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EMMANUEL LEVINA'S
PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE
ALLEGIANCE TO REASON

EMMANUEL LEVINAS'S RELATIONSHIP to phenomenology and its commitment to rationality would appear ambiguous. On the one hand, commentators speak of his anti-phenomenology and anti-ontology, describe him as struggling *against* philosophy, and pit him against the rationally oriented universal pragmatics of Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel. Even Levinas himself comes close to belittling the rigorous philosophical method characteristic of phenomenology and philosophical rationality:

There you have my response to the question of method. I would also say to you that I know no more about it. I do not believe that there is a possible transparency in method or that philosophy is possible as transparency. Those who have spent their lives on methodology have written many books to replace the more interesting books they would have been able to write. Too bad for the march in the sun without shadows that philosophy would be.¹

On the other hand, Levinas at times acknowledges that, from the point of view of philosophical method and discipline, he remains to this day a phenomenologist. He admits that his analyses are in the spirit of Husserlian philosophy, even if he does not follow it to the letter. For him, the presentation and development of notions employed in *Totality and Infinity* "owe everything to the 'phenomenological method.'" Theodore de Boer considers Levinas's philosophy as combining transcendental, phenomenological method with the dialogical method developed by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig.²

A careful study of whether or in what sense Levinas is or is not a phenomenologist will provide us with insight into his unique

meaning of "rationality," and will prepare us to grasp the notion of rationality underlying the works of Enrique Dussel, who, in spite of many original modifications of Levinas's thought, nevertheless relies heavily on it.

THE CRITIQUE OF THEORY: THE HORIZONS OF THEORY

As is well known, Husserl's phenomenological reflections at the time of *Cartesian Meditations* were moving in the direction of a transcendental idealism. Heidegger reacted against Husserl's idealism by emphasizing the modes of existence pertaining to pre-reflective being-in-the-world, from which theoretical thought arose. Hence, Heidegger described the pragmatic relationships with things (*Zuhandenheit*) that precede any consideration of them as objects, independent of their usefulness for us (*Vorhandenheit*). Existentialism followed Heidegger by focusing on how human existence, the lived body, substitutes for the transcendental ego. Concurring with many of these developments, Levinas notes that contemporary phenomenologists tend to move from what is thought toward the plenitude of that which is thought, discovering new dimensions of meaning. Levinas observes ironically, though, that several of these critics of Husserl made use of his insights and methods in their own phenomenologies. In fact, apart from these criticisms and even in reaction to them, Husserl indicates in his own writings that representative consciousness, which isolates what is given into distinct objects, is embedded in horizons of nonobjectifying consciousness. Husserl, anticipating many of his successors, recognized that conditions of corporate or cultural existence lie beneath and beyond representation.³

Husserl's recognition of this fact becomes evident in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, written years after Heidegger's *Being and Time*. There Husserl charges those who would establish a completely self-sufficient logic with naïveté, since this logic's

self-evidence lacks scientific grounding in the universal life-world a priori, which it always presupposes in the form of things taken for granted, which are never scientifically, universally formulated, never put in the general form proper to a science of essence. Only

when this radical, fundamental science exists can such a logic itself become a science. Before this it hangs in mid-air, without support, and is, as it has been up to now, so very naïve that it is not even aware of the task which attaches to every objective logic, every a priori science in the usual sense, namely, that of discovering how this logic itself is to be grounded, hence no longer "logically" but by being traced back to the universal prelogical a priori through which everything logical, the total edifice of objective theory in all its methodological forms, demonstrates its legitimate sense and from which, then, all logic itself must receive its norms.⁴

As this excerpt illustrates, Husserl saw clearly that the very dynamism of reason leads beyond the limits of "the total edifice of objective theory" to explore horizons taken for granted in different branches of that edifice. In "The Vienna Lecture," he traces the resolve to examine these horizons and not to accept unquestioningly any pre-given opinion or tradition back to the universality of the Greek critical stance at the origin of philosophy. Husserl chides mathematical natural science as *lacking in rationality* for its forgetting and refusing to investigate the intuitively given surrounding world and the nature of the consciousness that undertakes natural science.⁵

Vestiges of this same Husserlian zeal for giving a rational account surface in Levinas's preface to *Totality and Infinity* after he acknowledges his debt to Franz Rosenzweig's *Stern der Erlösung* and to the phenomenological method, to which the presentation and development of his notions owe everything.

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 by this thought. What does it matter if in the 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.⁶

Levinas's enterprise seems, then, to parallel Husserl's return to the life-world horizons underlying theory, although these horizons will not be found to contain "thoughts aiming at objects." The direction of his analysis partakes of that search, typical of post-Husserl generations, to dig beneath theory in order to turn

up theory's own preconditions. But is Levinas anti-phenomenological or anti-rational in adopting this orientation? Is his turn to the pretheoretical actually in the interests of a more comprehensive rationality, leaving no presuppositions unexamined, as Husserl's was? Is his pretheoretical in fact protheoretical, as Husserl's was? Such questions can be answered only after we discuss what Levinas finds as he turns to these forgotten horizons.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE OTHER AND THE STRUGGLE TO BE RATIONAL

Levinas' s regressive uncovering of the forgotten experiences from which theory arises depicts how the Other appears in dyadic relationships to a "me," that is, to Levinas the phenomenologist and, Levinas hopes, to the reader following his text. According to this fresh phenomenological description, which can be fully recaptured only by presenting Levinas's major works in their entirety, the irreducible Other calls into question my spontaneity and appears as a Master who judges me, who is not on the same plane as I am, who commands me from a position of height, who speaks to me as a first word, "You shall not commit murder," who offers me the resistance of what has no resistance —ethical resistance— and who demands not to be left without food. In *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas describes this practical human relationship as occurring at the level of bodily sensibility that, like Merleau-Ponty's analysis of bodiliness, is not constituted by a Cartesian consciousness first deciding to establish a relationship with one's own body or with the Other. This sensibility consists, rather, in exposure to others, vulnerability to them, and responsibility in proximity to them prior to thematization, apophansis, willed responses, and consciousness conscious of consciousness.⁷

The height from which the Other commands —not as my equal, not as identical or interchangeable with me—is leveled out when I consider human relationships through the prism of formal logic, in which terms are reversible, read indifferently from left to right and from right to left. In formal logic, instead of taking account of how the Other appears to me as I stand face to face with him, I remove myself from the direct face-to-face and "from

above" look upon myself as a neutral A in relation to the Other as B, who is equally related to me as A. In this extrinsic, third-person perspective, in which A and B appear interchangeably related, I distance myself from the ethical demands that I experience when face to face with B. The extrinsic, logical description from a third-person perspective hides the ethical inequalities and disequilibria intrinsically present in the face-to-face. In Levinas's terms, I replace the face-to-face with the "alongside of."⁸

Similarly, in *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas finds the contents of propositions, the said, obscuring the underlying saying activity, the ethico-practical relationship to an Other whose hostage I am. Should I formulate this relationship itself in propositions within the said, I would again speak of the Other and myself from a third-person perspective, as if we were two objects in the same discourse. All the while, I would be distracted from the nonreciprocity of my utter responsibility for the Other to whom I am saying these propositions. Similarly, Levinas notes that the experience of being vulnerable to the Other, "on the surface of the skin characteristic of sensibility," is "anaesthetized" in the process of knowing.⁹

Formal-logical processes, the utilization of language within the said, and the process of knowing itself effectively obscure the radically demanding features of the face-to-face. Only a disciplined effort to let those features appear in their authenticity can disclose them. Levinas describes his own disciplined effort in phenomenological terms: "One has to go back to that hither side, starting from the trace retained by the said, in which everything shows itself. The movement back to the saying is the phenomenological reduction."¹⁰

Levinas mentions several other major presuppositions of the Western philosophical tradition that must be overcome if one is to recognize the exigencies accompanying the Other's appearance, particularly the presupposition that one must always begin philosophizing with the freedom of the ego concerned only for itself. Because of this presupposed starting point, people insist that they cannot be held to answer when they have not done anything; they feel that it is questionable whether they are really their brother's or sister's keeper; they look on every Other as a limita-

tion inviting war, domination, and precaution; and, finally, like Hobbes, they believe that society commences with a war of all against all. In addition to these presuppositions, there is another major philosophical prejudice that Levinas withstands in his effort to return to what precedes all theory: namely, that ethics is a mere problematic addition to the more fundamental philosophical disciplines of epistemology and ontology.¹¹

If the guiding principle of Husserlian phenomenology is the refusal to accept unexamined cultural and philosophical prejudices so that the things themselves might come to appearance more clearly, then Levinas remains faithful to the spirit of phenomenology. Levinas himself readily acknowledges, though, that he has not implemented phenomenological reduction according to Husserl's rules and has not respected the entirety of Husserlian methodology. For Husserl, to the extent that logical positivism partakes of the prejudice that all judgments be based on empirical experience without first studying the essential types of judgment and the domains they treat, it is less than rational. For Husserl, to the extent that the natural sciences refuse to give any account of the intuitively surrounding world from which they arise, they succumb to prejudice and irrationality. Even in trying to bring to light the authentic features of human intersubjectivity at the origin of theory, encrusted over as they have been with mistaken assumptions, Levinas too is attempting to render theory, philosophical or otherwise, more rational.¹²

Not only is the rationality of Levinas's position shown in the fact that he uncovers the forgotten Other, but this very Other itself also augments rationality by initiating self-criticism. By engaging in theoretical processes, I show that I am not abandoned to my drives and impulsive movements; on the contrary, I distrust myself. In putting myself in question in this way, I act "unnaturally." Levinas refuses to trace this self-critical stance back to my aggressive spontaneity's discovery of its limits and its desperate search to circumvent these limits. To locate the origin of reflective self-criticism here would leave my spontaneity both unchallenged at its root and intact. Rather, self-critique is born in the Other, who calls my spontaneity itself into question. "The essence of reason consists not in securing for man a foundation and powers, but in calling him in question and in inviting him to justice." The

demand for theoretical self-critique reflects prior ethical exigencies sedimented within it.¹³

Furthermore, one embarks upon discourse and gives reasons because some Other has asked an account; rational discourse itself is an ethical response.

Thus I cannot evade by silence the discourse with the epiphany that occurs as a face opens, as Thrasymachus, irritated, tries to do in the first book of the *Republic*. ...The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no "interiority" permits avoiding. It is that discourse that obliges the 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.¹⁴

Levinas repeatedly tries to situate the search for truth in the context of a relationship with an Other who requests a response. For instance, in the preface to *Totality and Infinity*, he struggles to show that eschatological judgment of the Other upon the truth of the totality does not lead to irrationalism and subjectivism. In Section I, parts B ("Separation and Discourse") and C ("Truth and Justice") of *Totality and Infinity*, he presents the pursuit of truth unfolding within relationships under the mandate to be just. The subsection "Ethics and the Face" in Section III of the same work begins with ethics and ends with a discussion of reason. The ethical relationship is not, then, contrary to truth, but accomplishes the very intention that animates the movement into truth. Speech lies at the origin of truth, not Heideggerian disclosure, which takes place within the solitude of vision.¹⁵

This Other teaches and introduces something new into thought. "The absolutely foreign alone can instruct us." This Other issues a challenge, to any "Rationality" that is capable of attributing "order" to a world where one sells "the poor person for a pair of sandals." Thus, the Other, outside of reigning systems of rationality, opens the way for more authentic and comprehensive notions of rationality. Of course, we do not heed the Other's ethical appeal solely in order to enrich our fund of knowledge, since that would be to subordinate the Other to our investigative purposes, to our *telos*, to our totality, within which we would nevertheless remain entrapped. Paradoxically, one learns most

where one gives oneself over to the Other without taking thought for how one might intellectually profit from this giving over.¹⁶

It is clearly a mistake to place Levinas in the camp of anti-phenomenological or anti-rational postmodernists. He imitates Husserl's philosophical rigor in exploring forgotten horizons, in criticizing taken-for-granted presuppositions, and in illuminating phenomena never before seen clearly. The pretheoretical that he elucidates, the Other, induces self-critique, ushers in discourse and rational processes, and impugns one-sided notions of rationality and expands them. Like Husserl, Levinas's pretheoretical would appear to be protheoretical. But we must not rest content too soon, for other considerations point to ways in which Levinas's thought seems to undermine phenomenology and head for irrationality.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND RATIONALITY IN LEVINAS

The Other who comes to appearance in the ethico-practical relationship described by Levinas's phenomenological endeavor defies usual phenomenological categories. The Other is not a noema. When the Other gives meaning to his or her presence, an event irreducible to evidence occurs, which does not enter into an intuition. This revelation by Others constitutes a "veritable inversion" of any objectifying cognition. The mode in which the face is given does not consist in figuring as a theme under our gaze, in spreading itself forth as a set of qualities forming an image; rather, the knowledge that thematizes is subverted here and turned into conversation. Whereas things have no meaning of their own apart from our *Sinngebung*, the face of the Other signifies before we have projected light upon it. In *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas defines intentionality as "an aspiration to be filled and fulfillment, the centripetal movement of a consciousness that coincides with itself, recovers, and rediscovers itself without ageing, rests in self-certainty, confirms itself, doubles itself up, consolidates itself, thickens into substance."¹⁷ Intentionality, so defined, ineptly apprehends the proximity of the Other, who, for Levinas, cannot be confined within a "consciousness of" and who inverts intentionality. Given the fact that Husserlian intentionality bears

the trace of the voluntary and the teleological, Levinas refuses to describe the subject on the basis of intentionality, representational activity, objectification, or freedom and will. Rather than starting with subjectivity as intentionality, founded on auto-affectation, Levinas approaches the subject in terms of the passivity of time, a lapse of time, irrecuperable and outside all will, the exact contrary of intentionality. The Other appears to this subject, not as phenomena or an apparition in the full light, but as a trace and an enigma that disturb phenomena.¹⁸

This strange Other, given as an "object" in the face-to-face relationship and yet given totally differently from any object, evokes conflicting assessments of Levinas's project on the part of commentators. De Boer, for instance, holds that Levinas's method is not the intuitive, explicating disclosure of the phenomenologists. Similarly, Adriaan Peperzak insists that the Other is not a new sort of phenomenon that can be located among and conjoined with other kinds of phenomena. But Alphonso Lingis believes that in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas works out the phenomenological analysis of facing and that in *Otherwise Than Being* alterity takes form and "becomes a phenomenon in the face of another."¹⁹

To resolve this question of Levinas's phenomenology, one must pay attention to the way he focuses on the Other as an "object" over against the subject, which this Other overwhelms and whose intentionality this Other disrupts.

The idea of infinity hence does not proceed from the I, nor from a need in the I gauging exactly its own voids; here the movement proceeds from what is thought and not from the thinker. It is the unique knowledge that presents this inversion—a knowledge without a priori. ...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.²⁰

Levinas reaffirms this preeminence of the Other over against the subject in *Otherwise Than Being* when he notes that responsibility for the Other does not begin in my commitment, but comes, rather, from the hither side of my freedom, from a "prior to every memory," an "ulterior to every accomplishment." Just as for Husserl the objects of diverse regional ontologies prescribe rules for the manifolds of appearances and distinctive modes of investiga-

tion (including distinctive phenomenologies) , so for Levinas this "object" unlike any other object, the Other, dictates a unique method of approach, irreducible to other approaches, irreducible even to previous modes of phenomenology. Hence, the Other resists being subsumed under previous phenomenological categories (such as intentionality, noema, etc.).²¹

But how is it possible that Levinas can point out the ways in which the Other eludes such phenomenological categorizations? Has he not apprehended the Other at least sufficiently enough to recognize that all these phenomenological characterizations fall short of or distort the true sense of the Other? Levinas, it would seem, must presuppose a type of phenomenological reflection to which the Other is given enough that one can determine the unsuitability of all previous phenomenological conceptions to this given. As Husserl utilized phenomenological theory to go beyond theory itself to phenomenological theory, Levinas's phenomenology probes even more radically, even to the point of unsettling phenomenology itself. By being absolutely phenomenological and returning to the "things themselves," Levinas penetrates into a domain where phenomenology itself no longer works. As such, he proves himself the eminent phenomenologist he is. Levinas himself, speaking of philosophy in general, highlights this paradox: "The fact that philosophy cannot fully totalize the alterity of meaning in some final presence or simultaneity is not for me a deficiency or fault. Or to put it another way, the best thing about philosophy is that it fails. It is better that philosophy fail to totalize meaning—even though, as ontology, it has attempted just this—for it thereby remains open to the irreducible otherness of transcendence."²²

Of further relevance to this question of the phenomenological character of Levinas's work is Jean-François Lyotard's essay "Levinas' Logic." Lyotard detects similarities between Levinas and Kant in that both were interested in safeguarding the specificity of prescriptive discourse. Just as Levinas understands ethical expressions such as "Welcome the alien " as having their own authority in themselves, so Kant argues that the principles of practical reason are independent of those of theoretic reason and that one cannot draw the principle of prescriptive reason from

any object language. It is, however, the differences between Kant and Levinas that are most instructive.²³

Lyotard distinguishes between prescriptive and denotative statements. Prescriptions issue a straightforward order, such as "Close the door," and ask not to be commented on but to be executed. Denotations involve commentary on orders, descriptions, explanations. Commentators, instead of going to close the door, might ask how it is possible for a prescriptive statement to produce an act instead of (or as well as) its intellection, and in so doing they transform an immediate prescriptive into a "metalinguistic 'image' of the expression." Denotative transcriptions effectively neutralize the executive force of an order. Recipients and executors of commands are mere addressees, but when they assume the role of commentator on these commands, they become addressers. When philosophers embark on such commentary on prescriptives, even when they find such prescriptives valid, they dissolve ethics by making it pass under the jurisdiction of the true. Readers, in confronting commentaries such as Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, find themselves addressed by denotative propositions requiring them to understand and assent or dissent, but not to do. They read, not orders, but declarations that certain orders are valid norms. As Lyotard sums it up, "the statement of an obligation is not an obligation."²⁴

But, Lyotard points out, Kant does not and cannot sufficiently ensure the specificity of prescriptive statements. The addressee of the moral law ceases to be in the position of the Thou to whom the prescription is addressed once that addressee partakes in Kant's discourse. Rather, the addressee now becomes the I who delivers an opinion as to whether a prescription is or is not universalizable. In effect, Levinas focuses his attention on the experience of the prescriptive statement as it confronts us, before our later description and analysis of the prescription will test whether we can convert that prescription into a universal norm. Prescriptions can become norms only if they can be rewritten as universal norms, and, of course, philosophical reflection is absolutely necessary to establish such universality and to distinguish rational from irrational prescriptions. But two different attitudes are at play when one receives a prescription and when one reflects on whether that prescription is validly universalizable. For Levinas,

"the simplest prescription, instructively empty but pragmatically affirmative, at one stroke situates the one to whom it is addressed outside the universe of knowledge."²⁵

Lyotard's essay clarifies a new dimension of Levinas's thought, beyond his careful and original exposure of the unique way in which the Other, the "*object*," comes to appearance, underneath the theoretical constructs that level out the Other's height. The *subject*, faced with the Other's prescription, has the experience of being bound to the Other, seized by the presence of a Thou, before the subject ever begins to reflect upon that prescription. This attitude on the part of the subject differs radically from the attitude of reflection on prescriptions in which one enters a universe of denotative propositions, weighs the grounds for universalizing such prescriptions, and issues statements requiring their addressees not to act but to understand and to agree or offer counterarguments. Levinas, with Lyotard's exposition, would seem to be engaging in the delicate phenomenological process of disentangling the differing subjective attitudes through which objects present themselves, correlative, of course, to different objects appearing to those attitudes. Here again, Levinas's effort is analogous to Husserl's endeavor to specify the kinds of rational procedures and modes of apprehending appropriate to different regional ontologies.²⁶

But one might still take exception to Lyotard's contrast of Kant and Levinas. After all, isn't Levinas *describing* the Other and the obediential attitude the Other evokes? Isn't Levinas, like Kant, bringing the prescriptive under the dominion of denotative discourse? For all his revealing insights, doesn't Levinas's very discourse neutralize and conceal the force of the Other's solicitation? Does the very form of the discourse betray the very topic it discusses? Jacques Derrida poses several of these questions to Levinas and thereby exacts the ultimate and most profound self-reflection on Levinas's own project and its phenomenological/rational nature.

Derrida formulates many of these questions in his critique of *Totality and Infinity* in his famous essay "Violence and Metaphysics." He interprets Levinas as attempting to open toward the beyond of philosophical discourse by means of philosophy. But Levinas encounters problems when he attempts to express his

findings in language. Since Levinas feels compelled to renounce all language as totalizing, Derrida charges that he cannot speak positively of Infinity as infinite alterity and cannot employ even the words "infinite" and "Other." Since the Other cannot be translated into the rational coherence of language, thought appears stifled in the region of the origin of language as dialogue and difference. "This origin, as the concrete condition of rationality, is nothing less than 'irrational,' but it could not be 'included' in language." Derrida classifies Levinas as an empiricist, who dreams of a pure presentation of the purely given—as Hegel presented empiricism in his *Encyclopedia*, a dream which must vanish at daybreak, as soon as language awakens. In addition, Levinas appears to be caught in a dilemma with respect to phenomenology. Either he deprives himself of the very foundation and possibility of his own language by not permitting the infinitely Other to be given through an intentional modification of the ego, as Husserl does—that is, with reference to any transcendental perspective. Or his metaphysics presupposes the very transcendental philosophy that it seeks to put into question.²⁷

Levinas clearly took account of these questions before writing *Otherwise Than Being*, although, as Robert Bernasconi observes, he never explicitly recognizes Derrida's contribution. Levinas admits quite freely that he thematizes that which eludes thematization, subsuming under being that which is otherwise than being: "The very discussion which we are at the moment elaborating about signification, diachrony and the transcendence of the approach beyond being, a discussion that means to be philosophy, is a thematizing, a synchronizing of terms, a recourse to systematic language, a constant use of the verb being, a bringing back into the bosom of being all signification allegedly conceived beyond being."²⁸

Our descriptions of the Other never grasps the Other; it grasps only a "trace" in which the Other is both revealed and hidden, in which the Other obsesses the subject without staying in correlation with the subject. The Other orders me before appearing. When faced by the inscrutable Other, all language stands "under erasure," as Derrida would put it. A presence is given which is the shadow of itself; that which is absence comes to pseudo-presence; a being lurks in its trace. Just as the trace escapes the dilemma of

either revealing or concealing by doing both, so Levinas's phenomenology is a hybrid, both phenomenology and not phenomenology, because of the Other facing it. Levinas pushes phenomenology to its extreme and thereby uncovers that which revises the significance of all phenomenological categories. This very undoing of phenomenology depends on the rigorous application of the phenomenological spirit.²⁹

In fact, these paradoxes lead Levinas to conceive philosophy itself in novel terms. What is shown in the said is shown by betraying its meaning, but philosophy's task now becomes that of reducing that betrayal.

It [God or me Other] is non-thematizable, and even here is a theme only because in a said everything is conveyed before us, even the ineffable, at the price of a betrayal which philosophy is called upon to reduce. Philosophy is called upon to conceive ambivalence, to conceive it several times. Even if it is called to thought by justice, it still synchronizes in the said the diachrony of the difference between the one and the other, and remains the servant of the saying that signifies the difference between the one and the other as the one for the other, as non-indifference to the other. Philosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love.³⁰

Husserl, as we have seen, found himself driven by a demand for rational accountability to go beyond the theories of science and logic to uncover the horizons of those theories, the life-world. Reason's own desire for accountability impelled him to describe the conditions for these other theories through a new theory—phenomenological theory. Levinas, compelled by a similar urge for accountability, finds himself prodding phenomenology itself to its limits, until it arrives at the Other who evokes, conditions, and questions all theory, including phenomenology itself. This Other, which phenomenology finds, this "object," throws every theoretical attempt to come to grips with it off-balance. What Levinas has unveiled is an "object" that shows the unsuitability of every framework and theoretical attitude for comprehending it. This unique object revolutionizes philosophy, shattering its pretensions and prescribing for it the humble but ever vigilant role of reducing the betrayal of the saying in the said and of conceiving ambivalence over and over again. Who would not recognize in

these paradoxical findings of Levinas's the spirit that animated Husserlian rationalism? One is to return to the things themselves without presuppositions and allow those things to dictate the appropriate theoretical-philosophical outlook through which they are to be approached. This self-reflection on the "access through which" takes two different directions in the phenomenologies of Husserl and Levinas. Phenomenology for Husserl constitutes the ultimate self-reflective posture, for it becomes aware of the presuppositions taken for granted by other theories and aware of itself as the only theory capable of clarifying those presuppositions. Levinas, too, shows an ultimate kind of self-awareness, an awareness that all one's efforts will never be enough, that one must remain perpetually vigilant about one's own unavoidable tendencies to betray the saying and to obscure the Other. While Husserl's self-reflection heads toward a master science, Levinas's directs us toward unending, ruthless self-critique in the presence of the Other and for the sake of the Other. Could Levinas's rational standards be set higher?

NOTES

1. Steven G. Smith, "Reason as One for Another: Moral and Theoretical Argument in the Philosophy of Levinas," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 56-62. David E. Klemm, "Levinas's Phenomenology of the Other and Language as the Other of Phenomenology," *Man and World*, 22 (1989), 410. Michael J. MacDonald, "Jewgreek and Greekjew: The Concept of the Trace in Derrida and Levinas," *Philosophy Today*, 35 (Fall 1991), 225. Emmanuel Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1982), p. 143.

2. Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 14. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. 183. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), p. 28. Theodore De Boer, "An Ethical Transcendental Philosophy," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 83.

3. De Boer, "Ethical Transcendental Philosophy," pp. 86, 89, 104, 105, 106. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 110, 129. Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, pp. 139-40. Emmanuel Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1982), pp. 23-24.
4. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 141.
5. "The Vienna Lecture," in *ibid.*, pp. 286-87, 295-99.
6. *Totality and Infinity*, p. 28.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 43, 101, 199-201, 213-15. *Otherwise Than Being*, pp. 51, 53-54, 63-64, 66-69, 76-77, 80, 136, 150.
8. *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 35-36, 80-81, 289-90.
9. *Otherwise Than Being*, pp. 45, 53, 64.
10. *ibid.*, pp. 53, 45, 64. De Boer, "Ethical Transcendental Philosophy," p. 107.
11. *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 117, 119, 121, 159. Stephan Strasser, *Jenseits von Sein und Zeit: Eine Einführung in Emmanuel Levinas' Philosophie* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), p. 10.
12. *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, pp. 139-40. "Vienna Lecture," p. 286. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), pp. 1-6, 11. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier; London: Collier Macmillan, 1931), pp. 74-88.
13. *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 82-88.
14. *ibid.*, p. 201.
15. *ibid.*, pp. 53-100, 194-219 (particularly 99-100, 201-203, 218, 219). *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 121.
16. *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 73, 219. *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, p. 19.
17. *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 48.
18. *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 50-51, 66-67, 74, 90. *Otherwise Than Being*, pp. 47-48, 53, 96, 111. Emmanuel Levinas, "Phenomenon and Enigma," *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p. 70. De Boer, "Ethical Transcendental Philosophy," pp. 105-106.
19. De Boer, "Ethical Transcendental Philosophy," pp. 105-106. Adriaan Peperzak, "Some Remarks on Hegel, Kant, and Levinas" in *Face to Face with Levinas*, p. 210. Alphonso Lingis, "The Sensuality and the Sensitivity," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, p. 227.
20. *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 61-62.
21. *Otherwise than Being*, pp. 10, 15. See *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*; pp. 27-28, 115, where Levinas repeats the fundamen-

tal principle of phenomenology that objects prescribe methods of investigation. Husserl, *Ideas*, pp. 389-90.

22. Levinas and Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," p. 22.

23. Jean-François Lyotard, "Levinas' Logic," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, pp. 131-33, 152.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26, 130, 144, 145, 152.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 142, 147, 153.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

27. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 110, 114, 125, 127-28, 133, 151.

28. *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 155.

29. Robert Bernasconi, "Scepticism in the Face of Philosophy," in *Re-reading Levinas*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 159. *Otherwise Than Being*, pp. 90-94. Jan de Greef, "Scepticism and Reason," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 167-68. J. Claude Evans, *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 54.

30. *Otherwise Than Being*, pp. 156, 162.

31. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 152-54.