which enlivens content and concept.'¹⁴¹ *Esse* in other words, as *virtus essendi* unravels the static formalism to which ontology is prone. Being is event. Expressed in Levinas' language, being, as totality, is always and already thwarted in its attempt at comprehensive expansion on account of its *de facto* relationship with an exteriority which summons it and constitutes it as so summoned.

What then can be said of Levinas' refusal of analogy and participation? Perhaps this: his analysis has halted too soon, and he has failed to address adequately the doctrine of analogy and participation as developed by Aquinas. In his criticism of a comprehensive understanding of Being, he has failed to be comprehensive in his criticism. In the same way that Levinas argues the need for a phenomenological *awakening* to the deeper meaning of being as intersubjectivity in Husserl's transcendental reduction, so Rolnick speaks of this awareness of the active understanding of Being in terms of *awakening*; one - and here we cannot exclude Levinas - 'must "awaken" to the central import of existence and try to grasp something of what it means as the common bond of all things and the possibility of community.'¹⁴²

Levinas recognised in Husserl's criticism of philosophical naturalism an attack

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.65, quoting J Wippel, *Aquinas and Participation*, in *Studies in Mediaeval Philosophy*, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press), pp. 146-147, paraphrasing Aquinas' Commentary on the *Divine Names*, II, 3

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.27

¹⁴² *loc. cit.*

Attention is drawn to the recent study of Battista Mondin (*vide supra*) on 'Hermeneutics, Metaphysics and Analogy in St. Thomas Aquinas.' Mondin, recognising the separation between metaphysics and ethics in Kant, and acknowledging Levinas' avowal of ethics as first philosophy, nonetheless attempts to illustrate the metaphysical foundation of the moral, not by placing them in opposition but by associating them within a Thomistic understanding of the relation between good and being. See, especially, chapter 9, '*I Rapporti tra Etica e Metafisica: La fondazione metafisica della morale.*'

on the scientific reification of reality. Phenomenology reveals that access to being constitutes part of being's meaning, and so the notion of the brute fact of existence is rendered redundant. Husserl, however, according to Levinas, still maintained himself within an ontological framework: intentions still aimed at objects considered as things. What Levinas calls for is an 'awakening' to that event by which being as totality is sundered, an event which is brought about by the advent of the personal other, in his exteriority, revealing himself in excess of Being's comprehensive acquisition. The unifying tendency of Being is contested by the fact that it has a communitarian basis. Being is drawn beyond itself, is forced to be otherwise in its *community* with the personal other, who is perceived as a value outwith or beyond the totality. The problem with Levinas is that he wishes to situate the personal other outwith or beyond being, whereas the Thomistic understanding has no need of such a move beyond being, since the good and being are linked. Rolnick expresses it thus: 'being and value are similarly inseparable, because every action, consciously or unconsciously, is ordered to a goal or an end.'¹⁴³ Like a magnet, the good *constitutively* draws being out of itself towards action, and as such, is 'virtually the inner cause of intelligibility.'¹⁴⁴ Now, it is important to understand this link in Levinas between being and value properly. Being, for Levinas, is not the source of value on account of some inherent tendency on the part of Being towards an end; rather it is on account of Being's relationship with the good that there is value; the good *values* being. The explosion (*éclatement*) of this thought is evident throughout Levinas. Although he situates the good beyond being, its import with regard to being is that it is 'a supra-ontological source of value prior to ontology.'¹⁴⁵ With regard to being as totality, the good is utter exteriority, and '[j]ust as being is illumined in the light of the good, the meaning of the self is brought to ethical fulfilment in the presence of the other.'¹⁴⁶ Levinas makes this point when he speaks of the responsibility which arises in the subject as a response to the exteriority of the other. The other, as

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.37

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.36

¹⁴⁵ E Wyschogrod, *op. cit.*, p. 2

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

O'Rourke, however, commenting upon Aquinas', '*Intantum est autem perfectum unumquodque in quantum est actu*' (S.T., I, 5,1), points out that '[a]ctuality alone fundamentally endows or grants value' (*op.cit.*, p.86). One would want to stress here that it is the actuality of the existence of the Other.

good, is before being - 'The Good is before being'¹⁴⁷ - and assigns the subject towards itself in a non-indifferent way as responsibility. 'Responsibility is what first enables one to catch sight of and conceive of value.'¹⁴⁸

The problem with the transcendence of the good in Levinas is that it tends to devalue the ontological structures within which life is lived rather than revaluing and animating them. Plato argued that 'what gives the objects of knowledge their truth and the knower's mind the power of knowing is the form (idea) of the good. It is the cause of knowledge and truth'¹⁴⁹ because it is 'more splendid than they are;' and that '[t]he good therefore may be said to be the source not only of the intelligibility of the objects of knowledge, but also of their being and reality; yet it is not itself that reality, but is beyond it, and superior to it in dignity and power;'¹⁵⁰ likewise, Levinas creates a chasm between good and being, a chasm which may well be traversed in terms of a responsibility for the other, but which nonetheless seems to provide no motive for the ontological actualisation of a common world. It runs the risk of engendering a metaphysical responsibility without an ontological commitment. The difficulty of the separation of being and beyond is not only the problem Derrida indicates regarding the impossibility of the thought of the absolute other; it is also the problem of incarnating responsibility without ontology. Levinas' stress on the other beyond being to whom the subject is always and already responsible may affirm the absolute uncompromisable value of the other, but it offers no way of linking responsibility with practical commitment to the other.

¹⁴⁷ E Levinas, OB, p.122

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.123

¹⁴⁹ Plato, Republic, 508e

¹⁵⁰ Republic, 509b

H-G Gadamer associates Plato's discussion of the good with an understanding of knowledge as *techne*. In placing the good 'beyond,' Plato argues that it is beyond 'what is generally accepted as knowledge' (The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy, P Christopher Smith (tr.), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.23). Gadamer argues that knowledge has been taken as *techne* (art). In the *Apology*, the artisans have a specialist knowledge but fail us when considering the most important thing of all (*ta megista*) (*Apology*, 22d), towards which knowledge ultimately strives. 'Knowledge of the good is exactly what is not asked about in the *technai* (arts) and the *technites* (artisan-handworkers)' (*ibid.*, p.22). To catch sight of the good one must 'see past all else (*apoblepein pros*).' Does Levinas not unnecessarily isolate his understanding of Being from the good by understanding Being in a specifically Heideggerian way and by viewing Dasein as a *technite*?

7.6 *The Goodness of Being*

Whereas, for Levinas, the good and being are to be maintained in their separation, for Aquinas, being and the good belong together, without absolute distinction.¹⁵¹ Aquinas, emphasising a metaphysics of participation places 'the good within being itself,'¹⁵² 'thoroughly integrating its value within being.'¹⁵³ The separation of being and good, evident in Plato, is disavowed by Aquinas.

'Goodness is no longer something other than or higher than being. Rather, existential being itself, of its very nature, is good, and thus has a self-diffusive character to it, from the highest to the lowest. Thus God for St. Thomas is at once the supreme Act of Existence and by that very fact supreme Goodness also.'¹⁵⁴

The problem of maintaining being and the good in absolute distinction is that, whereas the good might be the drive towards transcendence and the evocation of responsibility, of itself it provides no forum within which this responsibility might be enacted. The good beyond being calls for ontological structures within which justice might be done for others. It is not sufficient that goodness be diffusive of itself. The passivity of *contemplatio* needs, for justice' sake to be resolved into *praxis*. One cannot simply seek respite from one's ontological labours by raising one's eyes to gaze on the face of the other and find inspiration. Commitment to the other, the incarnation of responsibility, needs to be enacted as ontology. As Rolnick, quoting Clarke, points out, the weakness of the neo-platonic tradition is that, in separating the good and being, it renders the self impotent in respect of the other; 'ideas cannot of themselves act.'¹⁵⁵ They can however participate in the real by becoming active forms, 'the intelligible structure of action.'¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ *Dicendum quod bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem, sed differunt secundum rationem tantum.* (S.T., I, 5,1)

¹⁵² P Rolnick, op. cit., p.5

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p.37

cf. '*Unde manifestum est quod intantum est aliquid bonum inquantum est ens: esse enim est actualitas omis rei*' (S.T., I, 5,1); '*Esse igitur actu boni rationem constituit... naturaliter enim bonum uniuscuiusque est actus et perfectio eius*' (*Contra Gentiles*, 1,37); '*Esse enim actu in unoquoque est bonum ipsius*' (*Contra Gentiles*, 1,38).

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.38, quoting W Norris Clark, *The Universe as Journey: Conversations with W Norris Clarke*, G McCool (ed.), (New York: Fordham University Press), p.80

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.38

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.38, quoting Clarke, *Journey*, 71

With regard to Levinas, the assertion of the philosophical primacy of the good over being not only, positively, delivers the ethical impossibility of violence, according to the basic command, '*tu ne me tueras point,*' it also delivers the impossibility of *doing* justice to the other. The ontological structures of society are not all bad, though they can be instruments of violence and evil, and submerge the individual; if they possess the good as 'the intelligible structure of action' they can become the incarnation of goodness and a common world in which the same and the other can be meaningfully related can be established.

7.7 *The Problem of the Social*

If both Rahner and Levinas are committed to an absolute otherness, and infinite which has philosophical primacy in the order of the metaphysical (Levinas) or the ontologico-metaphysical (Rahner) if not in the educational order of epistemology or logic, one area in which both seem to be under-developed is in the relevance of the social.

Rahner has been criticised for the lack of significance accorded to the personal and material world within his transcendental framework, although, as has been seen, his later writings point towards a conversion towards the personal Other, a conversion which R D Johns attributes to the close collaboration between Rahner and his student and friend, Johannes Baptist Metz.¹⁵⁷ Metz recognises that in Rahner's schematisation of the spirit's pre-apprehension of being, the alienation of the material world and a radical spiritualisation of the subject, as already indicated. Metz, therefore, develops a 'critical position with regard to the spiritualising and ontologising tendencies in Rahner's thought,¹⁵⁸ and stresses the need for a political commitment. Such a commitment, for Metz, is not to be founded in the pre-apprehension of God, as absolute Being, in the flight to whom the world is encountered almost acaccidentally, but rather 'in the consummation of all things beyond historical existence in God's future kingdom.'¹⁵⁹ The eschatological perspective, for Metz, is the undoing of the ontology of spirit, and the

¹⁵⁷ For an outline of the influence of Metz on Rahner's theological development, see R D Johns, Man in the World: The Political Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz, (Missoula, Scholars Press, 1976)

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.vi

possibility of categorical concreteness. Now, the importance of the eschatological is also evident in Levinas who, right at the beginning of *Totality and Infinity* remarks that the mark of the eschatological prophet is his ability to stand outwith the judgement of history while subjecting that history itself to judgement. For Levinas, ontology, and the politics it supports, finds its judgement in the Face of the Other who summons the subject and institutions not primarily to political action but to ethical responsibility. But this creates a similar problem as was seen in Rahner. Whether it is expressed as 'love of neighbour' or as 'responsibility for the Other,' there is a lack of categorical concreteness. Finkielkraut articulates the problem when he writes,

'Il existe, dans nombreuses langues, un mot qui désigne à la fois l'acte de donner et celui de prendre, la charité et l'avidité, la bienfaisance et la convoitise - c'est le mot: amour. Le désir ardent qu'a un être de tout ce qui peut le combler et l'abnégation sans réserve convergent paradoxalement dans un même vocable. On parle d'amour pour l'apothéose du souci de soi, et pour le souci de l'Autre poussé à son paroxysme.

Mais qui croit encore au désintéressement? Qui prend pour l'argent comptant l'existence de comportements bénévoles? Depuis l'aube des Temps Modernes, toutes les généalogies de la morale font dériver la gratuité de la cupidité, et les actions nobles du désir d'acquisition. Il n'y a pas d'oubli de soi qui ne s'avère payant pour le soi, pas de prodigalité sans compensation, pas de générosité qui ne soit en sous-main et symboliquement gratifiante, pas d'offrande, enfin, qui ne trahisse le besoin impérialiste d'agir sur l'Autre et de le posséder. Tout don est prédateur, et toutes nos conduites sont lucratives: voilà ce que nous pensons spontanément, et la lucidité est pour nous l'acte qui dévoile, sous le dévouement apparent, l'omniprésente réalité de l'égoïsme. L'homme tel qu'il est, c'est l'homme moins le don. Débarassée des préceptes religieux ou moraux, attachée exclusivement aux faits, la pensée positive ne retient de l'amour que l'instinct d'appropriation; c'est la pensée normative qui oppose à la voracité universelle et au règne du chacun pour soi, la valeur du désintéressement: l'amour du prochain définit l'homme tel qu'il devrait être, ou tel qu'il sera demain, une fois que l'Histoire aura fait table rase de son passé d'oppression.¹⁶⁰

In other words, the problem of love and responsibility for the Other as neighbour is the problem of making historical, categorical and concrete that love and that responsibility, such that it defines man, not simply as he should be or will be tomorrow, but as he actually is. Roger Burggraeve recognises that the role of society as an institution is poorly developed in Levinas when he notes that '[i]t is true that Levinas here presupposes and posits this "institutional mediating" more than he systematically

¹⁶⁰ A Finkielkraut, op.cit., pp.11-12

develops it,¹⁶¹ and that the love of the Other which is the prime relation for Levinas 'denies the factual structure and dynamism of interhuman reality.'¹⁶² Burggraeve, however, attempts an outline of an ethical social theory, inspired by Levinas, which can be briefly outlined: the ethical relationship with the Other dethrones the subject from his position of dominance and establishes the self as unconditioned responsibility. Since this relationship is asymmetrical, a heteronomy of rights develops. It is the Other, not the self, who has rights; the I is only responsibility and obligation. This responsibility, however, expresses itself in the justice I show to the neighbour, a justice which, for Levinas, is superior to love. I must do good to the Other who is my neighbour. Now, were the world characterised by the closed society of two alone, 'there would be no *problem*. The Other would be my responsibility completely.'¹⁶³ My relationship with the Other, however, is not simply two. There is the third person who is always present, and not simply as another self with whom I might share the responsibility I bear for the Other, for I cannot be substituted. '*Personne ne peut se substituer à moi, en tant que moi.*'¹⁶⁴ The third person, rather, is the other (*autre*) of the Other (*autrui*), to whom I may also, and certainly do, have responsibilities. Since the third party is always present, what I do to the Other has ramifications for the third party. What I intend, therefore, no longer coincides exactly with what I do; 'the intention cannot accompany the act to its most distant ramifications and yet the I knows it is responsible for those distant results.'¹⁶⁵ Thus, the Other who is present in the neutrality of the Face is both proximate and distant. My relationship is one, not only with the Other in the verticality of his height, but also in his horizontality insofar as in my relationship with the Other there are always present the others of the Other. The face opens on to a society. "The epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ R Burggraeve, From Self-Development to Solidarity: An Ethical Reading of Human Desire in its Socio-Political Relevance according to Emmanuel Levinas, (Leuven: Centre for Metaphysics and Philosophy of God, 1985), p.105

¹⁶² *ibid.*, p.101

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, p.106

cf. E Levinas, The Ego and Totality, in CPP, pp.30-31

¹⁶⁴ E Levinas, Autrement qu'être, p.6

¹⁶⁵ R Burggraeve, *op.cit.*, p.101; cf. E Levinas, CPP, pp.30-32

¹⁶⁶ E Levinas, TI, p.213

Now, this leads to a tension. On the one hand, I am responsible for the Other and am summoned to do him justice, but justice for the one Other may also be injustice for the other as third party. Further, I, as responsible, am finite. Hence the need for the mediation of responsibility in the practical and economic sphere. As Burggraeve notes, Levinas does not fully develop what this means in practice, though he does speak in positive terms of work, productivity and money, recognising their exchange value in terms of the good they might achieve and the justice which might be done to others. He speaks of the need for social (ontological!) institutions which facilitate and respond to the need for justice, and the role of conscious reflection which leads to theory, understood as contemplation, and philosophy and science.¹⁶⁷ In the end, though, he will admit that his concern is not the construction of an ethics, but merely the quest for its meaning.

For Levinas, then, as for Rahner, the question of categorical concreteness and its place within an ethical metaphysics remains as a lacuna.

¹⁶⁷ For a fuller treatment of these themes, see my article, Pastoral Ministry as Theology in Contact: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies, 116, (1995), pp.16-22, where the notion of theory as *contemplatio* is addressed; and Nec Tamen Consumebatur: Exodus 3 and the Non-Consumable Other in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, in The Scottish Journal of Theology, 48, (1995), pp.92-94, which addresses the metaphysical significance of money.

8

The Mystery of the Other

8.1 *Philosophy and Theology*

'What is a philosopher?' asks Blanchot, and responds by saying that, '[i]n the past one might have said it is a man who stands in wonder; today I would say... it is someone who is afraid.'¹ For, as indicated, in fear, says Blanchot, 'we leave ourselves, and, thrown outside, we experience in the guise of the frightening what is entirely outside us and other than us: the outside itself (*le dehors même*).'² This is not to regard philosophy as a movement into the irrational, for 'we are past the point of reducing philosophy to reason, or reason to itself.'³ Philosophy is a relationship with the unknown, not that it gives a knowledge of the unknown, for - such 'is a monster that critical philosophy exorcised long ago.'⁴ Rather, philosophy's unique dignity is that it maintains itself as thought in the face of the Other whom thought cannot contain. Philosophy is a relation with the absolute in which it is itself not absolutely lost. It is a question of transcendence. It is a question, says Blanchot, which one finds spoken with utmost sobriety in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas where, 'by entertaining precisely the idea of the Other (*autrui*)... it is as though there were here a new departure in philosophy and a leap that it, and we ourselves were urged to accomplished.'⁵ Philosophy on the precipice of the abyss - a strange idea. Philosophy maintaining itself in the face of mystery, for 'this Other is strangely mysterious (*Cet Autrui est étrangeté mysterieux*).'⁶ Philosophy on the verge of theology!

The distinction between philosophy and theology is less clear than it perhaps has ever been. Rahner notes that '[t]he unity of philosophy and theology within their theological distinction is much closer than has been suggested' on account of the co-existence of 'the universal, serious and efficacious salvific will of God towards the whole of humanity' and 'the whole personal history of mankind,' on account of the

¹ M Blanchot, IC, p.49

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*, p.50

⁵ *ibid.*, pp.51-52

⁶ *ibid.*, p.52

spatio-temporal co-incident of salvation history and world-history.⁷ Vatican I was correct, though by way of *norma negativa*, to affirm 'the duality of knowledge by natural reason and by revelation supported by grace' and the non-contradiction of the two because of their ultimate common source in God, and that neither philosophy nor philosopher 'can emancipate themselves from the higher norm of revelation.'⁸ One can no longer distinguish between philosophy and theology according to the classical distinction between nature and grace, whereby philosophy would concern itself with the natural sphere and theology with the supernatural. The one human existential is, as Rahner says, a 'supernatural existential' and both philosophy and theology strive to account for that human phenomenon. 'The depth of the human abyss, which in a thousand ways is *the* theme of philosophy, is already the abyss that has been opened up by God's grace and which stretches into the depths of God himself.'⁹ To be human is to be beyond oneself in transcendence, and, if one cannot name the term of transcendence as God, one can, at least, acknowledge that both philosophy and theology take their origin in a relationship with alterity.

Now, although Levinas does not concern himself explicitly with theology, since, for him theology is implicated in and contaminated by the onto-theological tradition which dominates Western thought, he nonetheless recognises the importance of Scripture and the value of the model and the language which it employs to speak of alterity. Key to understanding the relationship with the Other is the notion of revelation, a concept with which Rahner concerns himself in *Hearers*. Whereas Heidegger's task was the disclosure (*dé-voilement*) of Being, Levinas stresses that disclosure is an inappropriate model to describe the approach of the other as face. '*L'expérience absolue n'est pas dévoilement mais révélation.*'¹⁰ An object comes into the light from a certain perspectival context, '*dans une lumière empruntée,*'¹¹ the face, however, is its own light, '*l'être luit de sa propre lumière,*'¹² '*une signification sans contexte*', a '*rupture de la*

⁷ K Rahner, *Philosophy and Theology*, p.77

⁸ *ibid.*, p.72

⁹ *ibid.*, p.78

¹⁰ E Levinas, *Totalité et infini*, p.37

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*, p.43

totalité.' This is why Levinas describes the face as nudity. It is not clothed in any form, but approaches as a stranger, in the most radical sense of the word. Nakedness, as the essential phenomenon of the face thus indicates the radical similarity of all people, and universality of humanity. 'The epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity.'¹³ 'The presence of the face, the infinity of the other, is a destituteness, a presence of the third party (that is, of the whole of humanity which looks at us).'¹⁴ It is precisely this ethical sense of the face, says Levinas, which was formulated in the Biblical injunction of hospitality to the stranger. The noteworthy aspect of the biblical ethic is that one's responsibility does not simply extend to one's family and relations but to the stranger, the widow and the orphan who must be received with respect and treated with most concern.¹⁵ The revelation of the Other is an ethical experience. However, insofar as God is implicated in that relation as the Other (*Autre*) of the Other (*autrui*), the ethical relationship contains within itself the possibility of theology.

This thesis, then, has been concerned with the relationship with alterity as the constituting moment of human subjectivity. It has sought, following Levinas project in *Totality and Infinity*, to defend subjectivity by referring it to exteriority; it has sought, further, and more particularly to offer some deepening and defence of transcendental subjectivity which is so much intertwined in Rahnerian theology by reading Rahner with Levinas' thought of the reduction to ethical inter-subjectivity in mind. A happy consequence of this has hopefully been, not only a clearer focus on Rahner's ownmost aim as disclosing the human subject as a relationship with absolute mystery, and thought as ultimately a *reductio in mysterium*, but also of showing that Levinas' philosophical approach can be developed theologically, and in a manner which is not inconsistent with the tradition.

8.2 *Summary*

We began by outlining the methodological problematic. Methodology stands under the *aegis* of alterity. If, as Levinas says, 'philosophy is the work of love in the service of love,' then it will always be summoned to go beyond its current confinement

¹³ idem, TI p.213

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ See Ex.22,21; Is.1,17;55,3; Jer.21,3

and extend its endeavours to render an account of the relationship with the Other to the Other. The Other is a question, the answer to which is always inadequate. Methodology is thus subverted in two ways: firstly, it seeks to disclose what is, in itself, excessive to disclosure, and, secondly, it can only proceed dialogically and diachronically; the Other whose very excess sustains the philosophical relationship between the Same and the Other can neither be said nor situated in the same time or the same place. Thus, methodology finds itself robbed of a stable ground which would provide a sure footing for its quest for transparency. Jacques Pohier was certainly correct when he indicated that 'transparency is only a quality for window panes' not of human beings.¹⁶

The philosophical articulation of such a relationship, however, does not need to proceed simply by a *via negativa* which would demand a constant un-saying of what is said with regard to the Other, but by a *via eminentiae* in which the Other is spoken of in an eminent and superlative way in which the language of theory is pushed to its limit, and beyond, by the glory of the Other to whom such language is inadequate. Thought may fail to comprehend the Other because, aiming at critical grounding, it is forgetful of original difference. Nevertheless, thought finds itself always and already in the context of alterity. For Levinas, this context is the proximity of the Other in the ethical encounter; for Rahner, it is the theological reality of the supernatural existential; both in their own ways will link the theological and the ethical.

Now, while the idea of the Other in me is clearly the thought which animates Levinas' own thinking, it is also to be found in Rahner, though in a less developed way. Rahner's philosophy advances itself in response to an alterity, initially affirmed as Being in its comprehensibility, but ultimately understood as the proximity of incomprehensible mystery. Both Rahner and Levinas proceed phenomenologically: the contents of consciousness - the phantasmata of Aquinas - provide a point of departure for the phenomenological reduction. Both employ a transcendental method, seeking to expose the transcendental conditions of possibility of thought, and both find the ultimate transcendental condition in an alterity which is excessive to the subject. Rahner, responding to the Kantian problematic regarding the question of the possibility of metaphysics, discovers this alterity as the source and goal of the dynamic tendency of the finite intellect, yet acknowledges the weakness of a purely intellectual approach which fails to do justice to the personal and inter-subjective character of subjectivity.

¹⁶ See J Pohier, God in Fragments, p.267

Levinas straightaway acknowledges that metaphysics can only be undertaken as ethics. Rahner is anthropocentric in his approach without being egocentric. At the core of his subject, and constitutive of the subject, is a revelation of and a receptivity to alterity. His anthropological reflection, transcendently pursued, opens onto and ontologically affirms alterity. Thus, as Levinas expresses it, subjectivity finds its defence and its inviolability in terms of its relationship to an incomprehensibility excessive to the subject, and which is ultimately to be reduced as mystery.

We then sought to show how the transcendental reflection upon which both embark is pursued. Rahner, following Maréchal, goes beyond the static formalism of the Kantian Critique and demonstrates the dynamic activity of the intellect. Levinas, too, traces a transcendental reduction but, recognising the inadequacy of intellection, will follow it beyond the subjective to the inter-subjective, begun but not completed by Husserl, and nascent but not developed in Rahner. Rahner, following Maréchal, seeks an answer to Kant's question regarding the possibility and the scope of metaphysics - 'what can I know?' - by undertaking a transcendental analysis of the inherent dynamism of the human spirit. As 'power to know,' the finite spirit intends being, since, following Aquinas' dictum, 'whatever is can be known.' Being knows itself insofar as it possesses itself. The corollary of this is that not-knowing is a lack of self-presence. Knowledge is thus essentially comprehension, a unified and unifying grasp of Being. Questioning and acquisition go hand in hand. The fulfilment of Rahner's inquiry is the acquisition of Being. But, acquisition is inquisition.

It is this latent violence within Being's quest for comprehensivity and comprehension which is at the heart of Levinas' criticism of the western ontological tradition, the violence of comprehension which fails to give due *regard* to difference and otherness, but seeks instead to reduce the other to the same, enclosing it within an egological totality of understanding. Levinas will thus seek to pursue the totalising apparatus of thought to its limits, to the very point at which the event of thinking breaks down before the unassailable excess of the Other.

Now, although contained within and constrained by an ontological framework of understanding which would forge an essential link between Being and knowing, Rahner, attentive to a more metaphysical (in Levinas' sense of the term) strand in his thought, nonetheless recognises the limits of the ontological structure, and moves from an emphasis on human knowledge in the limiting philosophical propaedeutic of Spirit and Hearers to an acknowledgement of wider human experience, writing later that

'experience of God and experience of self... in a real and fundamental sense stand for the totality of human experience and human knowledge.'¹⁷ Again, even later in Foundations, he refers to knowledge in the wider sense of human experience pointing out that 'every transcendental experience is mediated by the categorical encounter with concrete reality in our world, both the world of things and the world of persons.'¹⁸ Knowledge is inadequately understood when it is understood as concept and only finds its perfection and realisation as freedom and love which are ultimately to be situated within the orientation towards Mystery, categorically realised in the love of the other person.

Levinas, too, will emphasise the manner in which knowledge is disturbed by the proximity of the other. '*Cet Autrui est étrangeté mysterieuse.*' The dominant and dominating position of knowledge as comprehension is always and already called into question because, with regard to it, the Other is *ex-position*.

Now, the relationship with alterity happens within the secular, and this calls for a proper understanding of the world and sensibility. For Rahner, the finite spirit demands the receptivity of materiality, a 'pure openness for absolutely everything.'¹⁹ Only in a conversion to the world can the spirit realise itself. But this material world in Rahner is an impersonal material world. Rahner himself, recognising the limitation of his early works in this regard, seeks to redress it in his later writings by stressing the subject's *essential* openness to the personal other and will link the loving experience of God with the loving experience of neighbour, and do so essentially. Ultimately, the redemptive role of the world for the finite spirit is achieved in the personal world of intersubjectivity.

Levinas, too, stresses the salvific role of secularity. Sensibility is not so much a staging post along the way of the ontological adventure, as in Rahner's propaedeutic, but is the locus of passivity and essential receptivity where the self is exposed to and rendered vulnerable to the incursion of the Other.

We next raised the question of the question as the starting point of Rahner's transcendental inquiry, and sought its significance. Rahner privileges the question as the starting point of his inquiry, and proceeds to expose its conditions of possibility through

¹⁷ K Rahner, Experience of Self, p.122

¹⁸ idem, Foundations, p.52

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.20

a transcendental reflection. Ultimately, the supreme transcendental condition of possibility is absolute being which is demanded by and sustains the dynamism of the spirit. However, although the ontology which sustains Rahnerian epistemology is one in which Being and knowing are essentially related, nonetheless, the finite spirit is less to be understood in terms of self-presence, but rather, and more primordially, as transcendence towards what is other than the subject, towards the alterity of exteriority. Theologically, this relation with alterity is, for Rahner, experienced in the proximity of grace, in which God communicates himself to the essentially open and receptive subject, while remaining himself uncompromised by his offer. Such a paradoxical relation of proximity and distance in grace finds philosophical articulation in Levinas who stresses the absolution of the terms of the relation from the relation. The Other to whom the self relates is, with respect to the self, infinite and unencompassable. In fact, so infinitely distanced is the Other from the same that the Other does not constitute a horizon for the activity of the same, for horizons relate to the source which projects them. The Other, absolute with respect to the Same, maintains himself, beyond any horizontality of relation, in a position of verticality and metaphysical height, which, says Levinas, is the true meaning of transcendence.

Now, for Levinas, the horizon of understanding against which the philosophical tradition has operated has always been Being. Hence, the deepest, widest and most fundamental philosophical question, as Heidegger indicates, has always been the question of the meaning of Being. Absolute alterity, however, finds its meaning in an absolution from Being. Thus the need, as Blanchot points out, to rethink the question. The question does not intend Being; rather, it is the promotion and the privilege of Being within the question which is itself to be placed in question. The question is not Being, but whether Being is the question. The question does not find its fulfilment or completion in the complete presence which the possession of Being would offer. Rather, the response marks a closure of the question. The true significance of the question lies elsewhere than in Being, in the one to whom and of whom questions are asked, the interlocutor. The ontological question of the meaning of Being becomes the ethical question of the significance of the Other, as interlocutor.

Now, if the question as such is an inappropriate point of entry to the relationship with the Other, how else is transcendence experienced? This led us to a consideration of the relationship between Infinity and Desire. Levinas contrasts two itineraries: the Ulyssean and the Abrahamic. The Ulyssean journey is by way of return. What is other

and alien is brought home by thought to dwell in the confines of the Same. It is this movement of return to full presence which has been the hallmark of western philosophy, 'a reduction of the Other to the Same.' In its place, Levinas proposes an Abrahamic ex-cendence which moves beyond the self in a relationship with true alterity. Such an ex-cendence is, for Levinas, an egress from the comprehension of Being. Rahner, too, recognises a transcending movement beyond the same, and the inadequacy of knowledge understood as the comprehension of Being. Ultimately, the relation to Being is not primarily comprehension, but mystery, and it is mystery not mastery which guides subjective spirituality.

This relationship with true alterity or absolute exteriority is articulated by Levinas as a relationship with infinity. Using the idea of the infinite which Descartes recognises as being placed within the cogito, but having its origin beyond the cogito, Levinas deepens the Husserlian phenomenological reflection to show that the idea of the infinite is a thought which breaks the unity of consciousness. The idea of the infinite is an idea excessive to representational consciousness, an idea to which the evidence of the cogito is inadequate. Husserl may have recognised this in pointing to the inter-subjective reduction, but unfortunately failed to pursue this thought. Such an infinite idea in me finds its parallel in Rahner's understanding of grace as an ineffable content implanted in the finite subject from the very first, and which gives the subject significance. Transcendental experiences are experiences of transcendence 'in virtue of the content implanted in them right from the very first by grace, the content in which their ultimate significance consists, and which is nothing less than the ineffable reality of God himself, and of his world permeated with himself.'²⁰

Such an *impossible relation* with an absolute, which remains absolute despite its communication, is considered by Blanchot. Ultimately, the subject is not to be understood in terms of possibility, as with Heidegger, but as radically *impossible* since it is the Other who offers and sustains all possibility. The subject is constituted by an *impossible relation* which is a relationship of transcendence and desire. Now, both Rahner and Levinas view the subject as a transcendence towards the absolute. For Rahner, this is absolute Being which is both source and goal of human transcendence; for Levinas, the absolute lies beyond Being and its categories and is encountered in the ethical relationship with the Other. Both Rahner and Levinas, however, share the

²⁰ K Rahner, *Unity - Love - Mystery*, p.239

conviction that this aspiration towards the absolute is not the work of the subject but is inspired by the originality of Other. Respiration follows inspiration. Further, both in their own way express this transcendence towards the Other in terms of Desire. For Levinas, Desire is an insatiable longing for the Other who, on account of his excess, sustains the Desire as radically and always unfulfilled and unfulfillable; for Rahner, although his language is often the language of spiritual dynamism in knowing and willing, the subject is also to be understood in the grammar of grace as a natural desire (*desiderium naturale*) for the beatific vision.

Such an impossible relation with the absolute, however, is not without its critics. Derrida accuses Levinas of an incoherent thought. Nonetheless, the paradoxical relationship of proximity with the Other and the ethical challenge which issues from that defies the logic of contradiction. Just as the phenomenon of suffering discloses a self which has been rendered devoid of the power and mastery which accompanies subjectivity, and just as the phenomenon of fear and panic reveals an object devoid of form, so the relationship with the Other is a situation in which both the position of the subject as origin and initiative is placed in question, and the Other, though proximate, is affirmed as infinitely distanced from the subject, not simply on account of an incapacity of comprehension, but primarily because of the positive excess or infinity of the Other with respect to the Same.²¹ Such a relationship, though seemingly impossible for thought, is nonetheless experienced as Desire and as Responsibility, and expressed as Language. Like the experience of grace, the Other draws close in proximity, but maintains himself as absolute mystery.

Derrida, however, is one who, like Levinas, also criticises the privilege of presence whereby the signifier, whether the spoken word or, more particularly for him, the written word is viewed in its fallenness or secondarity with regard to the signified. The sign has always, he says, been regarded as a fall from an original situation of full presence. Derrida's criticism of the devaluing of the sign invites a reflection on the relationship between signified and signifier, reality and its image, *res sacramenti* and *sacramentum*. However, Derrida's attentiveness to the signifier and his refusal of a transcendental signified to which this ultimately points as the intelligible face of the sign is problematical for it risks not only relativism but also opens a way towards situational totalitarianism. Both Rahner and Levinas, on the other hand, affirm the transcendental

²¹ See M Blanchot, IC, pp.43-45, 49-51

value of the signified, refusing its compromise by the sign, while nonetheless affirming the necessity of the signifier. For Levinas, the face is the cipher of the alterity of the Other, which offers the Other as an ikon of mystery, beyond thematisation and excessive with regard to thematising or representative consciousness. The face effects its own effacement, and though it enables a relationship, the Other is discrete in his face, being present only in the illeity of the trace; for Rahner, the symbolism of the sacrament offers the reality of an absolute experience, effecting what it signifies, without that thereby being reduced to its visible or audible expression in the signifier. Neither Rahner nor Levinas devalue the sign by relegating it to a position of secondarity in respect of the signified. Rather, as Blanchot points out, the ambiguity of the sign may open on to a multiplicity of double meanings and the possibility of misunderstanding if not duplicity, but, the more primal meaning of the sign is that its meaning is not so much the mediation of the meaning of the signified, but rather an opening on to an infinity of meaning, and ultimately to the other of all meaning, namely, the Other who is his own meaning.

Derrida regards the age of the sign as essentially theological. Rahner, however, recognises that theology is essentially the age of the sign, and necessarily so on account of the symbolic nature of reality. Being, for Rahner, is multiple in itself and thus relational. This can be seen clearly in finite being for whom the *conversio* is a necessity. But here, too, is the truth of Levinas' insight that it is not the case that one is, but rather that one is oneself; *on n'est pas; on s'est*. 'To be' is a reflexive verb (*s'être*). But Rahner continues. Relationality is also a mark of absolute Being as is seen in the Trinitarian relations immanent within the Trinity.

This theological dimension of the relational Being of the Godhead and its relation to finite being opens on to the question of the place of God within the philosophical and theological frameworks offered by both Rahner and Levinas. Both in their own and not irreconcilable ways, bring the relationship with the personal other and the relationship with God together. For Rahner, 'the whole incalculable mystery of man is contained and exercised in this act of love of neighbour²² who remains a nameless mystery. The relationship with God is realised in the love of neighbour. For Levinas, God is recognised in the tertiality of the Other. God is the other (*autre*) of the Other (*autrui*). Since God is accessible in the ethical encounter, that is, in justice, God remains

²² K Rahner, Love of God and Love of Neighbour, p. 242

uncontaminated by Being, and thus, for Levinas, Wholly Other.

Now this juxtaposition of God and neighbour in justice leads to a critique. Levinas must, in order to safeguard the absolute alterity of the Other, absent the Other from the domain of Being and establish the relation in terms of an ethical metaphysics, which leads to the question: having managed an excendence from the ontological through the ethical encounter with the Other to find oneself summoned to responsibility, how then does one manage to *do justice* to the Other within the ontological structures which regulate human society? Rahner, too, has been criticised for conflating God and neighbour within the kingdom of the Same - a kingdom also inhabited by the subject - and so of compromising not only God and neighbour in their relation to the subject, but also God and neighbour in their relation to each other. Rahner, however, affirms the *difference* between God and neighbour when he writes that God is not thought of as one object among others but is 'always given as the subjectively and objectively all-bearing *ground* of experience, a ground which is beyond this world.'²³ Whereas Levinas fears ontological identity, Rahner affirms ontological difference and an analogical understanding of being.

Levinas refuses analogy, seeing its ultimate ground in univocity. Yet, the understanding of Being which Levinas employs is an understanding which is not constant in the tradition. Thomas has already provided an excendence from Being as comprehension through his affirmation of the priority of *ens* and his doctrine of analogy. The problem of relating being and its beyond finds a certain resolution in Thomas who manages to bring together being and the good. This establishes the possibility of linking the metaphysical and the ontological, as Levinas understands them, by closing the gap between ethical ideal and ontological reality. Ethics is the prototypical experience of alterity which both implores and commands response. Response, however, calls for categorical commitment. It is this sphere which, in both Rahner and Levinas, requires further development, but such is outwith the scope of the present work. What Levinas has affirmed is the priority of the ethical relationship with the Other which must be the inspiration of all ontological endeavours to incarnate justice. What Rahner reminds us of is that ultimately philosophical reflection which gives rise to the ontologies which support inter-subjective life is ultimately a reflection which is a *reduction in mysterium*, for '*cet autrui est étranagement mysterieux*.'

23

ibid., p.244

8.3 'Cet autrui est étrangement mystérieux.'

The question of mystery is addressed directly by Rahner in The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology, and this article, perhaps more than any other, concentrates the themes pursued in this thesis. Against the background of what has preceded, it is now presented in summary for re-reading.

Ultimately, says Rahner, 'mystery' describes the relationship between God and the human person, and any reflection on mystery is a reflection on the possibility of what, following Blanchot, might be termed 'an impossible relationship' in which the subject is placed in relation to what is and remains in excess of his capacities - a God who, in radical and absolute proximity communicates himself, and whose proximity and self-communication are 'not merely a logical and notional possibility'²⁴ but are rendered 'ontologically valid' in the experience of incarnation, grace and glory.

'In what we call incarnation, grace and glory, God does not create *ex nihilo sui et subiecti* something different from himself, but imparts himself to the created nature. What is given in grace and incarnation is not something different from God, but God himself. He does not use the creature to impart himself, as when it points to God by its created reality: God imparts himself immediately of himself to the creature.'²⁵

The 'conventional notion of mystery,' upheld by Vatican I, understood mystery as being applied to formulations of faith; '[t]ruths and statements have the quality of mystery;' 'it is the *truths* which are mysterious.'²⁶ These truths, however, are only

²⁴ K Rahner, Concept of Mystery, p.72

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.66

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.38

Vatican I affirms *vera et proprie dicta mysteria*, which can only be known through divine revelation, in its Canons against liberal philosophical and theological schools (Cf. DS3041), but the provisional incomprehensibility of such mysteries, of which Rahner speaks, is also affirmed in DS3015. Knowledge manifests a twofold order, both in principle and object. In principle, because the human subject knows by faith and by reason; in object, because there are mysteries which can be probed by reason, and those which are hidden by God until and unless he chooses to reveal them. Such a limitation of reason, however, is linked to our pilgrim state, and will eventually be overcome. *Ac ratio quidem, fide illustrata, cum sedulo, pie et sobrie quaerit, aliquam Deo dante mysteriorum intelligentiam eamque fructuosissimam assequitur tum ex eorum, quae naturaliter cognoscit, analogia, tum e mysteriorum ipsorum nexu inter se et cum fine hominis ultimo; numquam tamen idonea redditur ad ea perspicienda instar veritatum, quae proprium ipsius obiectum constituunt. Divina enim mysteria suapte natura intellectum creatum sic excedunt, ut etiam revelatione tradita et fide suscepta ipsius tamen fidei velamine contacta et quadam quasi caligine obvoluta maneat, quamdiu in hac mortali vita "peregrinamur a Domino: per fidem enim*

'provisionally incomprehensible.'²⁷ There is, says Rahner, the 'silent presupposition... that we are dealing with truths which should strictly speaking have come within the scope of reason with its power to see and *comprehend* but in this case do not meet its demands.'²⁸ Such an approach, however, is founded on a notion of *ratio* which views as mysterious whatever is not disclosed to reason, and to make *ratio* the 'criterion of mystery'²⁹ in this way leads to a reduced understanding of mystery as statement, accessible only to faith. But is 'the precise nature of "ratio" so clear and obvious?'³⁰ Mystery is not so much related to *ratio* as to revelation, and its proper nature is to be sought not principally in truths and statements, but in revelation itself, which though often communicated in truths and statements, is not the statement itself, but the reality so spoken. 'Revelation is not a preliminary substitute for the thing'.³¹ It is the communication of the reality. As Levinas might say, it is the saying (*le Dire*) rather than the said (*le Dit*) which is revealed as infinite mystery, excessive to comprehension.

The notion of *ratio* needs to be re-appraised. Rahner, as do Levinas and Blanchot, situates *ratio* in the context of the relationship with the unknown, and asks,

'What if there is an "unknowing", centred on itself and the unknown, which when compared with knowledge, that is, with any knowledge not really aware of itself, is not pure negation, not simply empty absence but a positive characteristic of a relationship between one subject and another?'³²

Knowledge, as a relation between a subject and an object, would then become not the fording of a distance between subject and object and the forging of a unity between them, but rather, the maintaining of distance and difference, for '[t]he supreme act of knowledge is not the abolition or the diminution of the mystery but its final assertion,

ambulamus et non per speciem" (2 Cor 5, 6s) (DS3016; Constitutio dogmatico "Dei Filius" de fide catholica Session III, 24 April, 1870)

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.37

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.39

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.40

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.38

³¹ *ibid.*, p.39

³² *ibid.*, p.41

its eternal and total immediacy.¹³³ 'Supreme knowledge is knowledge of the supreme mystery as such.'¹³⁴ Mystery is not at the limits of knowledge, but at its heart as 'an intrinsic constituent;¹³⁵ and the conventional understanding of mystery is 'basically reduced to a defective mode of knowledge which is essentially oriented to the mystery as such.'¹³⁶ To situate mystery at the core of the epistemological adventure is to affirm it as the source and goal of the spirit's transcendence in knowledge and freedom and, in its very incomprehensibility, as 'the primordial and fundamental which is the ultimate transcendental condition of possibility of knowledge.'¹³⁷ It is also to recast *ratio* as the faculty of mystery, not simply incidentally and secondarily, but originally and basically. Its proper object then becomes not being as knowable, but mystery as incomprehensible. The comprehensibility of being falls before the incomprehensibility of mystery.

The relationship with alterity, however, is not only a function of knowledge alone. Love, too, merits consideration, and not only, or even principally, in its relation to what is other, but in its relation to knowledge. Simply to juxtapose knowledge and love would result in an 'unreconciled dualism.'¹³⁸ Love, says Rahner, is to be conceived as the fulfilment of knowledge, which 'can only exist in a being when and insofar as it realises itself by an act of love.'¹³⁹ Rahner summarises the relationship between knowledge, love and mystery thus:

'the self-transcendence of knowledge, the fact that it comes to be only *in so far* as it passes over into something else, must be understood in this way: knowledge, though prior to love and freedom, can only be realised in its *true* sense when and in so far as the subject is more than knowledge, when in fact it is a freely given love. This is only possible if knowledge is ultimately a faculty ordained to an object attainable only because the object is greater than the faculty. And what but the incomprehensibility of mystery can be such an object of knowledge, since it forces knowledge to surpass itself and both preserve and

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.59

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.42

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*

transform itself in a more comprehensive act, that of love?⁴⁰

The privileged position which knowledge appears to occupy within the transcendental schema gives way to the pre-eminence and greater comprehensivity of love. Mystery, however, is more eminent still, for "being essential to the "object" to which the intellect is primarily ordained, [it] forces it either to consume itself in protest or to transform itself in the self-surrender by which it accepts the mystery as such, that is, in love, and so to attain its proper perfection.⁴¹ Reason is thus *more than reason*. Not simply to be understood cognitively, it is 'the faculty which welcomes the greater sight unseen, the faculty of simple rapture, of submissive dedication, of loving ecstasy. But this can only be if its most proper object is that sovereign and all-embracing exigence which cannot be mastered, comprehended, or challenged: in a word, the mystery.⁴² It is mystery which is prior, for, in its proximity, it predisposes and divinises the hearer. 'Mystery demands, as the condition of possibility of its being heard, a hearer divinised by grace.⁴³ Levinas might argue it thus: the subject is related to infinity, a relationship in which thought actually thinks more than it thinks. The infinity of the Other has a priority, for the Other has always and already approached the subject, in proximity, *as grace*; has awoken the subject to a life other than a self-enclosed pagan existence; and has given the time wherein an address might be heard.

The human person, then, is the object of an address, and this both directly and indirectly. Not only is the subject the one spoken to, but the one, who in this being spoken to, is constituted as a subject. The very subjectivity of the subject is effected in so far as mystery draws near and speaks to him. Rahner proceeds by enquiring about this subject who is confronted, or addressed, by the mystery, and examines the relatedness of his created finite intellect to that mystery, for 'mystery is always understood as something relative, something which is mysterious *to* a given finite intellect.⁴⁴ Now, as absolute and unlimited transcendence in knowing and willing, man is 'the being who is orientated to the mystery as such, this orientation being a

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.43

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.44

⁴² *ibid.*, p.43

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.46

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.48

constitutive element of his being both in his natural state and in his supernatural elevation.¹⁴⁵ The 'finite spirit's transcendence... is directed to absolute being.¹⁴⁶ However, just as the relationship with the infinity of the Other is, for Levinas, *the experience of infinity in its very infinition*, and manifests itself as the experience of Desire and Responsibility, so, for Rahner, Absolute being, as the 'Whither of transcendence, can only be spoken of in terms of experience of transcendence as the limitless openness of the subject itself.¹⁴⁷ The act and its finality, thus constitute a unity. The question, therefore, follows, if 'the most primordial, underivative knowledge of God... is given in the experience of transcendence,¹⁴⁸ how does the Whither relate to transcendent experience?

One must distinguish, says Rahner, between immediate experience and reflection upon this experience. As with other transcendental experiences, the experience of God is prior to conceptual elaboration of that experience. 'God is known through and in this transcendence previous to such concepts....¹⁴⁹ He is the always present 'nameless, indefinable, unattainable.¹⁵⁰ 'All conceptual expressions about God, necessary though they are, always stem from the unobjectivated experience of transcendence as such.¹⁵¹ Although the experience is proximate in its immediacy of presence, the transcendent reference - the Whither - is absent and aloof. 'The Whither of transcendence is there in its own proper way of aloofness and absence. It bestows itself upon us by refusing itself, by keeping silence, by staying afar.¹⁵² 'The Whither is not experienced in itself, but only in the subjective transcendence and it is known only unobjectivatedly.¹⁵³ The Whither is the holy and we name it mystery.

⁴⁵ ibid., p.49

⁴⁶ ibid.

⁴⁷ ibid.

⁴⁸ ibid.

⁴⁹ ibid., p.50

⁵⁰ ibid.

⁵¹ ibid.

⁵² ibid., p.52

⁵³ ibid.

Now, the presence of the abiding mystery, which remains forever mystery, and therefore, aloof and absent with respect to the subject's comprehensive knowledge, is grace. By grace, the subject is ontologically oriented towards the mystery as such. He intends the beatific vision. This is so because mystery, as grace, *always and already* communicates itself to the subject, who *always and already* finds himself in the presence of mystery. 'Grace does not imply the promise and the beginning of the elimination of the mystery, but the radical possibility of the absolute proximity of the mystery, which is not eliminated by its proximity, but really presented as mystery'.⁵⁴ The removal of distance and aloofness in holy mystery which grace achieves through God's self-communication to the human spirit does not render the mystery no longer a mystery, for 'even in the beatific vision that which is known of God is known as the incomprehensible'.⁵⁵ 'Grace is therefore the grace of the *nearness* of the *abiding* mystery: it makes God accessible in the form of the holy mystery and presents him thus as the incomprehensible'.⁵⁶ Man is thus to be considered properly as *capax Dei*, or *capax infiniti*, as a capacity for that which is always greater than his possibility to contain. 'As long as we think that comprehension is greater than being overwhelmed by light inaccessible, which shows itself as inaccessible in the very moment of giving itself: we have understood nothing of the mystery of the true nature of grace and glory'.⁵⁷ It is this 'possibility of the finite being endowed with the infinite... (which)... constitutes the incomprehensibility of incarnation and grace'.⁵⁸

Rahner proceeds to enquire whether such a philosophical concept of mystery can be transposed to the level of the theological.

The relationship between the subject and God is a paradoxical relationship of absolute proximity. The subject is 'made for the absolute proximity of the mystery',⁵⁹ and God is 'the god of the absolute proximity of self-communication'.⁶⁰ God, as mystery

⁵⁴ ibid., p.55

⁵⁵ ibid., p.59

⁵⁶ ibid., p.56

⁵⁷ ibid.

⁵⁸ ibid., p.67

⁵⁹ ibid., p.61

⁶⁰ ibid.

draws close, yet is absolute (*absolutum*). This paradox raises the question of 'the possibility of an absolute *self-communication* of the mystery by which it enters into a radical proximity.'⁶¹ 'Need the holy mystery remain always the unattainable Whither of transcendence, given only in the experience of finite categories, that is, always mediated by the finite? Or can it communicate itself, as such, immediately to the creature, while still of course remaining essentially a mystery?'⁶² Rahner notes that revelation, not philosophy, provides the answer: 'this revelation cannot be confined to words, but must be also the giving of grace, as inner, objectless though conscious dynamism directed to the beatific vision.'⁶³ However, one would want to add that philosophy cannot be content to remain silent. As was said previously, philosophy is now to be considered as a relation with the unknown, and its unique dignity is that it maintains itself as thought in the face of the Other whom thought cannot contain. Philosophy on the verge of theology!

The possibility of a relationship with a reality in excess of the subject's capacity to contain it, of a thought thinking more than it thinks, is at the core of mystery. Strictly speaking, the created order of finite beings is not mysterious in an absolute sense, for as finite and thereby confined to the categories, there is, says Rahner, always the possibility of a finite mind adequate to them. 'In the region of the finite as such, there can be no absolute mysteries among the objects of categorised knowledge.' Only God can be mystery absolutely for the finite spirit. *However*, since 'all beings, and above all the created spirit in its transcendence towards absolute being, partake of the mysterious character of God ... [and] ... are referred to God ... [they] ... cannot be adequately understood without this relationship and hence in terms of this relationship.'⁶⁴ 'Thus all understanding of any reality whatsoever is in the last resort always a *reductio in mysterium*'⁶⁵ - because created by God. This reduction, however, calls for ethical articulation. Ethics is the new name, not only for philosophy, but also for theology. The mystery of God and the love and the desire which this arouses is intimately related to

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.62

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

the mystery of the neighbour and the justice which is offered to him. God is accessible in the justice I show to the Other, for God is the other (*autre*) of the Other (*Autrui*). As Rahner says,

'The act of love of neighbour is, therefore, the only categorised and original act in which man attains the whole of reality given to us in categories, with regard to which he fulfils himself perfectly correctly and *in which* he always already makes the transcendental and direct experience of God by grace.'⁶⁶

'Cet Autrui est étrangement mystérieux.'

⁶⁶ idem, Love of Neighbour and the Love of God, p.246

Bibliography

Bibliography

I. Books

- Aquinas, Thomas Aristotle's De Anima with Commentary, K Foster & S Humphries (trs.), (London: Routledge, 1951)
- Contra Gentiles*
- In Aristotelis Librum de Anima Commentarium, (Turin: Marietti, 1925)
- Aristotle The Works of Aristotle, Vol.III, W D Ross (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931)
- Benjamin, A The Plural Event: Descartes, Hegel, Heidegger, (London: Routledge, 1993)
- Benton, Robert Kant's Second Critique and the Problem of Transcendental Arguments, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1977)
- Bernasconi R, & Wood, D Derrida and Différance, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988)
- Bernasconi R, & Critchley S Re-Reading Levinas, (London: Athlone Press, 1991)
- Bernasconi R, & Wood D (eds.) The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other, (London: Routledge, 1988)
- Blanchot, M Aminadab, (Paris: Gallimard, 1942)
- Au Moment Voulu, (Paris: Gallimard, 1951, 1979)
- De Kafka à Kafka, (Paris: Gallimard, 1981)
- Exercices de la patience: Blanchot, (Paris: Obsidiane,)
- L'amitié, (Paris: Gallimard, 1971)
- L'arrêt de mort, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948)
- L'Entretien Infini, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969)
- L'Espace littéraire, (Paris: Gallimard, 1955)
- La Communauté Inavouable, (Paris: Minuit, 1983)
- Le Très-Haut, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948, 1975)
- Le Part du Feu, (Paris: Gallimard, 1949)
- Le Pas au-delà, (Paris; Gallimard, 1973)
- Le Livre à Venire, (Paris: Gallimard, 1959)

- The Unavowable Community, P Joris (tr.), (Barrytown: Station Hill, 1988)
- The Writing of the Disaster, A Smock (tr.), (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986)
- The Infinite Conversation Susan Hanson (tr.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)
- The Space of Literature, Ann Smock (tr.), (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982)
- The Work of Fire, C Mandell (tr.), (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)
- Thomas l'Obscur, (Paris: Gallimard, 1950)
- Boff, Clodovis Theology and Praxis, Epistemological Foundations, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987) (Originally, *Teologia e pratica: teologia do politico e suas mediações*,)(Petropolis, 1978))
- Bonnefoy, Y L'improbable et autres essais, (Paris: Gallimard, 1980)
- Boros, L The Moment of Truth: Mysterium Mortis, (London: Search, 1972)
- Brannick, V An Ontology of Understanding: Karl Rahner's Metaphysics of Knowledge in the context of Modern German Hermeneutics, (St. Louis: Marianist Communications Centre, 1974)
- Buchdahl, Gerd Kant and the Dynamics of Reason: Essays on the Structure of Kant's Philosophy, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)
- Burrgraeve, R From Self-Development to Solidarity: An Ethical Reading of Human Desire in its Socio-Political Relevance according to Emmanuel Levinas, (Leuven: Centre for Metaphysics and the Philosophy of God/Peeters, 1985)
- Mens en Medemens: Verantwoordelijkheid en God. De metafysische ethiek van E Levinas, (Leuven: Acco, 1986)
- Caputo, J D Against Ethics, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993)
- Carr, Anne The Theological Method of Karl Rahner, (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977)
- Cassirer, E Kant's Life and Thought, j Haden (tr.), (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1981)
- Ciaramelli, F Transcendance et Éthique: Essai sur Levinas, (Brussels: Ousia, 1989)
- Clark T, & Royle, N (eds.) Experiencing the Impossible, (Stirling: Oxford Literary Review, 15, 1-2, 1993)
- Cohen, Richard (ed) Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986)

- Time in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Ph. D. Thesis, State University of New York, 1979
- Collin, Françoise Maurice Blanchot et la question de l'écriture, (Paris: Gallimard, 1971)
- Coreth, Emerich Metaphysics, J Donceel (tr.), (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966)
Metaphysik: Eine Methodische-Systematische Grundlegung, (Munich, 1961)
- Cornell, Druscilla The Philosophy of Limit, (New York & London: Routledge, 1992)
- Critchley, Simon The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)
- Dalgarno, Melvin & Mattheews, Eric The Philosophy of Thomas Reid, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989)
- De Vleeschauwer, H J La Déduction transcendentale dans l'oeuvre de Kant, (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1936)
- De Lubac, H Le Mystère du Surnaturel, (Paris: Montaigne, 1965)
- Derrida, J Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money, P Kamuf (tr.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)
Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question, G Bennington & R Bowlby (trs.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)
Of Grammatology, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (tr.), (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976) (Originally published as De la Grammatologie, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967))
The Truth in Painting, G Bennington & I McLeod (trs.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
Writing and Difference, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978)
- Desartes, René Méditations Métaphysiques, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1956)
Meditations on First Philosophy, (J Cottingham (tr.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- Dirven, E De la forme à l'acte: Essai sur le thomisme de Joseph Maréchal, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965)
- Donceel, Joseph The Philosophy of Karl Rahner, (Albany: Magi Books, 1969)
- Dryer, D P Kant's Solution for Verification, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966)
- Edie, J M Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology: A Critical Commentary, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987)

- Feron, Etienne *De l'idée de transcendance à la question du langage: L'itinéraire philosophique d'Emmanuel Lévinas*, (Grenoble: Editions J Millon, 1992)
- Finkielkraut, A *La Sagesse de l'amour*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984)
- Forthomme, B *Une Philosophie de la Transcendance: La métaphysique d'Emmanuel Levinas*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1979)
- Foucault, Michel *Les Mots et les Choses*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1966)
- Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from the Outside*, (New York: Zone Books, 1990)
- The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London: Routledge, 1989)
- The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (London: Tavistock, 1970)
- Gadamer, H G *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, Christopher Smith, P (tr.), (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1986)
- Gasché, R *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1994)
- Gilson, E *Réalisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance*, (Paris: Vrin, 1983)
- Gramma *Lire Blanchot I - II*, (Paris, Jean Fournier, 1976)
- Grave, S. A *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense*, (Westport (Connecticut): Greenwood Press, 1960)
- Gubal, F *Et Combien de dieux nouveaux: II. Emmanuel Levinas*, (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1980)
- Hart, K *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstyruction, Theology and Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- Heidegger, M *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, R Manheim (tr.), (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959)
- Being and Time*, J McQuarrie & E Robinson (trs), (London: Harper & Row, 1962)
- Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 1929
- Held, David *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, (London: Hutchinson, 1987)
- Hicks, R D *Aristotle's De Anima*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907)
- Hill, W J *Knowing the Unknown God*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971)

- Husserl, E Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology, D Cairns (tr.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1973)
Cartesianische Meditationen, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1950)
Méditations Cartésiennes, G Peiffer & E Levinas (trs.), (Paris: J Vrin, 1986)
- Johns, R J Man in the World: The Political Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz, (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976)
- Kant, Immanuel Critique of Practical Reason, L W Beck (tr.), (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956)
Critique of Pure Reason, N Kemp Smith (tr.), (London: MacMillan, 1982)
Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, Paul Carus (tr) James W Ellington (revised), (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977)
- Kelly, W j (ed.) Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner S.J., (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980)
- Kunze, R W The Origin of Self: A Presentatio of the Philosophy of Levinas from the Standpoint of his Criticism of Heidegger, Ph.D. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1994, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International).
- LaPorte R & Noel, B Deux Lectures de M Blanchot, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1973)
- Laruelle, F Les Philosophies de la Différance, (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1986)
- Laruelle, F (ed.) Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas, (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1980)
- Levinas, Emmanuel Autrement que Savoir, (Paris: Osiris, 1988)
Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1974)
Collected Philosophical Papers, A Lingis, (ed.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1987)
De l'existence à l'existant, (Paris: Fontaine, 1947)
De Dieu qui vient à l'idée, (Paris: J Vrin, 1986)
De l'évasion, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1982)
Dieu, la Mort et le Temps, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1993)
Difficile Liberté. Essais sur le judaïsme, (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1963, 1976)
Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism, (S Hand (tr.), (London: Athlone Press, 1990.)

- Du Sacré au Saint*, (Paris: Minuit, 1977)
- En Découvrant l'Existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1967)
- Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*, (Paris, Grasset, 1991)
- Ethics and Infinity, Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, R Cohen (tr.) (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985)
- Éthique et Infini*, (Paris: Fayard, 1982)
- Exercices de la Patience, No.1: Levinas*, (Paris: Obsidiane, 1980)
- Existence and Existents*, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1978)
- Hors Sujet*, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1987)
- Humanisme de l'autre homme*, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972)
- L'au-delà du verset*, (Paris: Minuit, 1982)
- La Théorie de l'Intuition dans la Phénoménologie de Husserl*, (Paris: Librairie F Lacan, 1930)
- Le Temps et L'autre*, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1979)
- Nine Talmudic Readings*, A Aronowicz (tr.), (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994)
- Nommes Propres*, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1976)
- Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Alphonso Lingis (tr.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1981)
- Quatre Lectures Talmudique*, (Paris, Minuit, 1968)
- Sur Maurice Blanchot*, (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1975)
- The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, A Orianne (tr.), (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1973)
- Time and the Other*, R A Cohen (tr.), (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987)
- Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité*, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1961)
- Totality and Infinity, An Essay on Exteriority*, Alphonso Lingis (tr.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1979)
- Transcendance et Intelligibilité*, (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1984)
- Libertson, J *Proximity: Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille and Communication*, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1982)
- Lingis, A *Libido: The French Existential Theories*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985)

- Lonergan, B Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1958)
- Lotz, J B Metaphysica Operationis Humanae Methodo transcendentali explicata, in *Analecta Gregoriana*, (Rome: Gregorian University, 1958)
- Malka, S Lire Levinas, (Paris, Du Cerf, 1989)
- Manning, Robert J S Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1993)
- Maréchal, Joseph A Maréchal Reader, Donceel, J (tr.), (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970)
- Études sur la psychologie de Mystiques, (Bruges: Museum Lessianum, 1924)
- Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance, cahier II: Le conflit du rationalisme et de l'empiricisme dans la philosophie moderne avant Kant, (Brussels: Editions Universelles, 1944)
- Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance, cahier IV: Le système idéaliste chez Kant et les postkantians, (Brussels: Editions Universelles, 1947)
- Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance, cahier III: La Critique de Kant, (Brussels: Editions Universelles, 1944)
- Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance, cahier I: De l'antiquité à la fin du moyen âge, (Brussels: Editions Universelles, 1944)
- Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance, cahier V. Le Thomisme devant la philosophie critique, (Brussels: Editions Universelles, 1949)
- Mélanges Joseph Maréchal I: Oeuvres, (Brussels: Edition Universelle, 1950)
- Mélanges Joseph Maréchal II: Hommages, (Brussels: Edition Universelle, 1950)
- Précis d'Histopire de la philosophie moderne I: De la Renaissance à Kant, (Brussels: Edition Universelle, 1951)
- Marx, W Introduction to Aristotle's Theory of Being as Being, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1977)

- Muck, Otto The Transcendental Method, W D Seidensticker (tr.), (New York: Herder, 1968); Original edition Die Transzendente Methode in der Scholastischen Philosophie der Gegenwart, (Innsbruck: Verlag Felizian Rauch)
- Norris Clarke, W The Philosophical Approach to God - A Neo-Thomist Perspective, (North Carolina: Wake Forest University, 1979)
- O'Donovan, L J A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner's Theology, (New York: Crossroads, 1981)
- O'Leary, Joseph Questioning Back: The Overcoming of Metaphysics in the Tradition, (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1985)
- Paton, H J The Categorical Imperative: A study in Kant's Moral Philosophy, (London: Hutchinson, 1958, 3rd ed.)
- Peperzak, A T Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion, (New York and London: Routledge, 1995)
- Piclin, M La notion de Transcendance, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1969)
- Pohier, J Dieu Fractures, (Paris: Seuil, 1985)
God in Fragments, (London: SCM, 1985)
Quand je dis Dieu, (Paris: Seuil, 1977)
- Rahner, Karl A Rahner Reader, G McCool (tr.), (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975)
Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978)
Geist in Welt: Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Tomas Von Aquin, (Munich: 1964)
Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums, (Freiburg, 1976)
Hearers of the Word, M Richards (tr.), (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1969)
Hörer des Wortes, (Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1963)
I Remember, (London: SCM, 1984)
Inspiration in the Bible, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961)
Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982, (New York: Crossroad, 1986)
Nature and Grace, Wharton, D (tr.), (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963)

- Schriften für Theologie*, Band I - XVI, (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1957ff)
- Spirit in the World, W Dych (tr.), (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968)
- The Church and the Sacraments, (London: Burns and Oates, 1964)
- The Spirit in the Church, (London: Burns & Oates, 1979)
- The Trinity, J Donceel (tr.), (London: Burns & Oates, 1970)
- The Dynamic Element in the Church, (London: Burns & Oates, 1964)
- Theological Investigations, Vols. I - XX, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961ff.) (English translation of *Schriften für Theologie*, Band I - XVI, (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1957ff)
- Reed, Charles The Problem of Method in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1983, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International)
- Reeder, H P The Theory and Practice of Husserl's Phenomenology, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986)
- Reid, Thomas An Inquiry into the Human Mind, (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1810)
- Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man, (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1865)
- Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays, R Beanblossom & K Lehrer (eds.), (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983)
- Richardson, W J Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1963)
- Roberts, L The Achievement of Karl Rahner, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967)
- Rolland, J (ed.) Les Cahiers de la Nuit Surveillée: Emmanuel Levinas, (LaGrasse: Verdier, 1984)
- Rolnick, P Analogical Possibilities: How Words refer to God, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993)
- Ross, W D Aristotle's Metaphysics, Vol 1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924
- Rotenstreich, Nathan Experience and its Systematisation, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1965)
- Scruton, R Kant, (London: Oxford University Press, 1982)
- Sheehan, Thomas Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987)

- Subjectivity and Transcendental Method as the Fundamental Groundwork of Karl Rahner's Theological Anthropology, (Ph.D. thesis, Fordham University, 1971), (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International)
- Sorri, Mari & Gill, Jerry H A Post-Modern Epistemology : Language, Truth and Body, (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989)
- Spiegelberg, Herbert The Phenomenological Method: A Historical Introduction, 3rd ed., (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1984)
- Strawson, P F The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (London: Methuen, 1966)
- Taylor, Mark Altarity, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
- Tracy, David The Analogical Imagination, (London: SCM Press, 1981)
- Valevičius, A From the Other to the Totally Other, (New York: Peter Lang, 1988)
- Van Riet, G Thomistic Epistemology: Studies Concerning the problem of Cognition in the Contemporary Thomistic School, II, G Franks (tr.), (London: Herder, 1965)
- Thomistic Epistemology: Studies Concerning the problem of Cognition in the Contemporary Thomistic School, I, G Franks (tr.), (London: Herder, 1963)
- Vass, George Understanding Karl Rahner I: A Theologian in Search of a Philosophy, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1985)
- Understanding Karl Rahner 2: The Mystery of the Man and the Foundations of a Theological System, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1985)
- Vorgrimler, H Karl Rahner, His Life, Thought and Work, (London: Burns & Oates, 1963)
- Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to his Life and Thought, (London: SCM Press, 1986)
- Walker, R C S Kant on Pure Reason, (London: Oxford University Press, 1982)
- Ward, G Barth, Derrida and The Language of Theology, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Weger, K H Karl Rahner: An Introduction to his Theology, (London: Burns & Oates, 1980)
- Winqvist, C E The Transcendental Imagination: an Essay in Philosophical Theology, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1972)
- Wolff, Christian Logica, Frankfurt, 1732,
- Wyschogrod, E Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics, (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1974)

II. *Articles:*

- Baker, K Rahner: The Transcendental Method, in Continuum, 2, (1964),
- Bernasconi, R Skepticism in the Face of Philosophy, in Bernasconi R, & Critchley S, Re-Reading Levinas, (London: Athlone Press, 1991), pp.149-61
- Blanchot, Maurice La parole plurielle, in L'Entretien Infini, Paris, 1969
- Notre Compagne Clandestine, in En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici, in Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas, F Laruelle (ed.), Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1980), pp.21-60
- Our Clandestine Companion, in Cohen, R (ed.), Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.41-52
- Boehm, R De Kritiek van Levinas op Heidegger, in Tijdschrift voor Filosofie, 25, 3-4, (1963), pp.587-604
- Boothroyd, D Responding to Levinas, in Bernasconi R, & Wood D (eds.), The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp.15-31
- Bradley, D Rahner's Spirit in the World: Aquinas or Hegel, The Thomist, 41, (1977), pp.167-199
- Burke, Patrick Conceptual Thought in Karl Rahner, in Gregorianum, 75, 1 (1994), pp.65-93
- Burke, J P The Ethical Significance of the Face, Proceedings of the American Catholic Association, LXI, (1982), pp.194-206
- Cawte, J Karl Rahner's Conception of God's Self-Communication to Man, in Heythrop Journal, XXV, (1984), pp.260-271
- Cohen, R Dialogue with Emmanuel Lévinas in Face to Face with Emmanuel Lévinas, in R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986)
- Review of E Levinas, Existence and Existents, Man and World, 12, (1979), pp.521-526
- Collete, J Levinas et la phénoménologie husserlienne, in J Rolland (ed.), Les Cahiers de la Nuit Surveillée: Emmanuel Levinas, (LaGrasse: Verdier, 1984), pp.19-36
- Conlon, J J Karl Rahner's Theory of Sensation, The Thomist, 41, (1977), pp.400-417
- Coreth, Emerich Dialectic of Performance and Concept, in Continuum, 2, No.3 (Autumn, 1964)

- Immediacy and the mediation of being: an attempt to answer Bernard Lonergan, in McShane, P. (ed.), Language Truth and Meaning, Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1972), pp.33-48
- The Problem and Method of Metaphysics, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 3, (1963), pp.403-417
- Crawford, P A Kant's Theory of Philosophical Proof, *Kant-Studien*, 53, (1961-62), pp.257-268
- Critchley, S Il y a - A Dying Stronger than Death (Blanchot with Levinas), in Clark T, & Royle, N (eds.), Experiencing the Impossible, (Stirling: Oxford Literary Review, 15, 1-2, 1993), pp.81-131
- Davies, P A Fine Risk: Reading Blanchot Reading Levinas, in Bernasconi R, & Critchley S, Re-Reading Levinas, (London: Athlone Press, 1991), pp.201-227
- De Boer, Th. An Ethical Transcendental Philosophy, in Cohen, R (ed.), Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.83-115
- De Vries, J Approach to Metaphysics: Objective or Transcendental, *Philosophy Today*, 6, (1962), pp.151-163
- De Greef, J Éthique, réflexion et histoire chez Levinas, *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, (1969), n.3, pp.431-460
- Le Lointain et le Prochain, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 31, 3-4, (1969), pp.490-518
- Le concept de pouvoir éthique chez Levinas, *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, (1970), n.4, pp.507-520
- Skepticism and Reason, in Cohen, R (ed.), Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.159-180
- Derrida, Jacques At this very moment in this work here I am, R Berezdivin (tr.), in Re-reading Levinas, R Bernasconi & S Critchley (eds.), (London, Athlone Press, 1991)
- En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici, in Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas, F Laruelle (ed.), Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1980)
- Violence and Metaphysics. An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas in Writing and Difference, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978)
- Dewart, L On Transcendental Thomism, *Continuum*, 6, (1968), pp.389-401
- Dondeyne, A Inleiding tot het denken van E Levinas, in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 25, 3-4 (1963), pp.555-584

- Doud, R E Sensibility in Rahner and Merleau-Ponty, *The Thomist*, 44, (1980), pp.373-389
- Dulles, A Revelation and Discovery, in Kelly, W J (ed.), Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner S.J., (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), pp.1-29
- Eberhard, K Karl Rahner and the Supernatural Existential, *Thought*, 46, (1971), pp.537-561
- Egan, H Rahner's Mystical Theology, in Kelly, W J (ed.), Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner S.J., (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), pp.139-158
- Ernst, C Introduction to K Rahner, *TI, I*, pp.iv-xix
- Fabro, C The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 6, (1966), pp.389-427
- Faessler, M L'intrigue du Tout-Autre. Dieu dans la pensée de Levinas, in J Rolland (ed.), Les Cahiers de la Nuit Surveillée: Emmanuel Levinas, (LaGrasse: Verdier, 1984), pp.119-45
- Feron, E Ethique, langage et ontologie chez Emmanuel Levinas, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 82, (1977), pp.64-87
- Forthomme, B Structure de la métaphysique lévinassienne, *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 78, (1980), pp.385-399
- Heinrich, D The Proof Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction, in Review of Metaphysics, XXII, (1969)
- Holland, M Le hiatus théorique: le neutre, in *Lire Blanchot I*, *Gamma* 3/4, pp.53-70
- Holt, D. C. The Defence of Common Sense in Reid and Moore, in The Philosophy of Thomas Reid, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 145-157
- Hoye, W J A Critical Remark on Karl Rahner's *Hearers of the Word*, *Antonionum*, 48, (1973), pp.508-532
- Kearney, R Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas, in Cohen, R (ed.), Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.13-34
- Kerr, Fergus Human Beings are Transcendent, in New Blackfriars, 63 (1982), pp.476-487
- Rahner Retrospective: III Transcendence or Finitude in New Blackfriars, 62 (1981), pp.370-378
- Krewani, W Le temps comme transcendance vers l'autre. La notion du temps dans la philosophie d'e. Levinas, *Archives de Philosophie*, 44, (1981), pp.529-560

- Lacroix, J *L'infini et le prochain selon Emmanuel Levinas*, in Lacroix, J, *Panorama de la Philosophie Française Contemporaine*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), pp.116-123
- Lawton, P N *A Difficult Freedom: Levinas' Judaism*, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 37, 3-4, (1975), pp.681-691
- Love and Justice: Levinas' Reading of Buber*, *Philosophy Today*, 20, (1976), pp.77-83
- Levinas, Emmanuel 'Réflexions sur la "technique" phénoménologique' in E Lévinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, J Vrin, Paris, 1967. The article first appeared in 1959 in *Husserl, Cahiers de Royaumont, Philosophie, III, Editions de Minuit*.
- De l'Évasion*, *Recherches philosophiques*, 5, (1935-36), pp.373-92
- De la Conscience à la veille. A partir de Husserl*, in *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1986), pp.17-33. (First appeared in *Bijdragen*, 35 (1974))
- De l'Un à l'Autre. Transcendance et Temps*, in *Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.153-76
- De la Sensibilité*, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 46, n.3 (Sept, 1984)
- Diachronie et représentation*, in *Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.177-98
- Dieu et la Philosophie*, in *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1986), pp.93--127
- Enigme et phénomène*, in E Levinas, *En Découvrant l'Existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1967), pp.203-17
- God and Philosophy*, in *Philosophy Today*, 22 (1978), Summer. (Originally in *Le Nouveau Commerce, Cahier 30-31, Printemps, 1975*)
- God and Philosophy*, in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, A Lingis, (ed.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1987), pp.153-74
- Herméneutique et au-delà*, in *Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.81-92
- Ideology and Idealism*, A Lesley & S Ames (trs.), in *Modern Jewish Ethics*, M Fox (ed.), (Columbus: Ohio State Univesrity Press, 1975)
- Il y a*, *Deucalion, Cahiers de philosophie*, 1, (1946), pp.143-154
- L'Ontologie est-elle fondamentale?* in *Revue de la métaphysique et de morale*, 1951, 1; (Also in *Phénoménologie Existence*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1984), pp.193-203; E Levinas, *Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.13-24
- La pensée de l'être et la question de l'autre*, in *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, (Paris: J Vrin, 1986), pp.173-188

La philosophie et l'idée de l'infini, in E Levinas, En Découvrant l'Existence avec Husserl et Heidegger, (Paris: J Vrin, 1967), pp.165-78

La Proximité, Archives de Philosophie, 34, (1971), pp.373-91

La Conscience non-intentionnelle, in Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.141-52

La Philosophie et L'Éveil, in Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.93-106

Langage et proximité, in E Levinas, En Découvrant l'Existence avec Husserl et Heidegger, (Paris: J Vrin, 1967), pp.218-236

Language and Proximity, in Collected Philosophical Papers, A Lingis, (ed.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1987), pp.109-26

Le Moi et la Totalité, in Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.25-52

Le temps et l'autre, in J Wahl, Le Choix, Le Monde, L'Existence, Grenoble-Paris, 1947

Phenomenon and Enigma, in Collected Philosophical Papers, A Lingis, (ed.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1987), pp.61-74

Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity, in Collected Philosophical Papers, A Lingis, (ed.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1987), pp.47-60

Questions et réponses, in De Dieu qui vient à l'idée, (Paris: J Vrin, 1986), pp.93-127

Questions et Reponses in Le Nouveau Commerce, 36-37 (Spring)

Réflexions sur la "technique" phénoménologique, in E Levinas, En Découvrant l'Existence avec Husserl et Heidegger, (Paris: J Vrin, 1967), pp.111-24

Revue de La théorie de l'intuition dans le Phénoménologie de Husserl, Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger, CXIII, (1932), n.5-6

Signature, in Difficult Freedom, Essays on Judaism, (S Hand (tr.), The Athlone Press, London, 1990, pp.289-295. First published as Difficile Liberté. Essais sur le judaïsme, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1963, 1976

Sur les "Ideen" de M E Husserl, Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger, CVII, (1929), pp.230-265

Sur l'Idée de l'infini en nous, in Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.245-248

The Ego and the Totality, in Collected Philosophical Papers, A Lingis, (ed.), (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1987), pp.25-46. (First published in Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 59, pp.353 - 73)

- Totalité et Infini. Préface à l'édition allemande, in Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.249-252
- Un Dieu Homme?, in Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre, (Paris, Grasset, 1991), pp.69-76
- Wholly Otherwise, in Bernasconi R, & Critchley S, Re-Reading Levinas, (London: Athlone Press, 1991), pp.3-10
- Libertson, J La récurrence chez Levinas, Revue philosophique de Louvain, 79, (1981), pp.212-251
- La Séparation chez Levinas, Revue de métaphysique et de morale, 86, (1981), pp.433-451
- Levinas and Husserl: Sensation and Intentionality, Tijdschrift voor Filosofie, 41, (1979), pp.485-502
- Llewelyn, J Am I Obsessed by Bobby? (Humanism of the Other Animal), in Bernasconi R, & Critchley S, Re-Reading Levinas, (London: Athlone Press, 1991), pp.234-236
- Lyotard, J-F Levinas' Logic, in Cohen, R (ed.), Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.117-157
- Logique de Levinas, in En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici, in Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas, F Laruelle (ed.), Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1980), pp.127-150
- Marx, Werner Introduction of Aristotle's Theory of Being as Being, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1977
- McCool, G Philosophical Pluralism and an Evolving Thomism, in Continuum, II, No.1 (Spring)
- McDermott, J M The Christologies of Karl Rahner, in Gregorianum, 67 (1987)
- Metz, J B An Identity Crisis in Christianity? Transcendental and Political Responses, in Kelly, W J (ed.), Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner S.J., (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), pp.169-178
- Heidegger und das Problem der Metaphysik, in Scholastik, XXVIII (1953), pp.1-22
- Moloney, R Seeing and Knowing: Some Reflections on Karl Rahner's Theory of Knowledge, Heythrop Journal, 18, (1977), pp.399-419
- Muck, O The Logical Structure of Transcendental Method, International Philosophical Quarterly, 9, (1969), pp.342-362
- O'Donoghue, N Rahner: Early Philosophy, Irish Theological Quarterly, 37, (1970), pp.322-325
- Pedley, C J An English Bibliographical Aid to Karl Rahner, in Heythrop Journal, XXV, (1984), pp.319-365

Purcell, Michael

Agreement and Disagreements: Thomas Reid and Emmanuel Levinas, New Blackfriars, 1996

Gloria Dei, Homo Vigilans: Waking up to Grace in Rahner and Lévinas, Louvain Studies, (Autumn, 1996).

Homelessness as a Theological Motif: Emmanuel Lévinas and the Significance of the Home, Scottish Journal of Religious Studies, XV, 2, Autumn, 1994, pp.88-104

Nec Tamen Consumeatur: Exodus 3 and the non-consumable Other in Emmanuel Levinas, Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol 48 (1995), No.1, pp.79-95

Pastoral Ministry as Theology, Contact, The Interdisciplinary Journal of Pastoral Studies, 1995, No.116, pp.16-22

Sovereignty and Responsibility: a parabolic discourse, Irish Theological Quarterly, Vol.59, No.2, 1993, pp.143-156

The Mystery of Death: Alterity and Affectivity in Lévinas, New Blackfriars, December, 1995

The Natural Desire for the Beatific Vision.: Desiring the Other in Lévinas and "La Nouvelle Théologie", Philosophy and Theology, 10, 1-2 (1996)

The Absent Author: Maurice Blanchot and Inspiration, Heythrop Journal, Vol.35, No.3, July 1994, pp.249-266

The Ethical Significance of Illeity (Emmanuel Lévinas), The Heythrop Journal, April, 1996

The Question Is: A Consideration of the Question in Rahner, Blanchot and Lévinas, Irish Theological Quarterly, 1996

Rahner, K

'Behold this Heart!': Preliminaries to a Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart, in TI, III, pp.321-330

An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas, in TI, XVI, pp.244-254

Anonymous and Explicit Faith, in TI, XVI, pp.52-59

Christian Humanism, in TI, IX, pp.187-204

Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World, in TI, V, (London, 1966)

Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace, in TI, I, pp.297-317

Experience of the Holy Spirit, in TI, XVIII, pp.189-210

Experience of Self and Experience of God, in TI, XIII, pp.122-132

Experience of Transcendence from the Standpoint of Catholic Dogmatics, in TI, XVIII, pp.173-188

Experience of the Spirit and Existential Commitment, in TI, XVI, pp.24-34

Guilt - Responsibility - Punishment within the View of Catholic Theology, in TI, VI

Mystical Experience and Mystical Theology, in TI, XVII, pp.90-99

Nature and Grace, in TI, IV, pp.165-188

Philosophy and Theology, in TI, VI, pp.71-81

Poetry and the Christian, in TI, IV, pp.357-367

Reflections on the Experience of Grace, in TI, III, pp.86-90

Reflections on Dialogue within a Pluralistic Society, in TI, VI, pp.31-42

Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God, in TI, VI, pp.231-249

Reflections on Methodology in Theology, in TI, XI, pp.68-114

Religious Feeling Inside and Outside the Church, in TI, XVII, pp.228-248

Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace, in TI, XVI, pp.35-51

Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace, in TI, I, pp.319-346

Some Theses for a Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart, in TI, III, pp.331-353

The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in TI, IV, pp.287-311

The Hiddenness of God, in TI, XVI, pp.227-243

The Mystery of the Trinity, in TI, XVI, pp.255-259

The Theological Concept of Concupiscentia, in TI, I, pp.347-382

The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger, in Philosophy Today, 13 (1969), pp.126-137

The Experience of God Today, in TI, XI, pp.149-165

The 'Commandment' of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments, in TI, V, pp.439-459

- The Human Question of Meaning in face of the Absolute Mystery of God, in TI, XVIII, pp.89-104
- The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology, in TI, IV, pp.36-73
- The Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World, in TI, III, pp.277-293
- The Word and the Eucharist, in TI, IV, pp.253-286
- The Commandment of Love in relation to the Other Commandments, in Theological Investigations, 5,
- The Unity of Spirit and Matter in the Christian Understanding of Faith, in TI, VI, pp.153-177
- The Experience of God Today, in Theological Investigations, XI, London, 1974
- The Dignity and Freedom of Man, TI, Vol II, DLT, 1963
- The Dignity and Freedom of Man, in TI, II, pp.235-263
- The Body in the Order of Salvation, in TI, XVII, pp.71-89
- The Theology of the Symbol, in TI, IV, pp.221-252
- Theology of Freedom, in TI, VI, pp.178-196
- Thomas Aquinas on Truth, in TI, XIII, pp.13-31
- Transcendental Theology in Sacramentum Mundi, VI, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968)
- Unity of Spirit and Matter in Christian Faith, in TI, VI
- Unity - Love - Mystery, in TI, VIII, pp.229-247
- Reed, C W Levinas' Question, in Cohen, R (ed.), Face to Face with Levinas, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.73-82
- Reichmann, J B The Transcendental Method and the Psychogenesis of Being, The Thomist, 32, (1968), pp.449-508
- Reiner, Hans Die Entstehung und ursprungliche Bedeutung des Namens Metaphysik, in Zeitschrift fur philosophische Forschung, VIII:2, 1954, and Die Entstehung der Lehre vom bibliothekarischen Ursprung des Namens Metaphysik, ZfpF, IX:1, 1955
- Rolland, J Pour une approche de la question du neutre, in Exercices de la patience: Blanchot, (Paris: Obsidiane), pp.11-46
- Ross, J F Analogy as a Rule of Meaning for Religious Language, in Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays, (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1976)

- Rutten, Ch. *L'Analogie chez Aristote*, in *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne*, n. 1, (1983), pp.31-48
- Shine, D *The Transcendental Method*, Continuum, 6, (1968), pp.221-245
- Smith, S G *Reason as One for Another: Moral and Theoretical Argument*, in Cohen, R (ed.), *Face to Face with Levinas*, R Cohen (ed.), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp.53-72
- Splett, J *Theought-Forms*, in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. VI, (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), pp.255-257
- Strasser, S *Emmanuel Levinas in The Phenomenological Method: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd ed., (The Hague: M Nijhoff, 1984), pp.612-649
- Le concept de "phénomène" chez Levinas et son importance pour la philosophie religieuse*, *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 76, (1978), pp.328-341
- Sutton, T. J., *The Scottish Kant? A Reassessment of Reid's Epistemology*, in *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp.159-192
- Tallon, A *Nonintentional Affectivity, Affective Intentionality, and the Ethical in Levinas's Philoophsy*, in Peperzak, A T (ed.), *Ethics as First Philosophy*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1995)
- Rahner and Personisation*, *Philosophy Today*, 14, (1970), pp.44-56
- Response to Dulles, A, Revelation and Discovery*, in Kelly, W J (ed.), *Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner S.J.*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), pp.34-38
- Review of E. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, *Man and World*, 9, (1976), pp.451-462
- Spirit, Matter, Becoming: Karl Rahner's Spirit in the World (Geist in Welt)*, *Modern Schoolman*, 48, (1971), pp.151-165
- Van de Wiele, J *Métaphysique et pensée contemporaine*, *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 61, (1963), pp.92-110
- Vasey, C R *Emmanuel Levinas: from Intentionality to Proximity*, *Philosophy Today*, 25 (1981), pp.178-195
- Le problème de l'intentionnalité dans la philosophie de E Levinas*, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 85, (1980), pp.224-239
- Vertin, M *Maréchal, Lonergan, and the Phenomenology of Knowing*, in M L Lamb (ed.), *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honour of B Lonergan, S.J.*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), pp.411-422
- Wilson, B A *The Possibility of Theology After Kant: An Examination of Karl Rahner's Geist in Welt*, *Canadian Journal of Theology*, 12, (1966), pp.245-258

- Wyschogrod, E Emmanuel Levinas and the Problem of Religious Language, *The Thomist*, 56, (1962), 1, pp.1-38
- God and "Being's Move" in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, *Journal of Religion*, 62, (1982). pp.145-155
- Yovel, Yirmiyahu The Interests of Reason: From Metaphysics to Moral History (pp.135-148) in Yirmiyahu YOVEL (ed): Kant's Practical Philosophy Reconsidered, Papers presented at the seventh Jerusalem Philosophical encounter, December 1986, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London., 1989