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Christopher James Eland

ETHICAL AND POLITICAL ANARCHY IN EMMANUEL LEVINAS: ETHICS AS A DISARTICULATION OF THE STATE

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Christopher James Eland

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Ethical and Political Anarchy in Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics as a disarticulation of the State

CHRISTOPHER JAMES ELAND

Tese submetida à Banca Examinadora designada pelo Colegiado do Programa de Pós-Graduação em FILOSOFIA, como requisito para obtenção do grau de Doutor em FILOSOFIA, área de concentração FILOSOFIA, linha de pesquisa Filosofia Política.

Aprovada em 09 de março de 2020, pela banca constituída pelos membros:

Profa. Ester Vaisman Chasin - Orientadora
UFMG

Prof. Leonardo Meirelles Ribeiro
UFMG

Prof. Fabiano Victor de Oliveira Campos
PUC-MG

Prof. Ozanan Vicente Carrara
UFF

Profa. Angela Cristina Salgueiro Marques
UFMG

Belo Horizonte, 9 de março de 2020.

Christopher James Eland

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Banca Examinadora

Profa. Dra. Ester Vaisman
ORIENTADORA – UFMG

Prof. Dr. Fabiano Victor Campos

Prof. Dr. Leonardo Meirelles Ribeiro

Prof. Dr. Ozanan Vicente Carrara

Profa. Dra. Ângela Cristina Salgueiro Marques

Prof. Dr. José Tadeu Batista de Souza
Suplente

Prof. Dr. José Antônio Feitosa Apolinário
Suplente

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'Tis time to fear when tyrants seem to kiss.
-Shakespeare, Pericles, Act 1, Scene 2

The mob is the most ruthless of tyrants.
-Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ

RESUMO

Este trabalho procura descrever o destino político da fenomenologia ética de Emmanuel Levinas. Ao contrário da maioria de seus contemporâneos na filosofia continental da época pós-guerra, Levinas nunca se preocupou nos debates com políticas que acontecem no nível da racionalidade política. Por isso, alguns leitores de Levinas, como Alain Badiou e Slavoj Zizek, rejeitarem o trabalho dele como uma expressão simples de um desejo utópico de um ideal ético inacessível. Mas, na minha opinião, o trabalho de Levinas é profundamente político, mesmo que não seja diretamente político. Isso significa que o seu trabalho é constantemente motivado pelo problema político do mal, como surgiu no contexto histórico século 20. Além disso, argumento que sua fenomenologia ética procura especificamente superar essa política, escapando do ciclo de racionalidade política. Esta pesquisa enfoca o modo como ocorre a oposição direta de Levinas à ordem política tradicional e culmina com um apelo a uma "sociedade pluralista" na conclusão de Totalidade e Infinito e a um "monoteísmo político" em seus escritos confessionais talmúdicos. Nessas passagens, fica claro que o trabalho de Levinas serve não apenas para criticar Heidegger e a filosofia ontológica, mas também funciona em termos mais amplos como uma crítica concreta à totalidade política do Estado. Assim, o objetivo da análise atual é orientar essa crítica do Estado no contexto da teoria política, especificamente em relação com à tradição do anarquismo político.

Palavras-chave: Levinas; Ética; Filosofia Política; Anarquia; Anarquismo

ABSTRACT

This work seeks to describe the political fate of Emmanuel Levinas's ethical phenomenology. Unlike many of his contemporaries in post-war continental philosophy, Levinas never engaged in the directly political issues at the level of political rationality. This has caused some readers of Levinas, such as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Zizek, to dismiss Levinas's work as simply utopian pining for an unreachable ethical ideal. But in my view, Levinas's work is deeply political even if it is not directly political. What I mean by this is that his work is constantly motivated by the political problem of evil as it arose in the political context of the 20th century. Further, I argue that his ethical phenomenology specifically seeks to overcome this politics by escaping the cycle of political rationality. This research focuses on the way Levinas's direct opposition to the traditional political order culminates in a call for a "pluralist society" in the conclusion of Totality and Infinity and a "monotheistic politics" in his confessional Talmudic writings. In those passages, it becomes clear that Levinas's work serves not only to criticize Heidegger and ontological philosophy, but functions in broader terms as a concrete critique of the political totality of the State. Thus, the objective of the current analysis is to orient this critique of the State within the context of political theory, specifically as his work relates to the tradition of political anarchism.

Keywords: Levinas; Ethics; Political Philosophy; Anarchy; Anarchism.

List of abbreviations for books by Levinas:

Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence (Original French)	AqE
Beyond the Verse	BtV
De L'Existence a L'Existant	EE
Difficult Freedom	DF
Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo	EI
God, Death and Time	GDT
Nine Talmudic Readings	NTR
Otherwise than Being	OTB
Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology	TIHP
Totality and Infinity	TI

List of abbreviations for articles by Levinas:

"Freiburg, Husserl and Phenomenology"	FHP
"From Ethics to Exegesis"	FEE
"Humanism and Anarchy"	HA
"Is Ontology Fundamental?"	IOF
"Jewish Thought Today"	JTT
"Judaism and Revolution"	JR
"La Substitution" (Original French)	Sf
"Meaning and Sense"	MS
"Moses Mendelssohn's Thought"	MMT
"No Identity"	NI
"Phenomenon and Enigma"	PE
"Philosophy and Awakening"	PaA
"Politics After!"	PA
"Questions and Answers"	QA
"Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism"	RPH
"Rights of Man and Good Will"	RMGW
"Substitution"	S
"The Paradox of Morality"	PM
"The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other"	RMRO
"The Rights of the Other Man"	ROM
"The State of Caesar and the State of David"	SCSD
"Utopia and Socialism"	UaS

Contents

Introduction:

At the outset of this dissertation, it is necessary to outline the circumstances in which the current project came to be developed. My interest in the work of Emmanuel Levinas began as an undergraduate as I attempted to struggle against what I perceived as a fundamental error in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*[1]. Having read Marx prior to Heidegger, despite my enthusiasm for the project of fundamental ontology, I was convinced that authentic self could not be understood outside of the social context of class consciousness. Reading the works of Heidegger's students, especially Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, it became clear to me that the pathology of solipsism ran much deeper than I had originally perceived. But while the critique that Heidegger underestimated the social dimension of human life appears in many different forms, the work of Levinas seemed the most compelling in that he continued to view Heidegger's philosophy with unquestionable reverence while attempting to overcome its deficiencies. But it quickly became clear to me, especially after reading the work of Jacques Derrida, that Levinas's critique of Heidegger was not only a critique of his former teacher, but rather was a sweeping and radical indictment of the entire philosophical tradition.

As I read commentaries on Levinas, it seemed that this sweeping indictment was often misunderstood, even by philosophers extremely sympathetic to Levinas's philosophical task. This often takes the form of readings which insist that Levinasian ethics necessarily refers to a kind of pious religious ethics or even can be considered as synonymous with Christian love originating from God as "agape". The danger of this reading, in my view, is that Levinas's critique of philosophy can be seen as a kind of advocation of mysticism and obscurantism as a preferable alternative to rigorous philosophical thinking. But a close reading of Levinas's philosophical method, in my view, demonstrates that Levinas's work functions wholly independently of any religious commitment one might hold and can in no way be reductively read as mere piety. This goes to the heart of understanding Levinas's method as an attempt to critique philosophy itself in order to achieve what he called "a return to Platonism" in his own summary of *Totality and Infinity*[2]

[1] HEIDEGGER, Martin. Being and Time. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper, 1962. Hereafter BT. (Note: for in text citations, SZ refers to the original German pagination while BT refers to the pagination of this English translation)

[2] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979. Hereafter TI.

when he submitted the text for review at the University of Paris. Levinas's task is not a rejection of philosophy in favor of religious dogmatism, but rather a rehabilitation of philosophy which seeks a strikingly different foundation than the turn towards interiority of Cartesian modern philosophy.

Connecting this rehabilitation of philosophy to the realm of political theory is a task that I began to undertake after reading the work of Simon Critchley. The current project was originally conceived as my own response to a series of lectures and seminars given by Critchley leading up to the publication of his 2007 book *Infinitely Demanding*[3]. In developing the political context of Levinas's work, Critchley focuses on the inseparability of the self and the social realm as "dividualism" rather than "individualism". While modern philosophy after Descartes embraced the interiority of the self and its corresponding political incarnation as autonomous agents of individualism, Critchley develops a conception of Levinasian political subjectivity based on the themes of resistance and humor, focusing specifically on the role of political satire to critique the internal totality of the political sphere. Critchley attributes the genesis of his own thinking on this subject to the work of Miguel Abensour, whose investigations into Levinas's connection to political anarchism will be explored in more detail in chapter 5 of the present work.

After having been introduced to Levinas's work through figures such as Critchley, Derrida and Robert Bernasconi, I was fortunate enough to study Levinas in Brazil alongside researchers who approached his work from a very different philosophical perspective. Reading Levinas through the lens of the figures of liberation theology (especially considering the influence of Enrique Dussel) provides a very different view of his work than the agnostic or even atheistic versions of Levinas described by Critchley or Derrida. But reading Levinas alongside Dussel, possibilities emerge for leveraging the force of Levinas's work against the horrors of colonialism and neocolonialism that have traditionally defined Latin American politics. While the theme of colonialism does not play a large role in the present analysis, in part due to my own hesitance to appropriate colonialist discourse for my own purposes, this is clearly a line of thought that deserves a prominent role in contemporary Levinas scholarship. My own reading of Levinas has been strongly influenced by my experience in research and countless engagements with Brazilian Levinas scholarship, especially recent works by Ozanan Vincente Carrara, José Tadeu Batista de Souza and Helder

[3] CRITCHLEY, Simon. Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance. London: Verso, 2007.

Machado Passos. But while these thinkers from a variety of philosophical and political traditions offer compelling readings of Levinas's thought, I felt it was necessary to develop my own conception of Levinasian politics which resisted certain aspects of over-formalization or over-systematization that persist in most political readings of Levinas.

During the course of this project's development, a number of events took place that caused me to approach the question of Levinas's political implications in terms of an opposition to a very specific incarnation of politics that has lamentably become rampant in our contemporary world. One of these events was the passing of Agnes Heller, whom I had the great fortune to work with at the New School for Social Research in New York. Heller's work advocates a deep commitment to the idea that while philosophy has long engaged with conceptions of evil as it has been formulated by religious thought, in the contemporary world (i.e. after Auschwitz) "demonic" evil manifests exclusively as political evil. Against Arendt's conception of the banality of evil, Heller argues that evils committed or enabled by "demonic" agents becomes radical only when married to practical political power. She notes that Nero, for example, "was a murderer on a grand scale because as Emperor of Rome he had the power to murder." (HELLER, 2011, p. 24)[4] As the technology of cruelty evolved from Nero's flames to the furnaces of Auschwitz, the scale of atrocity within reach of demonic figures expanded exponentially. This leads to the situation where in our time "modern demons are in full bloom only in the situation of power." (HELLER, 2011, p. 27) Heller's central insight, which I take as a powerful motivating force for the present investigation, is that philosophy is uniquely suited to exposing the machinations of evil, and further that in our time the evil which is most urgently vital to oppose is found in the political sphere of human life. This is why, even in her final philosophical pursuits, Heller remained firmly fixed on opposing and challenging the politics of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Heller's analysis of Orbán has strong affinities with the Levinasian politics that will occupy our investigation here. In one such commentary, which she offered in an interview on August of 2018, after resisting referring to Orbán as a "populist" she pronounced her diagnosis of his particular pathology:

> From the time he became the prime minister of Hungary, Orbán was always interested in concentrating all the power in his hands. I would describe him as a tyrant. He is a tyrant because nothing can happen in Hungary that he does not want, and everything that he wants is carried through in Hungary. This is a very tyrannical rule… Everyone who is under

[4] HELLER, Agnes. "On Evils, Evil, Radical Evil and the Demonic" in Critical Horizons 12:1, p. 15-27. April, 2011.

> Orbán must serve him and must agree with him. No counter opinion is tolerated because this is a mass society, not a class society. (HELLER, 2018)[5]

This mentality of total concentration of power that Heller diagnoses in Orbán is certainly not limited to Hungarian politics nor is it only found within western countries. Rather, this same pathology can be seen as a worldwide movement that has engulfed China, Russia, Egypt, Turkey, Brazil, England and the United States. Heller's commitment to deploy the full force of philosophical rigor against this pathology is an important perspective to keep in mind as the unmistakable practical context of the political reading of Levinas that I will attempt to develop here.

A second event which transpired during the development of the present project was an extraordinary declaration by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, as to the status of Arabs within his country. He noted: "Israel is not a state of all its citizens. According to the Nation-State Law that we passed, Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people – and them alone."[6] While the content of this declaration would be extraordinary on its own, perhaps the most troubling aspect of it is the casual and dismissive nature of his announcement, given as a banal observation posted in a matter-of-fact and nonchalant manner on social media. In stating this bluntly, only weeks prior to an election in which Arab parties had unanimously supported his opponent, Netanyahu makes reference to the Basic Law adopted by the Knesset on July 19th of 2018 which established legal priority for Jewish citizens within the country. The persecuted and marginalized status of Arabs within Israel had become codified and enshrined in law, and this status was then used by Netanyahu as a cudgel against political opponents that would side with the "lesser" citizens. This was not the first time such politics of exclusionary nationalism have been deployed in precisely this same manner, nor will it be the last. But one would expect if any people in the history of the world would understand the dangers of exactly this kind of ethnic nationalism, it would be the Jewish population of Israel. Netanyahu's claim, in my view, demonstrates a very precise problem that Levinas's work is uniquely suited to expose and critique. While Levinas himself has a troubling relationship to Zionism as a program of ethnic nationalism, which we will explore in

[5] "Ágnes Heller: Orbán is a tyrant" interview conducted by Jan Smolenski, August 13, 2018. In Political Critique. http://politicalcritique.org/cee/hungary/2018/agnes-heller-orban-is-a-tyrant/ (Accessed, 10/15/2019)

[6] "'Israel Is the Nation-State of Jews Alone': Netanyahu Responds to a TV Star who said Arabs are Equal Citizens" Haaretz Online, Mar 11, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-is-the-nation-state-of-jews-alone-netanyahu-responds-to-tv-star-who-said-arabs-are-equal-citizens-1.7003348 (Accessed 10/15/2019)

some detail regarding the works of Judith Butler and Michael Morgan in chapter 4, Netanyahu's casual dismissal of the status of Arabs in the political process of the country runs counter to the most basic principles of unconditional universal responsibility that are at the core of Levinas's phenomenology. By declaring that the State exists only for the good of one of its ethnic groups, Netanyahu joined a long and infamous list of politicians and tyrants who have deployed exactly this logic of ethnic priority to awaken what Levinas will call "elementary feelings" among the populace and stoke the flames of animosity against the most vulnerable among them.

In my view, Netanyahu's claim is entirely consistent with what Levinas would predict if the very real problem of anti-Semitism is addressed purely at the level of political rationality. That is to say, in constructing a political solution to the problem of anti-Semitism, namely the security offered by the State of Israel, the result is fated to collapse into political totality and repeat exactly the same corrupted logic of exclusionary nationalism that Israel was intended to oppose. The force of Levinas's political reflections, which will occupy the majority of the current project, is a consistent and pervasive resistance to the tendency to collapse into totality. To be clear, a Levinasian politics would not condone a collapse into totality even in cases where that totality coincides with our own immediate goals or even if those goals are necessary for our very survival. Any pursuit of these goals which confines itself to the level of political rationality will ultimately and invariably suffer this collapse into totality. But this emphasizes that in our considerations of "Levinasian Politics" we do not mean "Levinas reduced to political rationality", which would be self-contradictory. Rather, by Levinasian politics we refer strictly to the way political rationality can be resisted and critiqued in order to ward off exactly this collapse into totality. Over the course of the present project, the term Nation-State will be evoked in exactly the sense deployed by Netanyahu here linking full and complete citizenship to a particular religious or ethnic group, relegating all others to a secondary or derivative status.

Orienting Levinas's thought as a response to political problems, such as these raised today by figures such as Orbán and Netanyahu, must always avoid the temptation to engage with them at the level of political rationality. While clearly efforts must be made to develop and support alternative political institutions when faced with situations of injustice, this is not a task that can be undertaken within the present context of developing the framework of a Levinasian politics. Rather, the approach that will be taken in the present work is to read Levinas philosophically with

an emphasis on the way his ethical phenomenology intersects and informs action in the political sphere. In this way, I see the task of reading Levinas in the way proposed in the current work in terms that might be considered as parallel to Theodor Adorno's project of reimaging philosophy after Auschwitz. In *Negative Dialectics*[7], Adorno offers a profound reflection on the challenge of thinking in the aftermath of the Holocaust: "A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen." (ADORNO, 2007, p. 365) In my view, this task of rearranging thinking itself, the primary challenge for anyone who would pursue philosophy after the Holocaust, is the necessary political context in which Levinas's philosophical work functions. While he approaches philosophy in a very different way than Adorno, they each describe formidable possibilities for rearranging the basic structure of philosophical thinking in ways that seek to avoid a repeat of the history of the 20th century. In Levinas's case, this rethinking takes the form of recasting ethics as first philosophy. But it is crucial to understand that in advocating for ethics as first philosophy, Levinas is not advocating for an absolute rejection of other fields of philosophical inquiry such as metaphysics, ontology or political theory. To be clear, ethics as first philosophy does not mean ethics as the **only** philosophy. This would, necessarily, imply that ethics can be collapsed into its own totality. Rather, Levinas work seeks to question the privilege that has come to be granted to ontology as the exclusive field of philosophical thinking and which reached its pinnacle with Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. It is in this sense of Levinas's rehabilitation of philosophy itself through the project of ethics as first philosophy that the present work will focus on the way philosophical thinking can be reformulated in such a way as to avoid the tragic failings of modern philosophy that were exposed by the rise of Hitlerism. Levinas's mature philosophical project, in my view, emerges from his own profound disappointment in philosophy's inability to guard against the worst tendencies of humanity as our "elementary feelings".

What motivates Levinas, then, is not crafting a response at the level of political rationality or even traditional philosophical conceptions of ethics, but rather he attempts to explore the philosophical foundations upon which modern philosophical and political traditions are grounded. This can give the impression, and I would contend a false impression, that Levinas's work is unconcerned with

[7] ADORNO, Theodor. Negative Dialectics. Trans. E.B. Ashton. New York: Contiuum Press, 2007.

politics since he flatly refuses to be drawn into the game of offering a competing political rationality which magically grows uncorrupted from this same corrupted foundation. This is why there is a near-constant refrain in critiques of Levinas that his philosophical project lacks any concrete, practical dimension by which it can be useful beyond the confines of university classrooms and libraries. Indeed, Levinas's staunch opposition to engaging directly in politics via political rationality sets him apart from his contemporaries in post-war French phenomenology, many of whom championed rigorous and direct engagement with the political sphere. But reading Levinas as un-political or unconcerned with political issues would be a drastic failure to comprehend his philosophical project. Levinas's work, in my view, is deeply political even if not directly political. What I mean by this is that despite a resistance to political rationality, Levinas engages with political questions at a level of philosophical discourse which he views as fundamental to politics. The central hypothesis which I wish to explore in the present work is the way this resistance to political rationality coincides with another particular approach to questions within the political sphere which can be identified within the tradition of political anarchism.

At a superficial level, this might make sense because political anarchism can easily be understood as anti-political in the same sense that Levinas's work is regularly criticized. Despite anarchists' clear interest and engagement in political issues, they are frequently denounced by more traditional schools of political thought for lacking a concrete, practical dimension to their critique. But this shared disdain for traditional political rationality is not the only theme that Levinas shares with the tradition of political anarchism, as I will develop in the following chapters. My goal is not to unmask a hidden politics within Levinas's work, but rather to explore the way his work engages with the political dimension of human life in ways which harbor deep affinities with identifiable tendencies within the tradition of political anarchism. Some attention will necessarily be paid to Levinas's own personal political commitments, but the present investigation is philosophical in nature rather than biographical. Our concern, above all else, is to determine fundamental characteristics of the politics is implied by his work independent of any personal political commitment Levinas might have expressed. This does not mean, however, that we should ignore Levinas's interviews or less formal writings. On the contrary, we will spend a great deal of time analyzing these underappreciated texts in order to better understand Levinas's philosophical positions at a more accessible and applied level. But Levinas's own political views should not be seen as the only possible outcome of his philosophical positions. In particular, Levinas's decidedly

unfavorable estimation of a particular sense of political anarchism will be examined in detail in chapter 5, and this analysis will necessarily involve reading Levinas against the grain of his declared intentions.

Thus, our investigation takes the form of developing a particular reading of Levinas which emphasizes aspects which coincide with (or take their inspiration from) various themes and trends which can also be identified within the tradition of political anarchism. But in order to understand what these themes are and how they function within Levinas's overall philosophical project, we must begin by understanding the unique and remarkable way that Levinas approaches philosophical questions in general.

As such, the first chapter of this work will explore Levinas's methodology and the way he adopts and adapts elements of traditional phenomenology with his own approach to philosophical reasoning. While Levinas emerged onto the French philosophical scene as a translator and interpreter of Husserl, his personal history as a student of Heidegger is widely known. Without dwelling on the admittedly fascinating personal narrative of Levinas's philosophical education, it is important to note the way Levinas enthusiastically embraced Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology as the historical context of how opposing that project would come to define his entire philosophical career.

In the second chapter, we will explore how one particular theme that Levinas encountered in this early engagement with Heidegger, the theme of anarchy, permeates throughout his work in interesting and sometimes-conflicting ways. This will give us the theoretical framework to understand what it would mean to interpret the political fate of his ethical work in terms which echo the tradition of political anarchism.

In the third chapter, we will begin to develop elements within Levinas's thought where the political content becomes apparent, specifically focusing on a vague call for a "pluralist society" in the concluding remarks of his magnum opus, *Totality and Infinity*. Pluralism, as we will see, implies a specific kind of resistance to political rationality in that it refuses synthesis into a hegemonic whole. Drawing out what Levinas means by evoking this terminology of pluralism necessarily means elaborating a distinction between social pluralism and metaphysical pluralism, which can be roughly understood as corresponding to social diversity and ethical responsibility. Unpacking

these overlapping conceptions show how Levinas considers pluralism to be a kind of anarchic irritant which provokes and unsettles the forces of political totality.

In the fourth chapter, we will explore Levinas's problematic and inconsistent relationship to the concrete political formulation of liberalism in terms of the western nation-state. Specifically, we will explore the way Levinas offers a limited and guarded endorsement of a particular conception of the State in the specific case of Israel. Levinas's commitment to Zionism, which has become a surprisingly popular topic in recent Levinas scholarship, offers the clearest case for understanding his political implications as culminating in the western liberal nation-state. Since our purpose here is to draw out the way in which his work opposes exactly this kind of political rationality, it is first necessary to contextualize Levinas's political commitment to Zionism as including a territorial nation-state but in no way limited to territorial politics.

With these themes laid out, we will, in the fifth and final chapter, explore the way Levinas's work coincides with figures of the tradition of political anarchism. This immediately enters into a necessary ambiguity since anarchism, if it truly remains an-archic, cannot be thematized into a single exhaustive definition. To be clear, we must avoid the temptation to render political anarchism in oversimplified terms as a thematized political rationality which emphasizes an anti-political dimension. Rather, by examining an array of converging and overlapping themes, and rendering them into Levinas's own vocabulary, we find a great deal of common ground between Levinas and these traditional anarchistic figures.

While our investigation is primarily concerned with a philosophical investigation into the works of Levinas, it is worthwhile here to draw out a few biographical themes that contributed to his philosophical views. While these biographical themes will not be dealt with in any extensive manner in the present work, it is necessary to indicate the important research of Salomon Malka's biography, *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy*[8], which offers a uniquely valuable starting point to orient our investigation. Malka's book is divided into two halves, the first focusing on Places which follows the path and events of Levinas's life, and the second Faces, which focuses on the individuals who helped to shape Levinas's most basic attitudes in his personal life. Malka meticulously follows Levinas's travels from Kaunas to Strasbourg to Freiburg to Paris in order to

[8] MALKA, Salomon. Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy. Trans. Michael Kigel and Sonja M. Embree. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006.

accurately orient any particular moment in Levinas's development within its appropriate historical context. This differs from similar biographical investigations into Levinas, such as Roger Burggraeve's much more philosophically engaged biography *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace and Human Rights*[9]. Additionally, while Burrgraeve's academic background is in Catholic theology, Malka approaches the task of the biography from the perspective of a Jewish author and journalist who had personally studied under Levinas at the École Normale Israelite Orientale as a teenager. The deeply personal nature of Malka's narrative allows him to describe his earliest memories of Levinas as a "small, energetic being, like a tight ball of nerves, who paced up and down the hallways…" (MALKA, 2006, p. xxxii) Malka's perspective as a student and admirer of Levinas is pervasive throughout the text, and yet he approaches the subject with a powerful honesty that refuses to shy away from Levinas's human frailty or personal failings. While Malka's work goes into an extraordinary amount of detail regarding a number of fascinating themes and personal anecdotes, we will focus on just a few here that have a special relevance for the current project.

The first, and perhaps most important, biographical detail of Levinas's life that we should keep in mind is the time he spent in Freiburg from the Summer of 1928 to the Spring of 1929. Malka's biography portrays Levinas not as a scholarly academic pursuing theoretical interests, as one might expect of a young university student, but rather as a committed disciple who became fully invested and integrated in the personal lives of his teachers. Malka recounts Levinas's frequent visits to Husserl's home and even being hired by Husserl to give French lessons to his wife, Malvina Husserl, in preparation for their trip to Paris to present a series of lectures at the Sorbonne. Malka also elaborates on the way that Levinas became not only personally enraptured with Heidegger's philosophy, but the general atmosphere of philosophical enthusiasm that accompanied his arrival at Freiburg in the Autumn of 1928:

> Heidegger had come from Marburg, the place of his first professorship, and was in the process of unseating the master [Husserl]. In the autumn semester, the great auditorium of the university was packed. Students stormed into the courses. And each one had to reclaim his seat anew the next day. Levinas was victim to the shock and to the charm. *Being and Time* was a monument in his eyes, obligating all philosophy to pass before its eyes henceforth. And he would never renounce this first infatuation, even after the discovery of

[9] BURGGRAEVE, Roger. The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace and Human Rights. Trans. Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 2002.

> the subsequent Nazi involvements of the professor from Todtnauberg, and still even after the polemics over this involvement. (MALKA, 2006, p. 40)

Malka further explores varying conflicting accounts of Levinas's participation in the great encounter between Heidegger and Cassirer at Davos in March of 1929. One of the most remarkable versions of these events comes from Maurice de Gandillac, one of the young participants in the debate, who describes the youthful exuberance of Levinas at the event as a "fervent disciple" of Heidegger that showed a devoted reverence for Heidegger when discussing leading a discussion group for French students examining *Being and Time* at the event. (MALKA, 2006, p. 48)

Malka's description of Levinas at this crucial point in his philosophical formation clearly establishes not just a passing intellectual interest in Heidegger's project, but a fanatical devotion that helps us understand the profound sense of betrayal Levinas suffered when Heidegger's political commitments came to light. And yet, as Malka stresses, Levinas's disappointment does not result in outright rejection of the project of fundamental ontology but an attempt to rehabilitate its structure outside of the "climate" of Heidegger's thought. Malka's insight is especially important given Levinas's own reluctance to elaborate on this early enthusiasm in his mature works. While Levinas had begun a book on Heidegger around this time, only a fragment of which has ever been published (as "Martin Heidegger and Ontology"[10]), there is scarcely little published material that conveys this early commitment to Heidegger's project for obvious reasons. As such, Malka's thorough accounting for this period of Levinas's life is indispensable to the current project.

Another theme that is worth mentioning in the context of the present work that is explored at length in Malka's biography is the role of Russian literature on his earliest philosophical reflections. Quoting Levinas from an interview with François Poirié, he notes that in response to the question what compelled him to study philosophy, Levinas declared:

> I think that it was first of all my readings in Russian, specifically Pushkin, Lermontov, and Dostoyevsky, above all Dostoyevsky. The Russian novel, the novels of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, seemed to me very occupied with fundamental things. Books shot through with anxiety—with an essential, religious anxiety—but readable as a search for the meaning of life. (LEVINAS apud MALKA, 2006, p. 21)

[10] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Martin Heidegger and Ontology" in Diacritics, vol. 26 no. 1, 1996, p. 11-32.

Levinas's deep roots in Russian culture are a subtheme to the present work that should be kept in mind as the background context of our attempt to approximate his ethical phenomenology to a particular vein of anarchic politics. Especially in the case of Tolstoy, whose particular brand of anarchism we will explore in chapter 5, this proximity to a particular way of thinking has been traditionally underappreciated within Levinas scholarship. This subtle Russian socio-cultural context of Levinas's work tends to be overshadowed by his unquestionable commitment to French culture and more specifically as a member of the Jewish minority within that culture. However, it is worth remembering that the first language Levinas spoke in his home was Russian and that the earliest years of his childhood were spent within the politically tumultuous Russian Empire, which eventually fell to the Russian Revolution in 1917. Levinas's connection to France was only developed much later, as he left home to attend the University of Strasbourg in 1923 at the age of 18. Malka even notes that Levinas's choice to study at Strasbourg was motivated by the fact that it was geographically the closest city to his home in Kaunas. As we explore Levinas's proximities to themes within Russian politics and literature, this early formative experience with Russian culture might be seen to take on renewed relevance than would otherwise appear within a strictly philosophical analysis of the content of Levinas's formal work.

A final biographical theme that Malka develops that can help orient the present analysis is his extensive account of Levinas's relationship to "the mysterious wandering Jewish genius and Renaissance man" known by the adopted pseudonym Mordechai Chouchani. Especially in developing Levinas's conflicting relationship to the conception of territorial Zionism in the 4th chapter of the present work, the influence of Chouchani's universalist message of Judaism which transcends territoriality will become crucial. And yet, since Levinas does not interact with Chouchani in a formal philosophical way, with virtually all of their communion taking place in private conversations, Malka's insight is uniquely useful for tracing out this influence.

The mystery and legend of Chouchani, whose real name and origins prior to the Holocaust remain unknown, is furthered by Levinas himself. Malka notes the difficulty in getting Levinas to elaborate on the role of Chouchani in his personal or philosophical life:

> Levinas never had much to say when we tried to get him to talk about Chouchani. He came to know him in the years following the war, through Dr. [Henri] Nerson, invited him to stay in his home, rented a room out to him at the Enio below his apartment, and spent many nights, for almost three years, under his tutelage… Everywhere he went, he was surrounded

> by small groups of students to whom he would impart lessons in the Bible or Talmud in exchange for room and board and occasionally for money. And everywhere, in the four corners of the world, he left his disciples—among them, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel—with the memory of a man of prodigious erudition and unparalleled teaching. (MALKA, 2006, p. 155-6)

Malka elaborates, drawing on interviews and his own research with Levinas's friends and colleagues such as François Poirié, that his engagement with Chouchani produced a profound shock the most basic elements of his philosophical thought. Malka notes:

> Levinas was always interested in his Judaism. "As in my own substance," he said. And he never gave it up. No doubt something like a distancing can be observed between 1923, the date of his arrival in Strasbourg, and in 1933, a decisive date for him. It is the only period in which he managed a few Jewish readings, busy as he was learning French, before beginning his apprenticeship in philosophy. But, even including the years of his stay in Strasbourg, he would return every summer to Lithuania where he reestablished contact with his roots, his family, and the traditional library of his parents. Therefore, he found himself at a certain distance during this period, but nothing more than a distance. He never experienced either "true ruptures" or "true recoveries." This time-continuum suffered only two shocks, two jolts, two blasts of the alarm clock: 1933 with Hitler's rise to power, and 1945 with his encounter with Chouchani. (MALKA, 2006, p. 159)

Malka's insight into the role of this itinerant mystic who passed through Levinas's life briefly, and yet left him with an indelible mark of renewed interest and enthusiasm for Talmudic readings, is crucial in that Levinas himself does not elaborate any formal account of this influence. While the current investigation is primarily concerned with the formal aspects of Levinas's thought, the historical context and the role of Chouchani must be taken into account in order to understand what is at stake in his philosophical engagement with traditional Jewish themes. In this, Chouchani's appearance as a wandering mystic without a fixed home takes on a special relevance, especially in the context of how Levinas understood Zionism in its universal sense rather than applying to a specific territorial nation-state.

But these biographical themes, while they do provide important historical context for our reading of Levinas's work, will not be a major focus of the chapters that comprise the current analysis. Rather, our interest is how his philosophical work can be read politically and how his phenomenological investigations intersect with practical considerations within the political dimension of human life. In my view, regardless of Levinas's own personal political commitments, the logical endpoint or fate of his philosophical account of exteriority is best understood as a kind of anarchic politics of resistance against the tendency of the State to close over into its own self-

sufficient totality. In my view, Levinas's work provides a framework which is fully capable of explaining the particular pathology of how this closing-over occurs and provides a sketch of how exactly that pathology can be address in terms that extensively align with parallel themes within the tradition of political anarchy.

Chapter 1: Levinas's Method and the Disarticulation of Totality

In this chapter I will attempt to lay out Levinas's basic methodological approach and show how his thought orients itself around the very specific theme of the disarticulation or disruption of totality. Levinasian terminology, in a style similar to Heidegger, utilizes common everyday concepts in distinctly uncommon ways to draw out a connection between the abstract philosophical realm and the tangible realm of lived experience. Terms like face (*visage*), ethics (é*thique*), and religion (*religion*) are all used in ways that evokes the immediate and familiar meanings of these terms, but harbor deeper themes that must be unpacked and laid bare in order to fully appreciate their philosophical relevance. By drawing out these themes and the way they function within Levinas's overall project, we can better understand the way a political reading of his work must necessarily focus on the disruptive role of ethical responsibility. The major methodological theme we must first explore is phenomenology, especially in Levinas's appropriation and adaptation of both Husserlian and Heideggerian themes as part of his own philosophical project. We will then examine the theme of religiosity as a methodological tendency of Levinas's work and attempt to respond to critiques which accuse him of abandoning philosophical rigor in favor of religious piety. I will attempt to show that this critique misunderstands the distinctly secular or social nature of his religious language, which will become an important theme in a later chapter examining the secular context of his account of "political monotheism" in his Talmudic commentaries. Levinas deploys religious terminology in distinctly secular ways. By elaborating the way that Levinas draws on a phenomenological method and a certain kind of religiosity, it becomes clear that he is not dogmatically beholden to either of these traditions, and yet each makes its own vital contribution to the way he approaches philosophical questions.

I. Levinas and Phenomenology: Part 1 - Husserl

Defining phenomenology is notoriously problematic because there are two overlapping ways to understand the term. In its rigid, formal sense, phenomenology is a particular philosophical methodology which is announced in the work of Edmund Husserl. In its loose, informal sense,

phenomenology is a movement within philosophy which favors first-person description of experience over speculative abstraction. This means that phenomenology might easily be identified in various thinkers who diverge radically from Husserl's formal work or even within the work of thinkers who preceded Husserl's formalization into a method entirely. Further, this second informal sense of phenomenology is so broad that it might even be used to describe contemporary philosophers who are only tenuously attached to Husserl's methodology (such as Hannah Arendt or Herbert Marcuse). By looking at the way Levinas describes his own approach to phenomenology, as well as looking at key methodological texts from Husserl and Heidegger, we can come to a better understanding of how Levinas both adopts and adapts phenomenological methodology for his own philosophical project.

In his best-known works, Levinas never directly addresses methodological questions and leaves his approach open to a wide range of interpretations. But in a few lesser-known treatises and interviews, Levinas makes clear his continued adherence to phenomenological principles despite his own misgivings about the limitations of that approach. Perhaps the most extensive methodological discussion in all of Levinas's published writings is from a March 1975 interview with a group of Dutch philosophers upon being awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Leyden[11]. One of the Dutch participants, Theodor de Boer, would go on to publish his highly influential book *The Development of Husserl's Thought* only a few years after the interview and presents an important challenge to Levinas's method from the perspective of someone who remained closer to the Husserlian tradition. De Boer's lengthy question, which Levinas indicates he had reviewed in written form prior to the event, focuses on the degree to which Levinas adhered to a phenomenological method in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*[12]. De Boer notes that Levinas admits to following Husserl's transcendental method in *Totality and Infinity* and asks if ethical language supplants phenomenology in this later work. He asks:

> Do you not give ontology too much credit with the central position that you give to the problem of the ineffability of the metaphysical dimension? You say that language translates as well as it betrays. If ethical language is adequate to metaphysical problems, the reverse does not hold true for ethical language. And does this not signify that the exploration of

[11] Originally published in *Le Noveau Commerce* 36-37 (Spring 1977), republished as "Questions and Answers" in Of God Who Comes to Mind. Trans. Bettina Bergo, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. Hereafter QA.
[12] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006. Hereafter OTB.

> ethical language could offer new possibilities for expressing the relation with the Infinite? (QA, p. 87)

Levinas's answer to this question, which comprises almost a short essay on methodology, offers a key insight into the methodological coherence between Levinas's two great works. Further, it sheds light on how he came to view phenomenology in retrospect towards the end of his career and to what degree he viewed his work as remaining loyal to the program that enthralled him in the 1920s. Thus, we will examine his answer in some detail here. He notes:

> These are fundamental questions. What is said in the preface of *Totality and Infinity* remains true, all the same, to the end for me with respect to method. It is not the word 'transcendental' that I would retain, but the notion of intentional analysis. I think that, in spite of everything, **what I do is phenomenology**, even if there is no reduction, here, according to the rules required by Husserl; even if all of the Husserlian methodology is not respected. (QA, p. 87, emphasis added)

Here we see a number of themes which converge and offer a dramatic insight into how Levinas came to view his own philosophical project in 1975. The first is that he rejects the distinction between his early and late methodology, which is a criticism that often follows a narrative of Derrida's critique of TI in *Writing and Difference*[13] spawning a radical shift in Levinas's thought. But here Levinas makes clear that what unites his two great works is a shared commitment to phenomenology, and specifically to the distinctly Husserlian theme of intentional analysis.

Here we can step back and return to Husserl's own texts to better understand this passage. At the most basic level, the term phenomenology denotes the study of phenomena, or that which appears to us, and centers on a first-person description of the structure of experience which seeks to lay bare the underlying structure of that experience as it appears to consciousness. Husserl attempts to achieve this by focusing on intentionality, or the intentional content of consciousness, which is not reducible to the intents or intentions of a subject, but rather is itself a kind of transcendence. This term is clearly highlighted as central in his famous the Encyclopedia Britannica[14] article defining the key points of phenomenology:

> The terminological expression, deriving from Scholasticism, for designating the basic character of being as consciousness, as consciousness of something, is intentionality. In unreflective holding of some object or other in consciousness, we are turned or directed towards it: our *"intentio"* goes out towards it. The phenomenological reversal of our gaze shows that this "being directed" (*Gerichtetsein*) is really an immanent essential feature of

[13] DERRIDA, Jacques. Writing and Difference. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

[14] "'Phenomenology' Edmund Husserl's Article for the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1927): New Complete Translation by Richard E. Palmer", Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, 2:2, pp 77-90

> the respective experiences involved; they are "intentional" experiences. (HUSSERL, 1927, p. 78)

Here Husserl clearly is drawing on the work of Franz Brentano and his own almost identical passage on intentionality from *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*[15]. In that work, written 30 years earlier, Brentano wrote:

> Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference [or relation] to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood as a reality), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. (BRENTANO, 1995, p. 88)

This conception of intentionality, derived from Brentano and systematized by Husserl, will become the defining feature of phenomenological analysis and it is this feature that Levinas claims is the common thread that runs through his own continued adherence to phenomenology. For Husserl, intentionality does not mean "what I intend to do" but rather, following Brentano and the Medieval Scholastics, a reaching outward beyond one's own consciousness. This directionality of consciousness is the key to Husserl's project of developing a science of consciousness which rivals the pure science of other disciplines.

When Levinas states that the retention of this methodological adherence to "intentional analysis" as the source of his work's persistent phenomenological character, he is clear to affirm that it does so "even if there is no reduction". By this he means that he rejects what Husserl called the phenomenological reduction or *epoché*, which seeks to bracket or abstain from drawing conclusions about the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*) based on prejudice or preconceptions. This, Husserl insists, is more positivistic than the work of positivistic philosophy, since epistemologically the only "thing" we have direct access to is the content of our consciousness. By positing an external natural world, positivism begins from a metaphysical abstraction that Husserl would have his pure science avoid. But this does not mean that consciousness itself is "pure" in the Cartesian sense of the abstract thinking subject reflecting on a priori certainties. Rather, for Husserl, consciousness is always conscious of something, which is to say that consciousness is always directed towards its

[15] BRENTANO, Franz. Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint. Trans. Antos C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and Linda L. McAlister. London: Routledge, 1995.

object. Intentionality is the term which attempts to capture this directionality of the relationship between subject and object and allow the phenomenological description of the structure of experience.

Levinas's most directly Husserlian work, from his early encounters with phenomenology at Freiburg, focus on the importance of intentionality as the core insight of Husserl's work. In a 1929 article "Freiburg, Husserl, and Phenomenology"[16], he notes that against the traditions of modern philosophy (mentioning Hume, Berkeley, and Mill specifically) phenomenology need not consider human facts to be like things. He notes:

> Phenomenologists understood their first task to be the determination of the true nature of the human, the proper essence of consciousness. We know their answer: everything that is consciousness does not turn in upon itself, like a thing, but tends toward the world. What is supremely concrete in man is his transcendence in relation to himself—or, as the phenomenologists say, intentionality. (FHP, p. 34)

While Levinas will go to great lengths to break from elements of Husserl's phenomenology this conception of a transcendence at the core of intentionality will remain a fundamental insight which continues to be a guiding force for all his mature philosophical project. He goes on to insist, with Husserl, that this transcendental ground is only accessible through a phenomenological method of intentional analysis: "Phenomenologists consequently maintain that the world itself, the objective world, is not produced on the model of a theoretical object, but is constituted by means of far richer structures which only these intentional feelings are able to grasp… *intentionality* is the concrete element starting from which the world must be understood." (FHP, p. 35) In similar reflection 48 years later, entitled "Philosophy and Awakening"[17], Levinas makes clear that his own break from Husserl focuses exactly on the way phenomenology is incapable of grasping the human other, noting: "The explication of the meaning that an ego other than me has for *me*—primordial me—describes the way in which the Other wrenches from me my hypostasis, from the *here*, at the heart of being or the center of the world where, privileged, and in this sense primordial, I posit myself." (PaA, p. 177) For Levinas, this maintains aspects of Husserl's central insights into intentional analysis, but cuts to the core of how Husserl understood human subjectivity (or hypostasis in

[16] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Freiburg, Husserl and Phenomenology" in Discovering Existence with Husserl. Trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998. Hereafter FHP.
[17] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Philosophy and Awakening" in Discovering Existence with Husserl. Trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998. Hereafter PaA.

Levinas's vocabulary) in terms of a dynamic directionality of consciousness rather than as a static characteristic of that consciousness.

By insisting that his work remains phenomenological without adhering to the Husserlian *epoché*, Levinas makes clear that he views intentional analysis as the key concept which remains pertinent even outside the rigid methodology prescribed by Husserl. He continues the above passage from the Leyden interview showing the sweeping range of this conception of phenomenology:

> The dominant trait, which even determines all those who no longer call themselves phenomenologists today, is that, in proceeding back from what is thought toward the fullness of the thought itself, one discovers—without there being any deductive, dialectical, or other implication therein—dimensions of meaning, each time new. It is this analysis that seems to me to be the Husserlian novelty, and which, outside of Husserl's own methodology, is a lasting acquisition for everyone. (QA, p. 87)

While Levinas himself refers to his own project as "phenomenology", his own definition of the term would allow him to find its defining characteristics even in the works of philosophers who are themselves hostile to phenomenological methodology. By focusing on this process "from what is thought toward the fullness of thought itself", Levinas is able to remain faithful to the idea of phenomenology as beginning with the description of first-person experience as a way to access hidden levels of meaning or signification embedded within that experience. Intentional analysis, then, does not begin by positing an underlying essence which might be unmasked through the description, but rather it proceeds by examining the structure of one's own experience in order to lay bare the layers of meaning which are at play.

Levinas makes clear that his own understanding of phenomenology differs from that of Husserl in that there is nothing like the "natural attitude" to overcome. For Husserl, the natural attitude is a basic assumption of the concreteness of the external world, which is part of an unreflective and passive acceptance of apparent realities. As Husserl defines it in an appendix contributed to Eugen Fink's *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*[18]:

> Nevertheless, in the natural attitude, in which for ourselves and for others we are called and are humans, to everything worldly there belongs the being-acceptedness: existent in the world [*in der Welt seiend*], in the world that is always existent beforehand [*im voraus seienden*] as constant acceptedness of a basis. So also man's being is being in the world

[18] FINK, Eugen. Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method. Trans. Ronald Bruzina. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

> that is existent beforehand. In phenomenology this being-beforehand [*Im-voraus-Sein*] is itself a problem… (FINK, 1995, p. 166)

Since phenomenological methodology has as its primary goal the laying bare of the fundamental structure of experience, overcoming this natural attitude is a vital step in supplanting naive acceptance of the world with a rigorous science of consciousness. In Husserl's approach to phenomenology, intentional analysis functions via intuitive description in order to gain philosophical access to the essences of things.

Levinas addresses this, returning to the lengthy response to De Boer from the 1975 interview, that his appropriation of intentional analysis from Husserl seeks not to overcome the natural attitude, but to bring into alignment the phenomenal world and the lifeworld. He notes:

> Phenomenology is not about elevating phenomena into things in themselves; it is about bringing the *things in themselves* to the horizon of their appearing, that of their phenomenality; phenomenology means to make appear the appearing itself behind the quiddity that appears, even if this appearing does not encrust its modality in the meaning that it delivers to the gaze. (QA, p. 87)

This is a remarkable passage since it reveals the way that Levinas views the primacy of appearance, or rather the primacy of phenomenal experience, as the proper object of philosophical reflection. This is crucial to understanding Levinas's phenomenological approach as an attempt to elaborate a perspective of a direct first-person accounting for the structure of the relations to the other as a disarticulation of the self. This is a fundamental theme that appears even in Levinas's earliest works, such as *De L'Existence a L'Existant*[19], where he describes fatigue as a "particular form of forsakenness… which disarticulates the self…" (EE, p. 50, my translation) This first-person accounting for experience and intentional analysis will remain fundamental for Levinas even as he breaks from Husserl's reductive method. He clearly affirms that despite this break, post-Husserlian phenomenologists like himself remain loyal to the more fundamental aspirations of phenomenology as a discipline noting: "All those who think in this way and seek these dimensions in order to find this meaning are doing phenomenology." (QA, p. 88)

Levinas makes clear that methodology is not one of his primary preoccupations, even ridiculing the tendency to define phenomenology by its most formal aspects in an orthodox Husserlian sense. Perhaps thinking of the analytic-continental philosophical divide, his ridicule seems primarily

[19] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. De L'Existence a L'Existant. Paris: Fontaine, 1947. Hereafter EE.

aimed at philosophers who sacrifice depth for clarity in their preoccupation with methodological purity. He notes:

> I do not believe that there is a transparency possible in method. Nor that philosophy might be possible as transparency. Those who have worked on methodology all their lives have written many books that replace the more interesting books that they could have written. So much the worse for the philosophy that would walk in sunlight without shadows. (QA, p. 89)

This distaste for methodological preoccupation helps us not only understand how Levinas views his work as remaining faithful to phenomenology without adhering to a strictly orthodox Husserlian program, but also how his approach can readily appropriate elements from both Husserl and Heidegger, as well as literary sources and biblical mythology, without collapsing these approaches into a totalized systematic philosophy. The goal of his own reflections is, as he poetically frames it, to "walk in the sunlight without shadows" rather than speculate on the method by which one could escape the shadows.

He concludes the remarkable passage responding to De Boer by addressing a question as to whether the transcendental condition is explained not as a fact but as a foregoing value. Which is to say, De Boer challenges Levinas to state clearly if the transcendental condition of responsibility is a response to the lifeworld rather than a brute fact of the lifeworld. To this, Levinas affirms:

> … I am absolutely in agreement with this formula, provided that 'transcendental' signifies a certain priority: except that ethics is before ontology. It is more ontological than ontology; more sublime than ontology. It is from there that a certain equivocation comes—whereby ethics seems laid on top of ontology, whereas it is before ontology. It is thus a transcendentalism that begins with ethics." (QA, p. 90)

This conclusion, which in Levinas's typical fashion avoids mentioning Heidegger by name, takes direct aim at the ontological priority assumed in the project of fundamental ontology. Levinas is, again, distancing himself from a kind of phenomenological orthodoxy, in this case that of Heidegger. But he does so carefully by insisting that his own project does not seek to merely transpose the priority of ethics and ontology while leaving the underlying philosophical structure intact. Rather, evoking Husserl's affirmation that phenomenology is more positivistic than positivism, he seeks to show the limitations of ontology as Heidegger understands it.

But in order to understand what it means to say that Levinas remains loyal to the project of phenomenology while abandoning Husserl's methodological orthodoxy, we must examine his critique of Husserlian phenomenology from its earliest formulation. Husserl's descriptive

phenomenology functions not just by bracketing and thematically categorizing essential vs non-essential characteristics within certain experiences, but going beyond experience itself to the meaning structures which underlie those experiences. Husserl declares this early in his *Ideas*[20], noting "For experience we therefore substitute something more universal: intuition." (HUSSERL, 1983, p. 37) Husserl's goal, it must be remembered, was to rescue a broad conception of science against the growing trend of viewing science through the hegemonic lens of the exact sciences and the scientism which defined the philosophical approach of the logical positivists. As such, his concern is not primarily with raw experience itself but rather with the "more universal" event of intuition in which we can scientifically pursue presuppositionless truth. Husserl continues "In fact, we allow no authority to curtail our right to accept all kinds of intuition as equally valuable legitimating sources of cognition—not even the authority of 'modern natural science'". (HUSSERL, 1983, p. 39)

Intuition, then, can be seen as the driving force of Husserl's phenomenological method and this is why it serves as the central theme of Levinas's doctoral dissertation, which was published in 1930. *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*[21] would go on to be a highly influential work in its own right and enjoys the unique historical status as the first book on Husserl published in France. At a time when no works by Husserl had been translated into French, and only a handful of Husserl's writings were published in German, Levinas's work is rightly credited as a watershed moment in the history of French phenomenology. This work, which Levinas produced in his early 20s, served as the first introduction of Husserl's work to the thinkers that would become synonymous with French phenomenology, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur. But in his later work, Levinas admitted some shortcomings to the text, largely attributed to the lack of published materials available to him at the time. As such, in order to continue our analysis, we can turn to his own more mature reflections on phenomenological methodology in the 1964 article "Meaning and Sense"[22]. The article, which largely serves as a lengthy response to Merleau-Ponty's 1960 book *Signs*, draws out Levinas's

[20] HUSSERL, Edmund. Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book, General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology. Trans. F. Kersten. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983.
[21] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology: Second Edition. Trans. André Orianne. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995. Hereafter TIHP.
[22] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Meaning and Sense" in Collected Philosophical Papers. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. Hereafter MS.

growing appreciation for the socio-cultural horizon of phenomena and the need for incorporating this horizon into phenomenological analysis.

Levinas begins with a metaphor to establish the pregnant nature perception which is already invested with meaning structures. He notes:

> This rectangular and solid opacity would become a book only inasmuch as it bears my thought toward other data still, or already, absent - toward the author that writes, the readers that read, the shelves that store, etc. All these terms are announced, without being given, in the rectangular and solid opacity that forces itself on my sight and hands. Those absent contents confer a meaning on the given. (MS, p. 75)

Levinas is attempting to make clear that phenomenological analysis cannot attain pure objective perception in the style postulated by logical positivists, but rather functions by taking into consideration exactly these meaning structures as inseparable from any objective reality by a rote listing of apparent qualities. Following Husserl, Levinas seeks to establish a methodological foothold for analyzing experience in such a way as to incorporate these meaning structures which are always already present within any experience. What makes phenomenological analysis so appealing to Levinas, even after his radical break from Heidegger and extensive critique of Husserl, is the uniquely human dimension of finite perception as distinct from an idealized account of pure experience. He notes, returning to the theme of intuition which occupied his first writings on Husserl:

> By right reality should possess a signification from the first. Reality and intelligibility should coincide. The identity of things should bear the identity of their meaning. For God, capable of an unlimited perception, there would be no meaning distinct from the reality perceived; understanding would be equivalent to perceiving.
>
> Intellectualism - whether it be rationalist or empiricist, idealist or realist – is bound up with this conception it. For Plato, for Hume, and even for contemporary logical positivists, meaning is reducible to contents given to consciousness. Intuition, in the straightforwardness of a consciousness that welcomes data, remains the source of all meaning, whether these data be ideas, relations or sensible qualities. (MS, p. 75-6)

Human beings, in our finitude, cannot attain the radical objectivity which would accompany unlimited perception, and thus our consciousness is incapable of completely collapsing this distinction between identity and meaning. This situation, which might be understood as a limitation in the view of positivists, serves as the foundation of phenomenology and the ground upon which Husserl attempts to rebuild scientific knowledge in terms which are rooted in this conception of intuition as "the straightforwardness of a consciousness that welcomes data" rather than the

presumption of an imperceptible objective reality which remains untouched by the meaning structures of consciousness.

Levinas continues this line of thought distinguishing Husserl's conception of "categorical intuition" which he notes is where Husserlian phenomenology "breaks with sensualist empiricism" (MS, p. 76) This categorical intuition had been more fully developed in his earlier text and Levinas does not repeat that lengthy analysis, although he seems to indicate its continued relevance for his methodological perspective in this later text. The earlier text explains: "In the intuition of categorical forms, the object founded includes in itself the objects which found it. A S*achverhalt* [fact] contains, in some way, the things that constitute it; essences, on the contrary, although they are founded on sensible perception, do transcend it in some way." (MS, p. 80) He then demonstrates the concept via an example:

> Let us consider a sensible perception A and another sensible perception directed toward *a* which is part of A. As long as we stay at the level of sensible perception, we cannot conceive of *a "qua part"* of A. This would require a new intention of thought that would precisely let *a* appear qua part of A. This act, directed toward the partive character of *a*, presupposes the perception of *a* and of A and gives their unity a new sense. It is a categorical act having precisely for its object the part-whole relation. The part is in the whole and is given in the perception of the whole but not qua part, a character which can be constituted only by a founded act. (MS, p. 81)

Levinas is showing a careful and attentive understanding of phenomenological methodology here and it should not be underestimated the degree to which this early engagement with Husserl persisted in his later approach to philosophical questions. What is at stake in this passage are the dimensions of consciousness that are inseparable from any perceived object, which if it were to be abstracted from the event of perception would already undercut any methodological purity that science could hope to achieve. Here Levinas is in full agreement with Husserl's critique of positivism and seeks to show that in their attempt to exclude the role of the conscious perception of a human subject, positivism begins from a distinctly unscientific assumption. Levinas then goes on to draw out the distinction between experience and intuition in clear phenomenological terms:

> Experience is a reading, the understanding of meaning an exegesis, a hermeneutics, and not an intuition. *This taken as that* - meaning is not a modification that affects a content existing outside of all language. Everything remains in a language or in a world, for the structure of the world resembles the order of language, with possibilities no dictionary can arrest. In the *this as that*, neither the *this* nor the *that* are first given outside of discourse. In the example we started with, this rectangular and solid opacity does not later take on the meaning of being a book, but is already signifying in its allegedly sensible elements. It

> contrasts with the light, with the daylight, refers to the sun that rose or the lamp that was lit, refers to my eyes also, as the solidity refers to my hand, not only as to organs which apprehend it *in* a subject, and would thereby be somehow opposed to the apprehended object, but also as to beings that are *alongside* of this opacity, *in the midst of* a world common to this opacity, this solidity, these eyes, this hand, and myself as a body. There never was a moment meaning came to birth out of a meaningless being, outside of a historical position where language is spoken. And that is doubtless what was meant when we were taught that language is the home of being. (MS, p. 78-9, translation modified)

Levinas makes clear that his continued allegiance to the phenomenological method retains Husserl's privileged role of intuition while incorporating elements from both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, specifically drawing our attention to Heidegger's emphasis on language as the "home of being" in the closing of this passage. He also seems to be drawing inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the embodied nature of perception as a critique of the modern Cartesian subject as disembodied rationality. The emphasis Levinas gives in this 1964 article to this theme of the inseparability of consciousness and its bodily or linguistic framework of meaning structures shows Levinas's growth as a phenomenologist in the 1960s, which will be an important context to keep in mind as we discuss his growing interest in political themes during this same time period.

While Merleau-Ponty's work is not widely seen as highly influential on Levinas's earlier work, at least up to the publication of TI in 1961, "Meaning and Sense" shows Levinas's great admiration for the rigor and insight of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. In this text, in which Levinas presents his only mature reflections on phenomenological method at any great length, he draws out specific themes from Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind" in *The Primacy of Perception*[23] as especially noteworthy. He draws out Merleau-Ponty's methodological insight in detail:

> *Of itself* a look would be relative to a position. Sight would be *by essence* attached to a body, would belong to an eye. *By essence* and not only *in fact*. The eye would not be the more or less perfected instrument in which the ideal enterprise of vision, capturing, without shadows or deformations, the reflection of being would be realized empirically in the human species. Both the fact that the totality overflows the sensible given and the fact that vision is incarnated would belong to the essence of sight. Its original and ultimate function would not consist in reflecting being as in a mirror. The receptivity of vision should not be interpreted as an aptitude to receive impressions. A philosophy such as that of Merleau-Ponty, who guides the present analysis, was able to be astonished by the marvel of a sight essentially attached to an eye. In such a philosophy the body would be conceived as

[23] MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice. "Eye and Mind" in The Primacy of Perception. Trans. Carleton Dallery. Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964.

> inseparable from the creative activity, and transcendence as inseparable from the corporeal movement. (MS, p. 80)

That Levinas so easily weaves together his own vocabulary of totality and overflowing with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception is remarkable here and shows a rare degree of affinity that Levinas finds for his recently deceased colleague. But Levinas's admiration for Merleau-Ponty is not limited to this fundamental insight regarding the nature of perception as an active engagement rather than a passive reflection. Levinas goes on to praise the way Merleau-Ponty incorporates sociality into the very heart of his philosophical inquiry. Specifically, following his enthusiastic reading of Signs, Levinas finds inspiration in Merleau-Ponty's attempts to incorporate the social dimension and cultural horizon of perception into phenomenological analysis. He notes, regarding Merleau-Ponty's methodological movement from proximity to Husserl to a greater proximity to Heidegger:

> Cultural meaning is taken to occupy an exceptional place between the objective and the subjective - the cultural activity disclosing being; the one that works this disclosure, the subject, invested by being as its servant and guardian. Here we rejoin the schemas of the last writings of Heidegger, but also the idée fixe of the whole of contemporary thought – the overcoming of the subject-object structures. But perhaps at the source of all these philosophies, we find the Hegelian vision of a subjectivity that comprehends itself as an inevitable moment of the becoming by which being leaves its darkness, the vision of a subject aroused by the logic of being. (MS, p. 82)

The appeal of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological method, in its promise to break down the subject-object distinction entirely, finds an enthusiastic audience in Levinas who sees in this attempt a possible escape from a pathological trend within western philosophy. By incorporating the social horizon of all experience and intuition into phenomenological analysis, the reign of a view of human subjectivity as pure autonomy can be brought into question. This view of human subjectivity as a self-contained totality, the central theme which Levinas sought to overcome in TI, is here shown to be something which might be overcome phenomenologically. This is the central inspiration that Levinas takes from Merleau-Ponty during this crucial time period between the publications of TI and OTB as Levinas moves in the direction of inquiry which is more directly engaged with social and political questions.

II. Levinas and Phenomenology: Part 2 - Heidegger

We can better understand how Levinas breaks from Husserl by examining the way he enthusiastically embraced Heidegger's fundamental ontology in the 1920s. Heidegger himself flatly rejects the conception of phenomenology as a formal school of thought or orthodox methodology. Rather, in Heidegger's view, phenomenology refers to a style of philosophical thinking present in Husserl but also identifiable in earlier thinkers. Two of his lecture courses from the 1920s have been collected and published which trace out deep Phenomenological elements in Aristotle[24] and Kant's Critique of Pure Reason[25]. Merleau-Ponty follows Heidegger's affirmation and even more directly affirms that phenomenology can be understood in terms far beyond the formal methodology of Husserl. He offers what might well be the definition of phenomenology as it was understood in post-war France in his preface to his 1945 book *Phenomenology of Perception*:

> Phenomenology is the study of essences, and it holds that all problems amount to defining essences, such as the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness… *phenomenology allows itself to be practiced and recognized as a manner or as a style, or that it exists as a movement, prior to having reached a fully philosophical consciousness*. It has been *en route* for a long time, and its disciples find it everywhere, in Hegel and in Kierkegaard of course, but also in Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2012, p. 7-8)[26]

This broad definition of phenomenology is indicative of the philosophical style inspired by Husserl without collapsing its meaning into an orthodox methodology of a rigorous psychological science. Merleau-Ponty's insistence that phenomenology is first and foremost an interest in essences, in so far as they are philosophically accessible through the rigorous description of phenomena, helps us understand how phenomenology draws upon the foundation of traditional Greek metaphysics. Levinas's metaphysical project follows this interest in essences and attempts to get at a fundamental philosophical ground via careful and methodical description of the way experience presents itself to consciousness. While the content and methodology of phenomenological

[24] HEIDEGGER, Martin. Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. From the 1921-22 winter semester at Freiburg, Vol. 61 of the Gesamtausgabe.
[25] HEIDEGGER, Martin. Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. From the 1927-28 winter semester at Marburg, Vol. 25 of the Gesamtausgabe.
[26] MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice. Phenomenology of Perception. Trans. Donald A. Landes. London: Routlege, 2012.

description can vary wildly, the dedication to a philosophical accounting for essences is a unifying theme of what we might understand in incredibly broad terms as phenomenological philosophy.

By not following the rigid method of Husserl's psychologistic phenomenology, Heidegger gives Levinas the tools to engage philosophically with the fundamental issues of human existence without resorting to a totalized conception of the human subject as exhausted by the concept of consciousness. The project of fundamental ontology elaborated in *Being and Time* places in question the most basic assumptions of human consciousness as understood by Husserl. It is this project that enthralled a young Levinas and serves as the driving methodological influence of his mature work. Levinas, of course, will famously break with Heidegger's reification of ontology and offer his own formulation of ethics as first philosophy in its stead. But the structure of Heidegger's project is unquestionably a central influence on Levinas in that he accepts the premise that Husserl's phenomenology overly psychologizes the subject and reductively renders the human condition as human consciousness. And yet, at least in his early work, Heidegger was utterly convinced at the rigorous approach of Husserl's pursuit of a pure philosophy which can only be achieved through phenomenological description of experience rather than the abstract philosophical postulations or rationalizations of modern philosophy. In the broadest terms possible, we might understand that Heidegger's project consists of turning this methodology away from psychology and towards ontology while Levinas's central project is to turn it again from ontology to ethics.

But let us first attempt to orient Heidegger's own unique approach to phenomenology from BT in order to understand what appealed so strongly to Levinas at Freiburg. Perhaps most importantly for Levinas, Heidegger rejects Husserl's pursuit of a pure science of experience which is understood in psychological rather than ontological terms. I take Heidegger's central point of departure to be his insistence on the condition of Being-in-the-world *(In-der-Welt-sein*) not as a property of the human condition or a setting wherein Being occurs, but rather as an essential quality which is inseparable from Being itself. This Being-in-the-world is the fundamental insight which draws Levinas to Heidegger's phenomenology and must be understood in order to contextualize Levinas's own unique approach to phenomenology. Heidegger explains the significance of the term early in BT:

> … Being-in is not a 'property' which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could be with it. It is not the case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world'—a world with which he provides himself occasionally. Dasein is never 'proximally' an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' towards the world. Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only *because* Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is. This state of Being does not arise just because some entity is present-at-hand outside of Dasein and meets up with it. Such an entity can 'meet up with' Dasein only in so far as it can, of its own accord, show itself within a *world*. (SZ, p. 57: BT, p. 84)

By insisting, against Husserl, on a fundamental connectedness of self and world, Heidegger takes phenomenology in a new direction that enthralled much of Germany and even Levinas himself in the 1920s. This break categorically rejects the psychological nature of Husserl's phenomenology, especially his rendering of the human subject in terms restricted to human consciousness. Heidegger explicitly rejects this psychologism by clearly affirming that knowing is merely a "mode of *Dasein*" rather than *Dasein* itself. The implication, then, is that while Heidegger still shows a strong affinity for Husserl's central insights, the overly psychological rendering of human subjectivity fails to adequately describe the way that subjectivity is oriented by its Being-in-the-world.

The important characteristic of the way Heidegger renders his conception of Being-in-the-world is that it is understood in terms of a pre-reflective condition of human existence. As pre-reflective, it cannot be accounted for in purely psychological terms, as Heidegger makes this clear at the conclusion of the chapter: "But 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. Thus Being-in-the-world, as a basic state, must be Interpreted *beforehand*." (SZ, p. 62: BT, p. 90) The pre-reflective condition of Being-in-the-world, then, is not reducible to the psychological terms of the "natural attitude" as described by Husserl. More importantly, for Levinas, it is not reducible to a characteristic of the totality of the self, but rather in its ethical dimension necessarily involves a kind of radical exteriority which orients and calls into question the absolute sovereignty of the self. Thus, while Being-in-the-world is purely solipsistic in Heidegger's formulation, it provides the philosophical framework which Levinas appropriates in his own phenomenological rendering of the human subject as is inseparable from its ethical context.

But this is not to say that Heidegger completely discounted sociality from his account of Being-in-the-world. Sociality, or Being-with-others is rendered in Heideggerian terms as *Mitsein* (Being-with) or more importantly as *Miteinandersein* (Being-with-one-another). *Miteinandersein*, it is important to note, is also Heidegger's German rendering of Aristotle's concept of *koinonia*, which is often translated as community, association or coexistence.[27] Heidegger addresses this social dimension of Dasein briefly in BT, in ¶26 of Book 1. There, Heidegger clearly attributes a pervasive social dimension of all aspects of Dasein. He notes, in rare poetic terms for the famously dry text:

> When, for example, we walk along the edge of a field but 'outside it', the field shows itself as belonging to such-and-such a person, and decently kept up by him; the book we have used was bought at So-and-so's shop and given by such-and-such a person, and so forth. The boat anchored at the shore is assigned in its Being-in-itself to an acquaintance who undertakes voyages with it; but even if it is a 'boat which is strange to us', it still is indicative of Others. (SZ p. 118: p. BT 154)

Heidegger clearly has a profound understanding of the pervasive role Others play within the lifeworld of Dasein. In attributing all the "things" of the world in the way described in the passage, or even more broadly than the sense of ownership used here, the world is always invested with a social content even within a solipsistic encounter with objects. Heidegger's description of a boat along the shore already implies the currents of social intentionality at play beyond his own immediate experience, which he cannot encounter directly but can glimpse from afar. The Other is always present in this social context even in his absence. This is a fundamental insight within Heidegger, but again, for Levinas this perspectives does not go far enough.

Heidegger will go on to commit the unforgivable philosophical sin of collapsing this exteriority of the Other into the interiority of the same. He notes in a following passage:

> When Others are encountered, it is not the case that one's own subject is *proximally* present-at-hand and that the rest of the subjects, which are likewise occurrents, get discriminated beforehand and then apprehended; nor are they encountered by a primary act of looking at oneself in such a way that the opposite pole of a distinction first gets ascertained. They are encountered from out of the *world*, in which concernfully circumspective Dasein essentially dwells. Theoretically concocted 'explanations' of the Being-present-at-hand of Others urge themselves upon us all to easily; but over against such explanations we must hold fast to the phenomenal facts of the case which we have pointed out, namely that Others are encountered *environmentally*. (SZ, p. 119: BT, p. 115)

[27] For a remarkable investigation into the dimensions of Heidegger's translation, see Roberto Wu's article "Heidegger's Concept of Being-in-the-πόλις." In The Humanistic Psychologist, 43:3, 267-277 (2015)

Here Heidegger seems to anticipate the lines of thought that will critique his work, from Levinas and other writers who find fault in the solipsistic nature of Dasein. But Heidegger is insistent that while we must not ignore the social context of the world which Dasein inhabits, phenomenologically we have no access to this other world beyond our own first-person experience. In a sense of phenomenology which remains loyal to Husserl's program of founding a pure science, Heidegger would not have us begin from a speculation of what occurs beyond an uncrossable void. The radical alterity with which Levinas begins his philosophical critique of ontology is perceived by Heidegger here as a limitation of philosophy beyond the boundaries of the project of fundamental ontology.

It is in this sense of what phenomenology can and cannot do that occupies our interest here. For Heidegger, phenomenology is the route to ontology, as he made clear in his Marburg seminars of 1924-1925[28]. In those lectures, given shortly before his move to Freiburg and encounter with Levinas, Heidegger argues for a phenomenology of existence itself. By tracing out the root conceptions of phenomenon and logos (φαινόμενον and λόγος) in Aristotle's *De Anima*, Heidegger attempts to show that Aristotelian ontology allows no fundamental separation of appearance and existence. He uses the concept of daylight as the definitive example:

> Daylight is apparently something that lets something else be seen through it, transparent. This daylight is not itself visible, but only by means of a color, alien to it. Daylight is what allows something to be seen, namely, the actual color of the things that I have in daylight. Aristotle discovered that daylightness is not a body… that it does not move, but is instead the heaven's actual manner of existing, allowing things to be seen, the day's being. Daylight is *a manner of presence* of something. (HEIDEGGER, 2005, p. 5)

The project of fundamental ontology draws on this phenomenological reading of Aristotle as collapsing the distinction between appearance and reality. Heideggerian phenomenology, then, is best understood (at least in these early seminars from the 1920s leading up to the publication of BT) as a way of uniting Husserl's original insights with a pre-modern conception of existence as a manner of presence. This wording will come to be the core of Derrida's deconstruction of phenomenology as a metaphysics of presence, which comes after his careful reading of both Heidegger and Levinas. But what is at stake in this central preoccupation of Heidegger in the 1920s is how phenomenological analysis is not primarily psychological or epistemological, as with

[28] Published in English as Introduction to Phenomenological Research, Trans. Daniel O. Dalhstrom, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005. Gesamtausgabe, Vol 17.

Husserl, but is more fundamentally a tool for gaining philosophical access to Being itself. In identifying elements of the phenomenological method at the core of Greek metaphysics, Heidegger inaugurates a revolutionary reading of the history of western philosophy in which ontology is shown to be the central preoccupation from the very beginning of the philosophical tradition. Because Levinas tacitly accepts Heidegger's reading of philosophical history, his critique of the fundamentality of ontology is not only a critique of Heidegger himself, but more fundamentally a critique of the entire philosophical history he diagnoses based on this collapsing of the distinction of existence and presence. Because Levinas was one of Heidegger's most loyal students at Freiburg, utterly committed to the project of fundamental ontology, this way of reading the history of philosophy as primarily concerned with ontology will be one of the most influential contributions that Heidegger makes to Levinas's mature philosophical project.

Another important Heideggerian theme which motivates Levinas's phenomenological approach to philosophical questions is Heidegger's emphasis on the everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*) of Dasein. This emphasis is necessary to carry out the analytic of Dasein because, as he notes in BT, "What is ontically closest and most well known, is ontologically the farthest and not known at all; and its ontological signification is constantly overlooked." (SZ, p. 43: BT, p. 69) In this sense, everydayness signifies a kind of a ready-at-hand custom or tradition upon which one might turn to in an attempt to escape the responsibility of affirming one's own will. The appeal of avoiding responsibility, the central theme that is drawn out at great length in Sartre's exsistential phenomenology, for Heidegger is rendered in terms of being absorbed into a kind of groupthink of the They (*Das Mann*). In terms which will be often repeated by critics who find authoritarian themes within BT, Heidegger notes:

> This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into the kind of Being of 'the Others', in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the 'they' is unfolded. We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* [man] take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and arts *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as *they* shrink back; we find 'shocking' what *they* find shocking. The 'they', which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness. (SZ, p. 126-7: BT, p. 164)

We can clearly see the imminent threat of this everydayness on the analytic of Dasein, which would threaten to mistake uncritically accepted dimensions of human life such as moral norms or social customs as fundamental rather than peripheral. While Husserl's phenomenology would

attempt to ward off this tendency via the *epoché*, Heidegger cannot simply bracket off this aspect of human existence as irrelevant, and yet cannot allow it to be mistaken for Dasein itself. This is the fundamental threat of allowing ontic life to infiltrate the analytic of Dasein and provides Heidegger the mechanism by which he can turn a blind eye to ethical or political life entirely.

But in a sense, it is exactly this everydayness which gives Levinas philosophical access to the social dimension of human life which will preoccupy his own mature work. Levinas will accept the basic premise that we must not understand ethics in the sense of the formal structure of morality, which would collapse relationality to the social norms of the They. This is a distinctly Heideggerian point following the way he renders everydayness in terms of a social proximity to the other:

> But what we have primarily in mind in the expression "everydayness" is a definite "*how*" of existence by which Dasein is dominated through and through 'for life' ["zeitlebens"]. In our analyses we have often used the expression 'proximally and for the most part'. 'Proximally signifies the way in which Dasein is 'manifest' in the "with-one-another" of publicness, even if 'at bottom' everydayness is precisely something which, in an existentiell manner, it has 'surmounted'. 'For the most part' signifies the way in which Dasein shows itself for Everyman, not always, but 'as a rule'. (SZ, p. 370: BT, p. 422)

This habitual nature of sociality, the performative courtesies expected while living with others, will come to be championed by Levinas in his account of the most basic gesture of transcendence, the famed "*après vous"* to which we will return below. But where Heidegger sees this as the domination of Dasein by anonymous and impersonal social forces, Levinas finds a dimension of being which is uniquely and fundamentally human. Put another way, while Heidegger finds the existence of others and the demands of social life as a restriction on the absolute autonomy of Dasein, Levinas seeks to develop a phenomenological description of humanity which begins from this point of sociality rather than sees it as the limit of human existence.

In some sense, Heidegger's later work avoids this explicitly solipsistic understanding of the human condition, abandoning the language of Dasein for a more social terminology of "humans". These works also incorporate the social dimension of Being-in-the-world to a greater degree since his more overtly hermeneutical approach admits a greater degree of social orientation of the human subject's worldly context. While it would be intriguing to pursue this question of Heidegger's later works falling more in line with Levinas's critique of BT, Levinas never addresses these later works in any meaningful way. Thus, at least in terms of the methodological influence which occupies us

in the present chapter, it is fair to say that Levinas's Heidegger always remained the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and these later investigations never received serious consideration.

III. Levinas's Method

Now that we have examined Levinas's two primarily methodological influences from Husserl and Heidegger, we can now sketch an outline of Levinas's method and what is at stake in some of the key terms he deploys in his work. As Levinas insists, the key methodological unity between TI and OTB lies in the adherence to phenomenological description and intentional analysis. But this does not tell the whole story of Levinas's methodology and we would be remiss to understand his work in the strict sense of phenomenology as an orthodox methodology, as his work diverges strongly from both Husserl and Heidegger at key points.

One important challenge to the reading of Levinas as a phenomenologist, in this methodological sense, lies in his view of the other which must be regarded as an enigma rather than a phenomenon. For Levinas, it is exactly because the other cannot be accounted for within phenomenological methodology that its relevance escaped the astute investigations of Husserl and Heidegger. Thus, it might seem problematic to view Levinas's project in phenomenological terms given the primacy of the other which defies traditional phenomenological description. In other words, if the other cannot be accounted for via first-person description or intentional analysis, phenomenology ultimately fails to meaningfully engage with the central concept of Levinas's work since it necessarily identifies and thematizes the other as a phenomenon. But I think this would miss the point of Levinas's understanding of enigma and the degree to which phenomenology has the potential to engage with that which lies beyond the limits of one's own consciousness. Returning to the conceptions of *Mitenandersein* and the everydayness of the They in Heidegger, it is not surprising that Levinas regards the other as an enigma given that Heidegger himself withdrew in horror at the idea of the limits of one's solipsistic autonomy. But for Levinas, this is a starting point for a lifelong philosophical investigation which begins at the very limit of more traditional approaches to phenomenology. Levinas could not, of course, attempt to collapse the radical alterity of the other into the phenomenologically accessible first-person experience of the other. But in reaching that limitation, in recognizing its significance, Levinas is taking a fundamentally phenomenological position that attempts to grasp the significance of that uncollapsibility.

While the other remains beyond the reach of phenomenology, our reaction to that radical alterity and how the self is called into question provides the exact content of Levinas's phenomenological investigation into the structure of ethical responsibility. It begins and is oriented from an exteriority, but his entire philosophical project aims not at accounting for that exteriority, but rather the significance of that exteriority. This is a subtle, but fundamental distinction which allows us to understand what is at stake in Levinas's work. He is not, to be clear, attempting to render the Other in phenomenological terms, but rather, in Heideggerian terms, coming to grips with the meaning of being after the epiphany of the other. It is an epiphany exactly in the sense of an attempt to grasp which lies beyond the scope of phenomenology and yet serves as the point of orientation around which phenomenology can truly begin.

We might understand this metaphorically as the sun sitting just below the distant horizon, which still illuminates the sky despite being itself beyond the grasp of one's own visual perception. It is exactly in this sense of a distant unreachable point which provides orientation for the self that Levinas attempts to account for phenomenologically in TI. Not as an attempt to describe that which lies beyond the bounds of phenomenological description, but to better understand the significance of that point of orientation and how that orientation occurs as it relates to the phenomenologically accessible lifeworld.

In this sense, Adriaan Peperzak refers to Levinas's methodology not as phenomenology but rather as transphenomenology. For Peperzak, Levinas's work seeks to phenomenologically lay bare the "modes in which the human Other is revealed to me." (PEPERZAK, 1997, p. 4)[29] But because the Other is not a being within the totality of beings, Levinas must refer to the Other in terms which transcend phenomenality and cannot be reduced to ontological terms. This is Levinas's conception of the Face (*visage*) which is, again, metaphorical in that it refers to a visual mode of perception but is not exhausted by that conception. Levinas's account of the Face is better understood as an event or encounter which announces the radical alterity of the other. The epiphany of the other is exactly the rupture of the totalized ego which can no longer rest comfortably on its solipsistic throne and is called away from any solipsistic interiority. The presence of the other is thus necessarily an obligation or responsibility which announces an ethical demand. Levinas renders

[29] PEPERZAK, Adriaan Theodoor. Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997.

this obligation in emphatic and unequivocal terms as the biblical imperative "do not kill me". As he notes in "Is Ontology Fundamental?" [30]:

> At the very moment when my power to kill realizes itself, the other (*autrui*) has escaped me. I can, for sure, in killing *attain* a goal; I can kill as I hunt or slaughter animals, or as I fell trees. But when I have grasped the other (*autrui*) in the opening of being in general, as an element of the world where I stand, where I have seen him *on the horizon*, I have not looked at him in the face, I have not encountered his face. The temptation of total negation, measuring the infinity of this attempt and its impossibility – this is the presence of the face. To be in relation with the other (*autrui*) face to face is to be unable to kill. It is also the situation of discourse. (IOF, p. 9)

As a number of commentators have pointed out, we might take issue with Levinas's somewhat indifferent way Levinas regards the moral obligation to non-human animals or to the natural environment in general. But Levinas's position is rooted in the fundamental belief that our relation to human animals is categorically different than our relation to non-human animals or things. As he notes in a widely-circulated interview with graduate students from the University of Warwick[31]: "The human face is completely different and only afterwards to we discover the face of an animal. I don't know if a snake has a face." (PM, p. 172) This indicates a clear anthropocentrism at play in Levinas's work should not be understated or ignored, but fully investigating this prejudice is beyond the scope of the present investigation. But Levinas's point is clearly that the encounter with the face of the other is experienced as an imperative against killing. This phenomenological description of the structure of experience is the core of Levinas's philosophical insight into ethics as first philosophy. While the face of the other cannot be explained or rationalized due to its absolute alterity, phenomenologically we can describe the structure of experience as this alterity acts upon the self. Again, as with our example of describing the sunlight while the sun itself remains just below the horizon, phenomenologically we can still describe effects and actions upon consciousness even while we are blocked from accessing the thing itself directly.

Here Levinas is not concerned with the psychological processes that preoccupy Husserlian phenomenology or the action of perceiving that will be the focus of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Rather, in a more Heideggerian fashion he is interested in the pre-reflective

[30] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Is Ontology Fundamental?" in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Eds Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. pp. 1-10. Hereafter IOF.

[31] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "The Paradox of Morality: an interview with Emmanuel Levinas" (Tamra Wright, Peter Hughes, Alison Ainley) Trans. Andrew Benjamin and Tamra Wright, in The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other. Eds. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood. London: Routledge, 1988. Pp 168-180. Hereafter PM.

conditions of the encounter with the other person. Again, following Heidegger, this is fertile ground for phenomenological analysis since phenomenology is capable of much more than accessing the content of consciousness. Indeed, it is true to his roots in Heideggerian phenomenology that Levinas deploys the deceptively familiar term of "face" to describe the event of the encounter with the other, knowing that this will inevitably generate some degree of misunderstanding of its strictly metaphorical reference to visual appearance. As Heidegger frequently deployed commonly used ontic language to refer to purely ontological conditions (especially in his use of terms such as *Sorge* or *Besorgen*), Levinas deploys similarly familiar language as a way of gaining access to the very structure of experience. This tendency to use seemingly superficial language to describe deep philosophical concepts coincides with the phenomenological approach of always returning to first-person description of experience as the core of philosophical inquiry.

But since Face cannot be understood in its superficial sense of a visual representation of the other, we must render the term as it is presented in Levinas's overall philosophical framework in order to understand its full significance. Again, this returns us to the concept he presents in terms of the epiphany or enigma of the other. Or perhaps more fundamentally, it is the enigma of the other which orients an epiphany called responsibility. This dynamic is laid out in an important article, "Phenomenon and Enigma" [32], which was written in 1957, just a few years before the publication of TI. This early work develops his most extensive elaboration of the concept of enigma as it relates to his phenomenological method, and deserves close attention here.

Levinas, at this point leading up to the publication of TI, remained committed to the idea that language and discourse was the mode of transcendence that was most accessible to phenomenological description. As such, the article offers a steppingstone in the development of Levinas's critique of the fundamentality of ontology at a point in which he had not yet established his own project of ethics as first philosophy. Enigma is developed in the context of the radical alterity of the other as a moment of disarticulation, where he defines the concept of enigma in clear terms:

[32] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Phenomenon and Enigma" in Collected Philosophical Papers. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. Pp 61-74. Hereafter PE. I am grateful for the recommendation of Prof. Leonardo Meirelles indicating the relevance of this article for my project here.

> This way the other has of seeking my recognition while preserving his incognito, disdaining recourse to a wink-of-the-eye of understanding or complicity, this way of manifesting himself without manifesting himself, we call enigma - going back to the etymology of this Greek term, [Αἴνιγμα means an obscure or equivocal word, a riddle.] and contrasting it with the indiscreet and victorious appearing of a phenomenon… An enigma is not a simple ambiguity in which two significations have equal chances and the same light. In an enigma the exorbitant meaning is already effaced in its apparition. (PE, p. 66)

It is exactly in this enigmatic sense that the other defies phenomenological description in manifesting without manifesting itself. Because the other is not a phenomenon in that it cannot be identified and thematized, its meaning cannot be exhausted by phenomenological description. And yet, it is exactly this point where Levinas begins his philosophical investigation into the modes of disarticulation which are brought on via this enigma. To be clear, if Levinas's goal was to exhaustively elaborate what exactly the other is, and how the other appears to the structure of consciousness, this would be an unattainable goal following any strictly phenomenological method. However, Levinas's interest is not in accounting for the other as a phenomenon, but the intentional structure of the ethical relation. In my view, Levinas's entire philosophical project seeks to come to grips with the philosophical significance of exactly that disruptive experience of disarticulation which is brought on by the enigma of the other.

The face of the other, thus presents a unique and unthematizable challenge to the ego, which is immediately disrupted in its presumption of unbridled autonomy. But this is not to be confused with an elevation of the interpersonal relation as a new totality, as one might imagine in Buber's I-Thou relation. For Levinas, the relation to the other is invested with meaning beyond the proximal other and incorporates the third party, which is Levinas's term for a presence alongside the proximal other in the ethical encounter. This is not Heidegger's anonymous the They of *das Mann*, although it bears some resemblance to Heidegger's limited sociality of being-with-one-another of *Mitenandersein*. Levinas notes, continuing the passage above: "The human face is the face of the world itself, and the individual of the human race, like all things, arises already within the humanity of the world. This humanity is not anonymous, but is the humanity aimed at in him or her who, when his or her face shines, is just him or her one had been waiting for." (PE, p. 69) By insisting on a universality of humanity which is not an anonymous universality, Levinas seeks to describe a kind of sociality that goes beyond what Heidegger understands as the social dimension of Dasein.

What Levinas means by the third party is worth examining here in order to avoid misconceptions. In one sense, it would be easy to arrive at a political reading of Levinas via his account of the third party, as has been developed by a number of recent commentators. This is bolstered by Levinas's near constant association of the third party and justice, which in Levinas's later works is only initiated through the third party. It is in this sense that Levinas notes, in OTB: "… it is the third party that interrupts the face to face of a welcome of the other man, interrupts the proximity or approach of the neighbor, it is the third man with which justice begins." (OTB, p. 150) This sense of justice is markedly different from Levinas's earlier rendering of the term in TI, where it was evoked as a synonym of the ethical relation to the other. This is a major theme of the Warwick interview, where he responds to a question on his methodology detailing a major departure from TI in his later work:

> In Totality and Infinity I used the word 'justice' for ethics, for the relationship between two people. I spoke of 'justice', although now [*in 1986*] 'justice' is for me something which is a calculation, which is knowledge, and which supposes politics; it is inseparable from the political. It is something which I distinguish from ethics, which is primary. However, in Totality and Infinity, the word 'ethical' and the word 'just' are the same word, the same question, the same language. When I use the word 'justice' there it is not in the technical sense as something opposed to or distinct from the moral. (PM, p. 171, date added)

What changes for Levinas after TI is his rethinking of the importance of the third party as the beginning of justice, which becomes more of a social calculation rather than the immediate imperative of ethical responsibility elaborated in TI. This is why in OTB, Levinas insists that unlike the relation to the proximal other, the relationship to the third party requires "weighting, thought, objectification, and thus a decree in which my anarchic relationship with illeity is betrayed." (OTB, p. 158) But what is important for our purposes here is the way Levinas renders his conception of the third party in terms which echo the sense of disarticulation or disruption of the totality of the self. The "presence" of the third party is what disrupts the totality of the immediate relation of proximity, preventing the establishment of a new totality. He notes:

> The responsibility for the other is an immediate antecedent to questions, it is proximity. It is troubled and becomes a problem when a third party enters… The third party introduces a contradiction in the saying whose signification before the other until then went in one direction. It is of itself the limit of responsibility and the birth of the question: what do I have to do with justice? (OTB, p. 157)

This will be a crucial theme in the coming chapters and must be kept in mind in the evolving sense that Levinas deploys justice in his work. While TI maintains a conception of justice which is

synonymous with the ethical relation, in his later works justice is only introduced via the social dimension of the proximal relation as the presence of the third party. But, again, this is as a disruption which prevents the ethical relation from itself becoming a new totality.

We can find a similar line of thought, returning to the "Phenomenon and Enigma" article, in the way that Levinas insists that the enigma of the other is a "partner" of human subjectivity in terms of a disruption of its totality. In the same sense that the third party is a "partner" or copresence with the proximal other, the enigma of the other is a partner of the self. He notes:

> … enigma concerns so particularly subjectivity, which alone can retain its insinuation, this insinuation is so quickly belied when one seeks to communicate it, that this exclusivity takes on the sense of an assignation first raising up such a being as a subjectivity. Summoned to appear, called to an inalienable responsibility - whereas the disclosure of Being occurs open to universality - subjectivity is enigma's partner, partner of the transcendence that disturbs being. (PE, p. 70)

Here Levinas is functioning at the limits of phenomenological language wherein the enigma of the other must be rendered grammatically as a thing, and yet this grammatical necessity immediately betrays the fundamental unthematizable which lies at the heart of his conception of enigma. He continues: "An enigma is beyond not finite cognition, but all cognition. Cognition rests on apparition, on phenomena, which the being of beings unfolds, putting all things together by light, ordering order." (PE, p. 71) This sense of "ordering order" will become a vital clue to our understanding of Levinas's language of anarchy in his later work in the next chapter. Because cognition is incapable of adequately rendering the other as a thematizable presence, Husserl's phenomenological psychology would break against this incomprehensibility. So too would Heidegger's ontological phenomenology which must necessarily render other beings in terms of their presence as thematizable objects. By reducing the other to cognition or conceptualization of the other, they are unprepared to grasp the significance of the enigma presented to the human subject by the face of the human other.

In this sense, we can understand what Levinas has in mind when he notes, in "From Ethics to Exegesis"[33], that his own phenomenology seeks to gain access to the richness of spiritual life of the structures or modalities which lies hidden beneath consciousness conceptualization. These hidden structures and modalities, he notes "can be discerned by a phenomenology attentive to the

[33] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "From Ethics to Exegesis" in In the Time of the Nations. Trans. Michael B. Smith, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988. Hereafter FEE.

horizons of consciousness, and in this sense (despite its use of biblical and Talmudic documents and formulations) it is a phenomenology prior to a theology that would use what it has borrowed as its premises." (FEE, p. 109) In this way, it is important to remember Levinas's insistence that his work is an attempt to combine the Greek and Jewish traditions, or as he sometimes describes it metaphorically as translating the bible into Greek. What this means is that Levinas seeks to render in philosophical terms these structures and modalities which are already accessed at a fundamental level within Judaism. Levinas's insistence on a phenomenological method is clear in this passage, and it is interesting here that it appears not in his formal philosophical work but rather in one of his many Talmud commentaries. But this reinforces the idea that Levinas's goal is not to critique philosophy from a religious perspective, but rather to render concepts which are more readily accessed through religion in terms of phenomenological description.

The central theme that will occupy us in the next chapters will be this sense of what Levinas names at various points the disarticulation, disruption, disturbance or disenchantment of totality which is brought on by the enigma of the other. Since Levinas here uses distinctly theological language to describe this disarticulation, or more broadly since it is a theme which occurs frequently in his Talmudic commentaries, it is important to understand what is at stake in the way he deploys religious terminology, especially the concept of monotheism which we will address at length in relation to his call for a "political monotheism". A number of misconceptions about the nature of the religious dimension of Levinas's thought have appeared in recent criticisms leveled at his work, often arguing (incorrectly, in my view) that Levinas's task is best regarded as theological rather than philosophical.

IV. Religiosity

Alain Badiou's criticism of this aspect of Levinas thought is perhaps the most pertinent since his status as a titan of contemporary French philosophy is unquestioned. His powerful and penetrating critique of Levinas's religiosity is important not only as the commentary of a single author but as part of a general trend of how Levinas's work has come to be seen in recent decades. Badiou's critique will become especially pertinent to the current investigation when we examine Simon Critchley's appropriation of both Levinas and Badiou (along with Knud Løgstrup) as pillars of his own anarchic politics of resistance. But for the present purposes we can examine this particular

critique of religious language in Levinas as it reveals deep themes of his philosophical methodology and perhaps offers a point from which his work might be dismissed altogether.

Badiou's central critique, as he makes clear in the first volume of *Ethics*[34], is that Levinas substitutes piety for philosophical rigor. On Badiou's reading, Levinas's ethics is incapable of rendering a positive conception of the Good in any form other than what he calls the Altogether-Other, which Badiou takes as a thinly veiled reference to God. The relationality at the core of Levinas's project, then, is wholly dependent on a religious foundation without which the entire "system" of Levinasian thought must necessarily fall apart. After laying out what he views as the core principles of Levinasian ethics, Badiou notes:

> This means that in order to be intelligible, ethics requires that the Other be in some sense *carried by a principle of alterity* which transcends mere finite experience. Lévinas calls this principle the 'Altogether-Other', and it is quite obviously the ethical name for God. There can be no Other if he is not the immediate phenomenon of the Altogether-Other. There can be no finite devotion to the non-identical if it is not sustained by the infinite devotion of the principle to that which subsists outside it. There can be no ethics without God the ineffable. (BADIOU, 2001, p. 22)

For Badiou, the detachment of Levinasian ethics from its religious language would be impossible because the absolutely Other or Altogether-Other is only comprehensible in overtly religious terms. The "Infinity" of *Totality and Infinity* already implies this radical divinity upon which the ethical relation relies. This critique, of course, is not unique to Badiou as Levinas's overtly religious language has been the target of extensive criticism from the earliest commentaries on his published works. What makes Badiou's criticism stand out, in addition to being a recent critique from a universally recognized authority in contemporary French philosophy, is that he dismisses the entirety of Levinas's position as lacking philosophical rigor. He continues the above passage in even more damning terms:

> In Lévinas's enterprise, the ethical dominance of the Other over the theoretical ontology of the same is entirely bound up with a religious axiom; to believe that we can separate what Lévinas's thought unites is to betray the intimate movement of this thought, its subjective rigour. In truth, Lévinas has no philosophy – not even philosophy the 'servant' of theology. Rather, this philosophy (in the Greek sense of the word) *annulled* by theology, itself no longer a theology (the terminology is still too Greek, and presumes proximity to the divine via the identity and predicates of God) but, precisely, an ethics. (BADIOU, 2001, p. 22-23)

[34] BADIOU, Alain. Ethics: An essay on the understanding of evil. Trans. Peter Hallward. London: Verso, 2001.

This leads Badiou to the conclusion that Levinas's position is the penultimate description of ethics as merely a category of pious discourse. This attack against Levinas, it should be noted, is not undertaken out of an attempt to critique Levinas's thought, but rather to open Badiou's own ethical investigations which have occupied his groundbreaking work for the last 20 years. For our purposes here, it is interesting to note that of all of the thinkers in the western philosophical tradition, Badiou saw fit to choose Levinas as the first and most direct voice that merited analysis in beginning to develop his own opposing position. This is because, on Badiou's reading, Levinas completes a specific movement within philosophy that has come to view ethics in religious terms, or as he puts it to cast ethics as decomposed or decomposing religion.

What Badiou seems to underestimate, in my view, is that in his brief dismissal of "a whole series of phenomenological themes for testing and exploring the originality of the Other" (BADIOU, 2001, p. 19), he fails to recognize the fundamentally social nature of Levinas's phenomenological description of the ethical relation. Because Badiou interprets Levinas's religious language literally rather than figuratively, he severely misunderstands the concept of religion as Levinas deploys it. And from a superficial perspective, Badiou is clearly right to affirm the deeply religious character of Levinas's language. In addition to his frequent references to biblical mythology, in TI Levinas explicitly defines religion as "the bond that is established between the same and the other without constituting a totality." (TI, p. 40) But whereas Badiou would take this in terms of a subordination of philosophy to a kind of decadent theology, I would contend that what Levinas means by religion can be understood in purely secular and social terms.

We can see how Levinas evokes a certain kind of secular religion by returning to his argument from "Is Ontology Fundamental?", which explicitly negates the theological interpretation of his phenomenological account of the ethical relation. He notes:

> In choosing the term *religion* – without having pronounced the word *God* or the word *sacred* – we have initially in mind the meaning which Auguste Comte gives to this term in the beginning of his *Politique positive*. Nothing theological, nothing mystical, lies hidden behind the analysis that we have just given of the encounter with the other (*autrui*)… (IOF, p. 8)

Thus, while religion is clearly a dominant thematic element that is easily identifiable within Levinas's philosophical writings, it must be contextualized by the way he understands religion in precisely this secular sense rather than in the sense of a sanctimonious piety as described by Badiou. Further, by emphasizing the social dimension of religion over the mystical or theological,

Levinas insists that his account of the other, even the Altogether-Other, cannot be understood in the sanctified sense of piety that Badiou describes.

In clearly affirming, even at the earliest stages of his formal critique of Heideggerian ontology in 1951, that religion accesses a field of relationality which has remained largely inaccessible to philosophy, Levinas already aligns himself with social theory rather than theology as that which resists traditional ontological philosophy. In embracing Comte's famed Religion of Humanity, Levinas evokes a core commitment to the sociality embedded in the ethical relation, and it is this commitment which persists in his later work even though Comte is rarely referenced directly. We will see, in the following chapters, Levinas will break with Comte's idealized social order, but here Levinas's affinity for Comte's sociality as secular religiosity is clear. He continues the above passage further aligning with social theory against the modern philosophical tradition:

> … the object of the encounter is at once given to us and *in society* with us; but we cannot reduce this event of sociality to some property revealed in the given, and knowledge cannot take precedence over sociality. If the word *religion* should, however, announce that the relation with human beings, irreducible to comprehension, is itself thereby distanced from the exercise of power, whereas it rejoins the Infinite in human faces, then we accept the ethical resonance of that word and all its Kantian echoes. (IOF, 8)

Here we see Levinas's unquestionable alignment with Comte's Religion of Humanity and the "ethical resonance" of religion in purely secular and social terms. We might regard Comte's conception of religion that Levinas appropriates here as "post-theistic" or perhaps "neo-Christian" in the sense that it adopts social elements of traditional religion but attempts to render them in a meaningful way for modern scientific society. This, we will see in a future chapter, aligns thematically with Émile Durkheim's conception of civic religion to which Levinas will repeatedly draw from in TI as well as his later works. Perhaps surprisingly, we will see how Durkheim's sociology will play a more direct role in Levinas's philosophical formation than Comte's political theory. But in drawing a direct line from his own conception of religion to Comte's Religion of Humanity, Levinas establishes a point from which we can resist Badiou's rejection of the blatant religiosity of Levinas's work.

In *Politique Positive,*[35] Comte defines religion explicitly at the outset of the work:

> Throughout this treatise the term Religion will be used to express that state of complete harmony peculiar to human life, in its collective as well as its individual form, when all the

[35] COMTE, Auguste. System of Positive Polity: Second Volume. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1875.

> parts of Life are ordered in their natural relations to each other. This definition, which alone embraces equally all the different phases of Religion, applies equally to the heart and to the intellect, for both of these must concur to produce any true unity of life. Religion therefore gives a natural harmony to the Soul, exactly analogous to that which Health gives to the body. (COMTE, 1875, p. 8)

While Levinas would resist the formal aspects of Comte's proposed positivistic religion, there is a remarkable overlap between this account of universal religion as social relationality with the way Levinas regards monotheism. For Levinas, monotheism is not primarily a paternal relation but is first and foremost a fraternal relation, or we might say that monotheism is an attempt to locate a vertical relation to the divine within the horizontal experience of the relation to the other. In Comte's terms, this is the social dimension of the religion of humanity which his work attempts to capture, but for Levinas is a theme identifiable at the very heart of the Jewish conception of monotheism. Levinas hints at a primarily secular understanding of monotheism in TI where he insists that the kind of fraternity he seeks to describe in the work must necessarily be universal beyond any conception of race or group. He notes in a crucial passage:

> The very status of the human implies fraternity and the idea of the human race. Fraternity is radically opposed to the conception of a humanity united by resemblance, a multiplicity of diverse families arisen from the stones cast behind by Deucalion, and which, across the struggle of egoisms, results in a human city. Human fraternity has then two aspects : it involves individualities whose logical status is not reducible to the status of ultimate differences in a genus, for their singularity consists in each referring to itself. (An individual having a common genus with another individual would not be removed enough from it.) On the other hand, it involves the commonness of a father, as though the commonness of race would not bring together enough. Society must be a fraternal community to be commensurate with the straightforwardness, the primary proximity, in which the face presents itself to my welcome. Monotheism signifies this human kinship, this idea of a human race that refers back to the approach of the Other in the face, in a dimension of height, in responsibility for oneself and for the Other. (TI, p. 214)

Unlike the above passage from "Is Ontology Fundamental?", Levinas never mentions Comte directly in the text of TI, although there is a clear affinity which remains from the earlier text in which monotheism is rendered in terms which prioritize the horizontal relationship of kinship to the vertical relationship of parentage. The verticality of the interhuman relation, which Levinas will name *height* in *OTB*, is not derivative of the vertical relation to God in a Neoplatonic sense of a corrupted worldly relation that is merely an imitation of the true Form of relation to God. Rather, for Levinas the relation to the other is an exclusively secular experience of the human other which then informs and orients the conception of the divine.

This sentiment is echoed in his embrace of the tradition of Judaism which is based in sociality above theology, as with Spinoza and Mendelssohn, who we will discuss at length in a later chapter. He notes, in *Difficult Freedom*[36]:

> Through historical criticism of the Bible, Spinoza teaches us its ethical interiorization. 'Judaism is a revealed Law and not a theology': this opinion from Mendelssohn came, then, from Spinoza. Can the present-day Jewish religious consciousness deny this teaching of interiorization, when it is capable of giving such teaching a new meaning and new perspectives? Does it want to side with a Kierkegaard in regarding the ethical stage of existence as surpassable? (DF, p. 116-117)

Kierkegaard serves as a near-constant foil for Levinas's own conception of the Altogether-Other, and rejecting the teleological suspension of the ethical might well be read as the central argument of his own ethical project. By aligning here with Mendelssohn and Spinoza, Levinas is clearly setting himself against the kind of theology which would render the Altogether-Other as a supreme being in Kierkegaard's sense. And while Levinas would unquestionably reject the formal aspects of "Judaism as Law" in Mendelssohn's sense, what is clear is that Levinas's own conception of religion more closely approximates sociality than theology.

Thus, his conception of monotheism expresses an attempt to capture a spirit of universal fraternity in terms of a divine parentage, but Levinas renders this phenomenologically in terms the divine appearing within the structure of the human experience of responsibility. This means that the experience of the divine is a secular experience which he understands **primarily** as fraternity and only **derivatively** as paternity in monotheism. By prioritizing the fraternal over the paternal within monotheism, Levinas effectively secularizes the divinity of the vertical relation. This leads to a conception which might well appear at first glance to be self-contradictory in that Levinas's religious language presents a call for secular monotheism, or what he will eventually come to name "political monotheism" in his confessional writings.[37] But, in terms that will become clear over the course of the following chapters, we might more fundamentally consider Levinas's conception

[36] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism. Trans. Seán Hand. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. Hereafter DF.

[37] We would be remiss to not point out the overt patriarchal bias of Levinas's vocabulary of fraternity and paternity. In opposition to this unmistakable bias, I will deliberately render fraternity and paternity to be synonymous with sorority and maternity for all purposed related to the present research. It is worth noting, however, that this tendency in Levinas's work to exclude the feminine from his account of "humanity" is an unforgivable oversight and indeed has given some thinkers entirely justified cause to call his entire philosophical project into question, such as Simone De Beauvoir's emphatic denouncement of Levinas in the introduction of *The Second Sex*.

of monotheism to be first and foremost a kind of anarchistic monotheism which is not oriented around a singular archic divinity.

Returning to the way Levinas viewed Husserlian phenomenology towards the end of his career, Levinas clearly describes the kind of ethical transcendence his phenomenology attempts to describe as rooted in Husserl but attuned to a religious dimension that escapes Husserlian thought. This is important for our methodological context here since it shows the way that Levinas collapses the distinction between transcendence towards the Other and transcendence towards God as the Altogether-Other in a way that refutes Badiou and reveals the phenomenological core of his account of ethical transcendence. He notes, returning to the 1977 article "Philosophy and Awakening", that his own approach to phenomenology centers on this particular conception of transcendence:

> It is not an *experience* of nonequanimity posited within the theme of a knowledge, it is the very event of *transcendence* as life. It is the psychism of responsibility for the Other, which is the lineament of this transcendence and which is psychism tout court. Transcendence in which, perhaps the distinction between transcendence toward the other man and the transcendence toward God should not be made too quickly… But all this is no longer in Husserl. (PA, p. 178)

Levinas here is attempting to render the concept of ethical transcendence in terms of Husserl's formal phenomenology, in part to demonstrate Husserl's method but also to show how his own work emerges from that tradition. By questioning the distinction of the I-Thou and I-God transcendence, we immediately see how Levinas's work avoids the kind of piety that Badiou attacks so vehemently. There is a fundamentally secular nature to the collapsing of this distinction which makes Levinas's work function entirely independently of any presumption of the God of rational or mystical theology. This, in my view, necessarily implies that the ethical relation can only be understood in a purely secular sense as a kind of social transcendence.

This primacy of the secular is absent from Badiou's analysis and understanding how Levinas might avoid the brunt of this critique sheds light on the fundamentally social nature of Levinas's religious discourse. While Badiou is certainly right in affirming there is a sense of "piety" within Levinas's project, this piety can in no way be understood as reverence of the God of traditional theology. This is what Levinas has in mind when he refers, in no uncertain terms, to his understanding of Judaism as a "religion for adults". The Altogether-Other is no way synonymous with a supernatural "being" in the sense that Badiou takes it as this would already return to an ontological conception

of alterity which Levinas's entire philosophical project seeks to overcome. Rather, by interpreting his references to religion in light of his earlier account framing religion in Comte's terms, we can avoid the force of Badiou's critique and focus on the social dimension of human relationality which implies (rather than relies upon) the theological dimension of the divine. If we understand Levinas to be collapsing the distinction of interhuman transcendence and human-God transcendence, then Badiou's focus solely on the transcendence towards the Altogether-Other is shown to be fundamentally misguided. By reading Levinas as primarily a thinker of the social relation in a secular sense, and indeed of the secularization of the sacred, his anarchistic conception of monotheism necessarily approximates Comte's Religion of Humanity and offers a crucial point of overlap with traditional approaches to social theory.

Conclusion

The convergence of themes of phenomenology and religiosity is not unique to Levinas, with thinkers such as Edith Stein and Paul Ricœur standing out among Levinas's contemporaries. And yet, at a fundamental level, I think it is clear that Levinas is not a religious thinker in the same sense because his work categorically seeks to elevate the secular rather than subordinate it to the sacred. Religious language offers unique access to the kind of transcendental relationality that his work seeks to describe, and yet his work must not be understood, as Badiou would have it, as a pious lamentation of the secular world. This would betray the most fundamental principles that drew Levinas to study with Husserl at Freiburg in pursuit of a pure science which avoids the metaphysical assumptions of the natural attitude or the baseless constructions of positivism.

In asserting, in 1975, "what I do is phenomenology" Levinas is clear to note that his phenomenology abides by the principles of intentional analysis without adhering to the methodological program of the *epoché*. In this sense, his phenomenology more closely approximates Heidegger than Husserl and attempts to arrive at the pre-reflective structures of experience rather than pursue pure essences via phenomenological description. The key structure which will occupy is in the coming chapters is the disenchantment or disarticulation of totality which occurs through the enigma of the other. Further, this disarticulation is evoked in the same

sense as the way the third-party ruptures and calls into question the immediate relation to the proximal other, which in Levinas's later work becomes synonymous with justice. Because the unreachable alterity of the other cannot be accounted for through phenomenological description, we must not attempt to read Levinas's work as an attempt to articulate the significance of the other, but rather to show the modes of disarticulation which proceed from it. Reading Levinas in this way, as a philosopher primarily preoccupied with the phenomenological description of the modes of disarticulation of totality, will allow us to better understand the way that formal political totality can be ruptured and called into question through the emergence of ethical responsibility for the other.

Chapter 2: From Arche to Anarchy

Having established the way Levinas approaches philosophical questions, we can now examine the way this method functions in regards to a more concrete sense of disarticulation. The key theoretical term which Levinas uses to describe this disarticulation is anarchy (or an-arché in its more technical variation). In this chapter, we will attempt to orient the way Levinas deploys this terminology in a distinctly Heideggerian sense that develops gradually over the course of his writings. The task of defining Levinas's concept of anarchy is more difficult than it might appear because the concept is presented in radically different contexts in his two major works. Most strikingly, in TI, references to anarchy are strictly pejorative. There, as we will see in this chapter, "anarchy" is the term Levinas employs to denounce a worldview detached from one's own responsibility. On the other hand, OTB utilizes a conception of anarchy which holds a distinctly positive sense as the fundamental characteristic of responsibility itself, which Levinas views as anarchic in that it resists synthesis into thematization as consciousness. In order to develop, in the following chapters, what it would mean to approximate Levinas with the political tradition of anarchism, it is necessary to clearly understand the full range of philosophical traditions that inform Levinas's understanding of anarchy as it stems from the ancient Greek conception of arche (*ἀρχή*).

I. Heidegger and the Double Sense of Arche

Because Levinas's treatment of anarchy in OTB is his best-known development of the concept, it is tempting to think that this later, mature position is his more definitive and authoritative rendering of the concept of anarchy. Since there he develops the anarchic dimension of responsibility against the theoretical framework of Henri Bergson's account of anarchy as disorder, Bergson is clearly the most central philosophical influence cited by Levinas when developing his mature vocabulary of anarchy. For Bergson, anarchy is effectively a logical impossibility because in its attempt to resist the order of arche, disorder necessarily becomes elevated as a new archic order. While Levinas seems to agree with Bergson that disorder necessarily gives rise to another order, he maintains that ethical anarchy is not fated to this collapse into disorder. In what is perhaps his best-known description of anarchy, Levinas makes clear to distance anarchy from this distinction of order and disorder, noting: "Anarchy troubles being over and beyond these alternatives. It brings

to a halt the ontological play which, precisely qua play, is consciousness, where being is lost and found again, and thus illuminated." (OTB, p. 101) Levinas develops his innovative terminology in OTB in order to express the permutations of this anarchic responsibility through terms such as substitution, persecution and obsession. Because ethical anarchy resists and interrupts the ontological play of consciousness, it becomes arguably the key philosophical concept in all of Levinas's later work.

However, despite Bergson's prominence in OTB, as well as earlier texts from the 1950s, we would be remiss to understand Levinasian anarchy strictly as a response or counterpoint to Bergson. This is clear, in my view, because of the way the concept is employed in TI in a distinctly Heideggerian manner as a critique of the Heideggerian project of fundamental ontology. Levinas deploys the concept of anarchy in TI in an attempt to criticize the absence of responsibility in Heidegger's fundamental ontology. In his earlier works, Levinas regards this absence of responsibility as the anarchic spectacle of being in general or what he calls the *il y a*. Rather than seeing responsibility as the anarchic disruption of ontology as he develops more famously in OTB, Levinas originally viewed anarchy as a fundamental characteristic embedded within Heideggerian ontology itself. A careful reading of TI shows that Levinas employs the language of anarchy not only to denote a disruption of order, but as a more fundamental deprivation of any ordering principle. This relies on Levinas's understanding of Heidegger's appropriation of the Greek double meaning of arche, which was a recurring theme in many of Heidegger's early seminars during the time that Levinas studied under Heidegger at Freiburg. Thus, in order to understand how Levinas employs the concept of anarchy against Heidegger, it is first necessary to understand the way in which Heidegger appropriates the concept from Aristotle.

In his seminars from the 1920s and 1930s, Heidegger emphasizes a double meaning of arche which incorporates an Aristotelian concept of arche as origin or principle *(Ausgang)* into a pre-Socratic notion of arche as ordering or dominion *(Verfügung)*. In a 1939 paper on Aristotle's Physics[38], Heidegger makes clear what is at stake with this distinction:

> The Greeks ordinarily hear two meanings in this word (ἀρχή). On the one hand ἀρχή means that from which something has its origin and beginning; on the other hand it means that which, *as* this origin and beginning, likewise keeps rein *over*, i.e., restrains and therefore

[38] HEIDEGGER, Martin. "On the Essence and Concept of φύσις in Aristotle's Physics B (1939)" In: WILLIAM MCNEILL (Ed), Pathmarks, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998

> dominates, something else that emerges from it. Ἀρχή means, at one and the same time, beginning and control. On a broader and therefore lower scale we can say: origin and ordering. In order to express the unity that oscillates between the two, we can translate ἀρχή as originating ordering and as ordering origin[39]. The unity of these two is *essential*. (HEIDEGGER, 1998, p. 189)

It is the unity of double meaning as originating ordering and ordering origin that Heidegger finds compelling about the way arche is used in metaphysics after Aristotle. This is an example of one of the common mechanisms of Heidegger's philosophical methodology in that it rethinks concepts which are taken as static states and reorients them as activities or forms of engagement. Thus, his account of arche mimics elements of his account truth as the Greek *aletheia* as opposed to the Latin *veritas*. Heidegger's preoccupation with Greek thought, and resistance to the tendencies of modern philosophy, is unmistakable throughout his work. In "My Way to Phenomenology"[40] Heidegger describes the fundamental connection between Greek thought and his own reinvention of phenomenology:

> The clearer it became to me that the increasing familiarity with phenomenological seeing was fruitful for the interpretation of Aristotle's writing, the less I could separate myself from Aristotle and other Greek thinkers. Of course I could not immediately see what decisive consequences my renewed preoccupation with Aristotle was to have. (HEIDEGGER, 2003, p. 73)

This preoccupation with Greek thought certainly extends beyond his early encounters with Aristotle, as a student of Husserl. In *Being and Time*, as Thomas Sheehan observes, "Aristotle appears directly or indirectly on virtually every page." (SHEEHAN, 1975, p. 87) This is important for understanding the way in which Heidegger approached the project of fundamental ontology in *Being and Time* since, ultimately, the quest for the meaning of being is not simply a search for a universal principle which is shared by all beings, but an attempt to unveil the arche of being in its double sense of originating ordering and ordering origin.

In other writings based on his seminars from this time period, Heidegger connects arche with *Grund* (reason or ground). He notes in his lectures on Schelling[41]:

[39] "ausgängliche Verfügung und verfügenden Ausgang" – Gesamtausgabe 9, p. 247

[40] HEIDEGGER, Martin. "My Way to Phenomenology (1963)" in Martin Heidegger: Philosophical and Political Writings. Ed. Manfred STASSEN. New York: Continuum, 2003.

[41] HEIDEGGER, Martin. Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985a.

> The key term for what we call "ground" is the term arche in Greek metaphysics in the double meaning of beginning and dominance; in modern philosophy, on the other hand, the term ratio (principium rationis sufficientis, grande illud principium, Leibniz)." (HEIDEGGER, 1985, p. 181)

This theme of the double meaning of arche appears repeatedly and clearly functioned at the center of Heidegger's thought during this period, especially during the crucial seminars around the time of the Davos encounter with Cassirer. For Heidegger, the recuperation of the double sense of arche in Greek metaphysics against Leibniz and modern philosophy's *ratio*, was vital to his early philosophical project. It is in this context of arche as a central theme in Heidegger's thought of the 20s and 30s that pervades the way Levinas employs the language of anarchy (an-arche) in TI.

The role of Heidegger's early concept of arche has been addressed extensively in contemporary Heidegger scholarship and a few of these commentaries help shed light on how Levinas's interpretation of this key concept might have influenced how he adopted this explicitly Heideggerian (or anti-Heideggerian) vocabulary. Reiner Schürmann's commentaries on Heidegger emphasize how arche, as adapted from the Greeks, originates in his early engagement with Aristotle and persists throughout his work. For Schürmann, in order to understand Heidegger, it is necessary to understand how arche functions not only as part of Heidegger's recuperation of Greek thought against the erroneous tendencies of modern philosophy, but also methodologically in the way in which Heidegger appropriates and overcomes Aristotle's view that understanding the arche of beings is the central task of philosophy.

Schürmann follows a deconstructivist reading of Heidegger that does not adhere to a strict separation of the writings before and after the *Kehre*. For Schürmann, Heidegger's project always aims at overcoming "the traditional understanding of man as one entity, one res, among others—endowed, not with chlorophyll as some plants, nor with wings or fins as some animals, but with 'animal rationale.'" (SCHÜRMANN, 2008, p. 56) In order to achieve this overcoming, Heidegger must come to terms with the distinctly archic view of man that emerges from Greek antiquity, especially in Aristotle. In his best-known work on Heidegger, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*[42], Schürmann approaches this question by analyzing the basic methodology of Heideggerian phenomenology. For Schürmann, Heidegger's method itself is

[42] SCHÜRMANN, Reiner. Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy. Trans. Christine-Marie Gros. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

anarchic in the sense that it opposes the basic archic assumptions of classical philosophy. By reading Heidegger against the grain of traditional metaphysical rationality, Schürmann examines the fundamental relationship between theory and practice from a Heideggerian point of view. He explains his general approach early in his introduction:

> I would like to show what happens to the old problem of the unity between thinking and acting once 'thinking' no longer means securing some rational foundation upon which one may establish the sum total of what is knowable, and once 'acting' no longer means confirming one's daily enterprises, both public and private, to the foundation so secured. (SCHÜRMANN, 1987, p. 1)

For Schürmann, Heidegger's project deconstructs the basic foundation of metaphysics in that what has taken to be the first foundation of philosophy is necessarily rooted historically. Heidegger's deconstructive approach thus "interrupts, throws out of gear, the derivations between first philosophy and practical philosophy." (SCHÜRMANN, 1987, p. 1) Thus, the logical conclusion of this Heideggerian deconstruction of metaphysics implies "that action itself, and not only its theory, loses its foundation or archē." (SCHÜRMANN, 1987, p. 1) From Schürmann's methodological approach to Heidegger's project, through the lens of the fundamental rejection of arche, a distinctly anarchical view emerges of the project of fundamental ontology.

This methodological anarchism underlies the basic Heideggerian project and Schürmann's insight into the fundamental anarchy in Heidegger's project can help us understand how anarchy functions within Heidegger's philosophical framework. Schürmann summarizes Heideggerian anarchy thusly:

> 'Anarchy' here does not stand for a program of action, nor its juxtaposition with 'principle' for dialectical reconciliation… Is not the backbone of metaphysics-whatever the ulterior determinations by which this concept would have to be specified the rule always to seek a first from which the world becomes intelligible and masterable, the rule of *scire per causas*, of establishing 'principles' for thinking and doing? 'Anarchy', on the other hand, designates the withering away of such a rule, the relaxing of its hold. (SCHÜRMANN, 1987, p. 6)

By rethinking first philosophy in terms of anarchy, rather than constructing a novel superstructure upon some arbitrary arche taken to be foundational, Heideggerian philosophy avoids the basic archic tendency of western philosophy. Schürmann is quick to distinguish this anarchy from political anarchy, pointing specifically to the approaches of Proudhon and Bakunin, who in his view seek only to displace current order or authority. Heideggerian anarchy, Schürmann argues, is a fundamental questioning of any "principle of cohesion, be it authoritarian or 'rational'".

(SCHÜRMANN, 1987, p. 6) Here, Schürmann is describing the deconstructivist methodology of Heideggerian phenomenology, but the way in which he emphasizes the role of anarchy at this fundamental level of the way Heidegger approaches philosophical questions highlights the juxtaposition of arche and an-arche that we find throughout Heidegger's work.

Schürmann develops at great length the Aristotelian roots of Heidegger's understanding of arche and stresses that Aristotle's innovation regarding arche lies in uniting two distinct meanings into a single theoretical concept. These two meanings he understands as a more ancient pre-Socratic sense of arche as inception and a later sense of arche as domination. He notes:

> Until the end of antiquity ἀρχή remains a technical term for designating the constitutive, abstract, and irreducible elements in being, becoming, and knowing. The metaphysical concept of ἀρχή expresses that abstract structural element in entities which, in their analysis, is *unhintergehbar*, insurpassable. (SCHÜRMANN, 1987, p. 97)

It is this technical sense of arche that we must keep in mind to understand how Heidegger employs the term, and especially the way in which Levinas appropriates the concept of arche for his own rendering of an-arche. But crucially, as Heidegger emphasizes, it is the unity of two meanings of arche as origin and domination within a single Aristotelian concept that motivates and orients all later usage of the term. Given the importance of Aristotle in this vocabulary of arche and an-arche, the way in which Heidegger both appropriates and resists Aristotle is crucial to any understanding of these terms. This is especially important for Schürmann in terms of the way that Aristotle's concept of arche privileges the dimension of becoming or causality over ontology. He notes:

> Causal explanation is one mode of understanding among others, although this mode has maintained its hegemony over Western philosophy. Liberating the phenomenological nucleus from the Aristotelian conception of the origin will require that inception and domination be understood otherwise than as the essential traits of the causes and of causality. It will require that the *archē* be disengaged from causal representations. (SCHÜRMANN, 1987, p. 100)

On Schürmann's reading, while Heidegger's indebtedness to Aristotle is unquestionable, overcoming the primacy of Aristotelian causality is the central task of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Schürmann approaches Heidegger from the standpoint of the Heideggerian hypothesis that classical metaphysical rationality produces its own closure. The project of fundamental ontology, then, signifies the overcoming of this causal hegemony, which is only possible through the rethinking of arche in its ontological sense rather than how it has come to be understood in a purely causal sense.

But whereas Schürmann embraces a reading of Heidegger against Aristotelian causality, Walter Brogan emphasizes the way in which Heidegger's work is motivated by a more sympathetic and distinctly phenomenological reading of Aristotle's Physics. Brogan focuses on Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's physics B1 and the account of *phusis* as being in general in order to develop the way in which motion and change are central to the way Aristotle understands *ousia*. This leads Brogan to develop, through Heidegger, an account of what he calls Aristotle's kinetic ontology, which is the understanding of beings in their dynamic sense of kinesis. Brogan describes this kinetic ontology, following Aristotle's claim that kinesis is "the most fundamental characteristic of natural beings" (Physics 253 b9). Brogan elaborates on how Heidegger interprets this claim:

> Aristotle tries to think the kinetic character of being in a way that does not deny the Greek sense of being as standing there and preserving itself. The being of beings is emerging into presence and standing-there; it is also preserving itself in this appearance. We must think these two together as Aristotle does when he speaks of *phusis*. But in thinking the togetherness of these opposing notions of emerging forth and preserving, we must also hold them apart. Otherwise movement is impossible. Heidegger suggests that this twofold meaning of *arche* as *Ausgang* (the origin in the sense of that out of which something emerges forth) and *Verfügung* (ordering in the sense of governing over and preserving) can be translated as originating ordering or ordering origin. The two movements are equiprimordial, though in a sense opposite." (BROGAN, 2005, p. 34)

In agreement with Schürmann, Brogan emphasizes the way that Heidegger is drawn to Aristotle's originality evoking a double sense of arche against his pre-Socratic predecessors. Brogan defends Heidegger's controversial reading of Aristotle's physics as a distinctly ontological account of change, in which *aitia* refers to a kind of causality more fundamental than considerations of the derivative relation of cause and effect. He notes:

> Our task in the *Physics*, [Aristotle] says, is to further delineate the nature of this *archê*. Here, we are given a first indication of what is meant by *archê* and thus by *phusis*. *Phusis* is an *aitia*. This is typically translated as cause. But Heidegger warns us that *aitia* does not mean what we imply by our ordinary sense of causality (*Kausalität*), as is typically assumed of Aristotle. Causality here is not about the way one thing affects another. This kind of causality, the producing of an effect, is only a derivative sense of being a cause… Aristotle is asking about cause in an ontological sense, and is concerned about the *archê* or original source of this relationality between beings. (BROGAN, 2006, p 86)

It is in this context of the task of philosophy as understanding the fundamental relationality between beings that Brogan elaborates on the role of arche in Heidegger's thought as adapted from Aristotle. Rather than focusing on the derivative, ontic sense of causality, Heidegger's reading of Aristotle emphasizes causality in its ontological sense of source or origin. Brogan's extensive

work, then, aims to defend this unorthodox reading of Aristotle in which understanding the arche of a thing, which is the central task of philosophy, is not to understand it at an ontic, superficial level, but at the level of ontology. By uniting the themes of inception and domination within the single concept of arche, Aristotle is able to access the more fundamental ontological level of being as being, which is the central theme of arche that draws Heidegger's interest in the 1920s and 1930s.

That Levinas's work is thoroughly indebted to Heidegger is unquestionable. But because of the ferocity with which Levinas attacks Heideggerian thought beginning in the 1930s it is tempting to think of Levinas only in terms of a critique *against* Heidegger rather than a thinking *with* Heidegger. In my view, however, Levinas never fully overcomes the enthusiasm with which he embraced Heidegger in the 1920s. During that period, Levinas was known to be one of the most dedicated of Heidegger's disciplines, accompanying him to the famous encounter at Davos with Cassirer in 1929 and even portraying Cassirer himself in a satirical *soirée* attended by both Heidegger and Cassirer. In the article "Martin Heidegger and Ontology", published just prior to Heidegger's public political commitment to National Socialism in 1933, shows the enthusiasm with which Levinas embraced Heidegger's project:

> The prestige of Martin Heidegger and the influence of his thought on German philosophy marks both a new phase and one of the high points of the phenomenological movement… For once, Fame has picked one who deserves it and, for that matter, one who is still living. Anyone who has studied philosophy cannot, when confronted by Heidegger's work, fail to recognize how the originality and force of his achievements, stemming from genius, are combined with an attentive, painstaking, and close working out of the argument—with that craftsmanship of the patient artisan in which phenomenologists take such pride. (Quoted in GORDON, 2010, p. 102)

This level of admiration and dedication to Heidegger, at a crucial moment in Levinas's philosophical formation, would later become an embarrassment for Levinas following his break with Heidegger, insisting this passage be left out of future publications. Levinas's abrupt turn against Heidegger, in my mind, should be attributed to a political rather than philosophical dispute with Levinas understandably and justifiably revolted by Heidegger's politics. While this left Levinas with a need to leave the "climate" of Heideggerian thought, unlike his contemporary Herbert Marcuse, Levinas never explicitly repudiated Heidegger's philosophical project on the basis of its connection to his personal politics. Marcuse, looking back at his time with Heidegger in 1977, wrote:

> I left Freiburg in January 1933. Prior to 1933 neither I nor my friends had observed or known anything about Heidegger's connection to Nazism. Only later did we attempt to reconstruct the affinity between his philosophy and his politics. Today it seems inexcusable to me to dismiss Heidegger's support of the Hitler regime as a (brief) mistake or error. I believe that a philosopher cannot make such a "mistake" without thereby disavowing his own, authentic philosophy. (MARCUSE, 2005, p. 176)

Levinas is not interested in this particular vein of criticism against Heidegger, although there certainly are elements of agreement between the two former students of Heidegger. But unlike Marcuse, Levinas's admiration for Heideggerian philosophy, and the basic methodology of Heidegger's early work, persisted despite their obvious political conflict. While Levinas famously declared that it was difficult to forgive Heidegger for his politics, he did not see Heidegger's politics as negating the legitimacy of his philosophical project in the same way that Marcuse did. And yet, Levinas's unrelenting critique of the project of fundamental ontology still incorporates elements of Heideggerian thought and methodology against Heidegger's own philosophical project. This attempt to utilize Heideggerian concepts against Heidegger himself is especially clear with the concepts of arche and an-arche that concern us here.

II. Anarchy and the Myth of Gyges

The first significant reference to anarchy in TI appears near the end of Section 1, in the subsection "Truth Presupposes Justice". This passage appears just a few paragraphs after Levinas's emphatic declaration "We therefore are also radically opposed to Heidegger who subordinates the relation with the Other to ontology… rather than seeing in justice and injustice a primordial access to the Other beyond all ontology." (TI, p. 89) Levinas then refers to the myth of Gyges as it appears in Book 2 of Plato's Republic. Since this appears so prominently in Levinas's early use of the vocabulary of anarchy, it is worth developing here at length, especially in the context that Levinas himself defended the project of TI as a "return to Platonism" when he submitted the manuscript for review at the University of Paris. Indeed, Platonic myths appear frequently throughout Levinas's work. As Tanja Stähler observed in a recent article[43]:

> Levinas refers to the myth told by Aristophanes in the Symposium, to the myth of Theuth in the Phaedrus, to the myth of Gyges from the Republic, and to the myth at the end of the Gorgias. The most conspicuous myth in Totality and Infinity is the myth of Gyges, whereas

[43] STÄHLER, Tanja. "Getting Under the Skin: Platonic Myths in Levinas", in Levinas and the Ancients. Eds. Brian SCHROEDER and Silvia BENSO. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.

> in Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, the myth of the last judgment at the end of the Gorgias plays the more important role. (STÄHLER, 2008, p. 73)

While Levinas frequently refers to biblical myths or more contemporary literature, especially Doskoyevski, to illustrate his points about ethical responsibility, the extensive references to the myth of Gyges in TI seem to stand out as an attempt to recuperate a distinctly Platonic understanding of justice. In my view, Levinas's "return to Platonism" serves not only as a kind of counterpoint to Heidegger's return to Aristotle, but also as a rejection of the way justice is rendered by modern political philosophy.

Glaucon relates the myth of Gyges in Book 2 of the Republic immediately after Socrates's response to Thraymachus's view that Justice is fundamentally the will of the stronger. Glaucon's basic position can be understood a kind of early contractarian theory of justice, although clearly not in the fully-developed technical sense with which the term is used in modern and contemporary political philosophy. Contractarianism, following Hobbes, seeks to overcome the collective action problem, that is, a group pursuing their own individual self-interest may lead to an outcome which is worse for the whole or indeed for each individual. In situations where cooperation would lead to preferable results, free-riders are tempted to seek the benefits of a cooperative strategy while not contributing. According to Stephen Darwall, contractarians view morality as "an especially broad and pervasive form of cooperation. Principles of moral right and wrong can then be understood as rules, specifying requirements, permissions, and so on, that underlie the broadest possible cooperation…" (DRAWALL (ed), 2003, p. 3) This differs subtly from a contractualist view of morality, such as can be found in Rousseau or Kant. Darwall continues:

> … whereas contractarianism takes moral principles to result from rationally self-interested bargaining, contractualism sees the relevant agreement as governed by a moral ideal of equal respect, one that would be inconsistent, indeed, with bargaining over fundamental terms of association in the way contractarianism proposes." (DARWALL (ed), 2003, p. 4)

The core of this distinction between contractarianism and contractualism can be understood in terms of Kant's "kingdom of ends" formulation of the Categorical Imperative in which each individual not only obeys a universal principle, but gives himself/herself the universal law. Kant's contractualist position is not a bargain with other members of society in pursuit of one's own self-interest, but rather a kind of cooperation stemming from a collective common perspective, similar to Rousseau's "general will". We will return to these themes in our discussion of political

anarchism in a later chapter, but for the context of Glaucon's argument in the Republic, it is important to note that the myth of Gyges appears as the centerpiece of Glaucon's defense of a kind of proto-Hobbsean view of contractarian morality.

Glaucon begins to develop this position in the opening paragraphs of book 2. He notes:

> People say, you see, that to do injustice is naturally good and to suffer injustice bad. But the badness of suffering it far exceeds the goodness of doing it. Hence, those who have done and suffered injustice and who have tasted both—the ones who lack the power to do it and avoid suffering it—decide that it is profitable to come to an agreement with each other neither to do injustice nor to suffer it. As a result, they begin to make laws and covenants; and what the law commands, they call lawful and just. That, they say, is the origin and very being of justice. (358e1-359a5)

Glaucon, at this point, defends a view that injustice is fundamentally preferable to justice in the eyes of a self-interested moral agent. The only reason to avoid acting unjustly is that one would expect other people to act in a similar manner. The contractarian position of mutual self-interest that Glaucon establishes maintains that avoiding the injustice done by others is the only reasonable motivation to establish laws and covenants of social order, and thus the greater suffering of a lawless state of nature can be avoided. Glaucon begins to establish the parameters of his position via a thought experiment:

> Suppose we grant to the just and the unjust person the freedom to do whatever they like. We can then follow both of them and see where their appetites would lead. And we will catch the just person red-handed, traveling the same road as the unjust one. The reason for this is the desire to do better than others. This is what every natural being naturally pursues as good. But by law and force, it is made to deviate from this path and honor equality. (359c1-5)

For Glaucon, the natural condition of man is to pursue their own appetites and it is only the threat of violence and the force of law that stems this tide. Importantly, Glaucon does not view the just man as he who has greater moral constitution in resisting this temptation, merely the one who is more strongly motivated by the threat of reprisal than his own appetites. Glaucon then elaborates on the thought-experiment relying on the myth of the ring discovered by the shepherd Gyges in the kingdom of Lydia[44]. This ring, according to Glaucon's version of the myth, gave Gyges the power of invisibility:

[44] Strangely, when the myth is introduced by Glaucon (359d1) the ring is attributed to "an ancestor of Gyges of Lydia" whereas at the conclusion of the Republic (612b4) Plato refers to it as "Gyges's ring". Since it has no bearing on the context here, for the sake of simplicity I will follow Plato's attribution of the ring to Gyges himself.

> If he turned the setting inward, he became invisible; if he turned it outward, he became visible again. As soon as he realized this, he arranged to become one of the messengers sent to report to the king. On arriving there, he seduced the king's wife, attacked the king with her help, killed him, and in this way took over the kingdom. (360a5-b2)

No special moral standing, either just or unjust, is ascribed to Gyges prior to finding the ring, as he is described only as "a shepherd in the service of the ruler of Lydia." (359d2) His situation, as Glaucon narrates the story, is that once beyond the force of law, Gyges's appetites lead him, naturally, to exploit the power granted by the ring. Glaucon, having established the parameters of the freedom that Gyges is granted, presents the conditions for his thought experiment:

> Let's suppose, then, that there were two such rings, one worn by the just person, the other by the unjust. Now no one, it seems, would be so incorruptible that he would stay on the path of justice, or bring himself to keep away from other people's possessions and not touch them, when he could take whatever he wanted from the marketplace with impunity, go into people's houses and have sex with anyone he wished, kill or release from prison anyone he wished, and do all the other things that would make him like a god among humans. And in so behaving, he would do no differently than the unjust person, but both would pursue the same course. (360b3-c4)

Glaucon's assumptions about the particular kinds of appetites that come naturally to men describe a rather bleak view of human nature that will be echoed by later contractarians following Hobbes. But what is crucial for Glaucon's thought experiment is the inevitability that the just and unjust alike will fall victim to the temptation of the power that the anonymity of the ring grants them. His point is that there is no underlying moral sense of righteousness or indignation, but that justice refers to the obedience of established contractarian laws aimed at restraining the pursuit of anti-social appetites that all self-interested individuals will naturally pursue. Thus, if civility is ultimately attributable only to the mutual self-interest within the social contract, the condition of Gyges's freedom allows him to participate in the contract when visible, but choose to break the contract without consequence at will.

Beyond the grasp of any law or retribution, Gyges, or anyone in his situation, would act unjustly according to Glaucon. For Levinas, this situation of perfect liberty to act without the possibility of accountability necessarily means the situation of Gyges is an-archic. He explains:

> … a world absolutely silent that would not come to us from the word, be it mendacious, would be an-archic, without principle, without a beginning. Thought would strike nothing substantial. On first contact the phenomenon would degrade into appearance and in this sense would remain in equivocation (TI, p. 90)

For Gyges, the world would exist as pure spectacle, wherein his liberty goes uncontested and his just actions would go unheralded while his unjust actions go unpunished. This pure uncontested liberty, which Glaucon insists would inevitably be used to his own benefit and to the detriment of all others, renders Gyges in all respects to be "like a God among men." Anarchy, the way Levinas uses it in relation to this myth, consists of Gyges God-like condition of perfect liberty beyond any accountability other than the call of his own conscience. Thus, we can say that anarchy is synonymous with what Levinas more frequently calls "interiority" in TI. He notes earlier in the text: "The myth of Gyges is the very myth of the I and interiority, which exist nonrecognized. They are, to be sure, the eventuality of all unpunished crimes, but such is the price of interiority, which is the price of separation." (TI, p. 61) Interiority, then, is a kind of anarchy in which the individual remains separated from the call of responsibility. Gyges represents the case of liberty *par excellence* in which his actions have no possible consequences other than his own conscience, which Glaucon insists will not be sufficiently compelling for any human being in such a situation. The central preoccupation of TI is how the call of the face of the Other, responsibility, ruptures this condition of anarchic interiority.

At this early stage in TI, Levinas describes this rupture in terms of language and speech. In the second noteworthy appearance of the concept of anarchy, also in the subsection "Truth Presupposes Justice", Levinas notes: "Speech introduces a principle into this anarchy. Speech disenchants, for the speaking being guarantees his own apparition and comes to the assistance of himself, attends his own manifestation." (TI, p. 100) This is a remarkable moment in Levinas's earlier work, when seen in light of his later emphasis on the anarchic dimension of responsibility itself. Here, anarchy signifies the interiority of the self that is undone by the event of speech and the appearance of the face of the Other. While Glaucon views Gyges as unbound by morality, since he exists beyond the reach of punishment, Levinas contends the event of speech, or more abstractly in the appearance of the Other, disrupts that perfect liberty in a more fundamental way than the threat of retribution. While in the Republic both Glaucon and Ademantius stress the impossibility of justice in this state of perfect liberty, for Levinas this wrongly subordinates responsibility to accountability. In his view, at least in TI, responsibility emerges against the anarchy of perfect liberty by introducing a principle, an arche, as speech which orients and grounds the ethical subject. But crucially, this orientation is a disenchantment, a disruption of the pure spectacle of the Gygean interiority unbound by consequence.

That Levinas sees the solipsism of the spectacle of Gygean liberty as a kind of anarchy in TI is remarkable in light on how he presents anarchy in his later works. And yet, there is a clear continuity in that responsibility cannot be archic in the sense of an obligation guided by principle. While for Glaucon, Gyges cannot possibly choose to be moral, there is a sense that for Levinas true ethical responsibility can only be understood in this Gygean state of perfect liberty, beyond the practical realm of consequences that might be imposed by Gods or men. If, as Levinas maintains, the possibility of this injustice is the basic condition of man, Gyges gives us an extreme example of the basic human condition that lies at the heart of this egoism. It is the transcending this egoism, by responding to the ethical demand which emanates from the face of the other that Levinas understands as "disinterestedness" or more simply as "goodness".

This disinterestedness is what overcomes the anarchy of Gygean liberty, which Levinas also refers to as "separation". He notes in TI:

> Gyges's ring symbolizes separation. Gyges plays a double game, a presence to the others and an absence, speaking to "others" and evading speech ; Gyges is the very condition of man, the possibility of injustice and radical egoism, the possibility of accepting the rules of the game, but cheating. (TI, p. 173)

Here again we see that Levinas considers Gyges in terms of his separation from the call of responsibility, and that the anarchic spectacle of Gygean liberty is seen as the basic condition of human existence. The myth of Gyges, or the myth of interiority, gives the illusion of separation and justification of interiority. What makes this myth so interesting for Levinas, and why he returns to it repeatedly over the course of TI (and once again in OTB), is that liberty produces interiority as separation. What this means is that according to the myth, Gyges was not a cruel or selfish individual prior to encountering the ring. It is the ring, the key to perfect liberty, which creates his separation and solipsism.

But perhaps the most provocative part of the above quote is Levinas's insistence that Gyges accepts the rules of the game but chooses to cheat. In its political context, in accordance with Glaucon's contractarian position, this seems to confirm that Levinas does indeed understand the Hobbesean liberal position behind Glaucon's telling of the myth. For a purely self-interested individual, obedience to laws and social norms serves no purpose but to limit the actions of others. Given the opportunity to cheat, to reap benefits without risking consequence, the purely self-interested

citizen will always choose to cheat since obedience to morality itself has no immediate selfish benefit.

III. Enjoyment and Transcendence

On a deeper level, we might understand Levinas's response to Glaucon's contractarianism in terms of the way it views civility as obedience motivated only by threat of violent reprisal for transgressions. Civility is, then, motivated not by pursuit of appetites but rather by avoidance of pain. This helps explain why so much of TI is dedicated to Levinas's account of enjoyment rejecting Heidegger's understanding of human life in terms of a struggle for survival. This question of individual enjoyment takes on a central role in Section 2 of TI. Levinas seems concerned that his juxtaposition of enjoyment and interiority could end up collapsing the basic concept of individual enjoyment and end up subordinating individual enjoyment to the collective greater good or survival of the Volk. It is this last position that he associates with Heidegger's *Dasein* and lies at the core of the "climate" of Heideggerian philosophy that he feels the need to escape. Robert Bernasconi, in his article "Levinas and the Struggle for Existence"[45], explains this particular aspect of Levinas's critique of Heidegger by connecting Heideggerian *Dasein* to a kind of Darwinian *Kampf ums Dasein* (struggle for existence) that Levinas dismisses as mistaking the satisfaction of want (*Not*) for enjoyment.

Bernasconi points out that the only work of political philosophy mentioned by title within the text of TI, other than Plato's Republic, is by the obscure Nazi scholar Kurt Schilling: "*Einfuhrung in die Staats- und Rechts-philosophie*" from 1939 (BERNASCONI, 2005, p. 170). Levinas does not describe the text at length, only dismissing it as "typical of racist philosophy" (TI, p. 120n), but the footnote in which the text is discussed does contain one of TI's few crucial references to the State, which we will develop in more detail in the following chapter. What is important about the reference to Schilling, within the present context, is the way in which this typically racist philosophy relies on the subordination of enjoyment to biological survival. Bernasconi notes:

> Part of Levinas's objection to Schilling is that in his work the happiness of individuals is bypassed for a focus on want or distress (*Not*) and its threat to life (*TeI 93n, TI 120n*). *Not* was also a central concept in Heidegger's writings in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but more significantly, Levinas had frequently directed the same complaint against

[45] BERNASCONI, ROBERT. "Levinas and the Struggle for Existence" in Addressing Levinas, Eds. ERIC SEAN NELSON, ANTJE KAPUST and KENT STILL. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p. 170-184, 2005.

> Heidegger's ontology of *Dasein.* In *Existence and Existents* Levinas insisted that we eat because we are hungry and not in order to live. The same point is made in *Totality and Infinity*, where it is said that Heidegger's *Sorge*, which Levinas somewhat tendentiously equates with the naked will to be, forgets love of life: "being is risked for happiness" (*TeI 84, TI 112*). (BERNASCONI, 2005, p. 170-1)

This oblique attack on Heidegger underscores the vitality of personal human enjoyment in Levinas's own thought and represents another fundamental conflict with Heideggerian philosophy. Enjoyment can neither be reduced to interiority nor subsumed to a general sense of survival. Returning to the question of the pursuit of appetites in the myth of Gyges, we see here a shared fundamental characteristic of both Heideggerian Sorge and the interiority of Gygean liberty. The term *Not*, which as Bernasconi points out plays a central role in Heidegger's thought, implies not only "want" but also "distress" or even "compulsion" (with force as with *nötigen* or *Nötigung*). Bernasconi's makes a compelling case that Levinas's concept of enjoyment seeks to avoid not just the interiority of Heideggerian *Dasein*, but also a social sense of *Not* in a social or political sense that Levinas viewed as the core of Nazi social Darwinism. As evidence of how Levinas understood this connection, Bernasconi cites an interview response, again from the 1986 Warwick interview, in which Levinas argues that there is a fundamental agreement between Heidegger and Darwin: "Heidegger says at the beginning of Being and Time that Dasein is a being who in his being is concerned for this being itself. That's Darwin's idea: the living being struggles for life. The aim of being is being itself." (PM, p. 173) Bernasconi problematizes this connection, pointing to texts that Levinas was seemingly unfamiliar with in which Heidegger repudiates Darwin. But the more crucial point for our purposes here is the way in which Levinasian enjoyment avoids Heideggerian individual solipsism as well as a general struggle for the existence at the level of species or Volk. This will be crucial in our later discussion of individualism and collectivism.

At this point it becomes clear that Levinas is dealing with an explicitly political vocabulary of liberty and anarchy even while stressing the priority of the ethical. Since he understands Gygean liberty as "the possibility of injustice" which is "the very condition of man" one might be tempted to interpret his position as naturalizing solipsism. However, he makes clear that this condition of man refers not to solipsism, but for a **potential to become** solipsistic. It is important to remember that Levinas's interest in the myth of Gyges is not in how the ring allows natural and latent solipsism to emerge, as Glaucon would have it, but rather how "the myth of interiority" is created through liberty and freedom from consequence. Overcoming this myth and avoiding the potential

for solipsism is not possible, however, within the political realm. Rather it is only the ethical dimension of human life that allows this transcendence.

In attempting to elucidate this ethical dimension, Levinas's primary preoccupation in TI is to describe the phenomenological structure by which the call of the Other precedes an ontological state of selfhood or political subjectivity as citizenship. However, this precedence is not chronological, but rather indicates that the task of ethics as first philosophy undermines these concepts of selfhood or citizenship. Instead of viewing ethics as one activity among others in which autonomous agents find themselves engaged, Levinas understands the priority of ethics in a fundamentally phenomenological sense. This means that the primary phenomenological datum of human existence is an attenuation to call of ethical responsibility. The self, rather than being an object which engages in ethical choices, is the subject which is called into being through ethical responsibility for the Other. Thus anarchy, in the sense of Gygean liberty, is not chronologically or ontologically prior to ethical responsibility. The ethical, for Levinas, precedes and exceeds the liberty to act or the self which is the site of agency.

And yet, responsibility implies and depends on a self which has free will, otherwise Levinas would fall back into the anarchic Gygean spectacle. It is here that we must understand the Levinasian ethical subject as a kind of transcendence. This is not the transcendental subject of Kant or even Husserl, but transcendence in the sense that Levinas adopts from Plato as "surpassing the totality" (TI, p. 103). In this way, Levinasian ethical transcendence differs from Buber's I-Thou, which considers relation to be purely symmetrical and reciprocal. For Levinas, subjectivity must be transcendental because it is made possible through the exteriority of the absolutely other, whereas Buber's transcendence would only signify the creation of a new closed totality. Levinas's transcendence is always incomplete because a completed transcendence would thematize and reduce the other to merely another part of my interiority. It is in this sense that he understands ethics not as the creation of an archic system, but as critique in the sense of that which avoids the reduction of the other to the same. (TI, p. 43)

This understanding of transcendental subjectivity, as the concrete self that is called into question through the disruptive presence of that which lies beyond our totality, lies at the core of why Levinas views anarchy in TI as a condition of ontology rather than a condition of responsibility. Levinas notes: "The presence of the Other dispels the anarchic sorcery of the facts : the world

becomes an object. To be an object, to be a theme, is to be what I can speak of with someone who has broken through the screen of phenomena and has associated me with himself." (TI, p. 99) It is only through the catalyzing event of encountering exteriority that the world outside of my own totality can be understood as an object. But since speech is a kind of transcendence for Levinas, it allows for the overcoming of the "imperialism of the same" (TI, p. 39) without reducing the Other to an object that I can comprehend as just another part of my totality. This means that the exteriority of the other is not reducible to my comprehension of its alterity, which always escapes and exceeds my attempts to encapsulate the Other as an object. It is this unthematizability of the Other, the impossibility of reduction to sameness, that brings the self into question. The event of speech, or the face of the Other, presents a call of exteriority which refuses synthesis into comprehension as transcendence. By emphasizing ethics as first philosophy, Levinas takes exteriority not as the condition for the possibility of the transcendence of a subject, but the event in which subjectivity emerges as transcendence. TI, at its core, is an attempt to describe responsibility as the way in which order is introduced into the chaos of the anarchic spectacle of being as interiority.

By viewing responsibility as the introduction of ordering into the spectacle of being, Levinas's position in TI must be understood as maintaining that responsibility is fundamentally archic. But, to return to the central distinction of the double meaning of arche in Heidegger's view, Levinasian responsibility is archic in the sense of *Verfügung* as ordering rather than the sense of *Ausgang* as origin. Here, at least, Levinas is not yet affirming that responsibility is the origin of self, but rather that responsibility introduces order in the anarchic chaos of the spectacle. Later in TI, Levinas does seem to emphasize archic responsibility as the origin of self in the sense of *Ausgang* against the impersonal solipsism of Heideggerian being-in-general.

IV. The Anarchy of the *il y a*

In these later passages in TI, Levinas connects anarchy with his concept of the *il y a*, or the *there is*, which Levinas had developed in his earlier book, *Existence and Existents* (EE). In that 1947 work, Levinas develops his extensive account of the *il y a* (literally: there is) in order to explicitly highlight the solipsism of Heidegger's *es gibt* (literally: it gives). The interiority that Levinas sets out to critique from the opening pages of TI must be understood in relation to this aspect of Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. As with the Gygean anarchic spectacle, Heidegger's understanding of being is laid out in terms of the pure interiority of *Dasein*, which is to say being

lacks the ordering introduced by responsibility. We might stay that for Levinas, if it were not for the transcendence of the face of the other, or more concretely the event of speech, Heidegger would be right to understand being in terms of pure interiority. But for our purposes here, it is important to highlight the way in which Levinas's work is indebted to Heidegger's understanding the relation of self and world. For Heidegger, being-in-the-world does not imply the condition of being-in as a property of *Dasein*, but rather it is a fundamental characteristic of Being itself. (HEIDEGGER, 1962, p. 84) One key to understanding Levinas's concept of anarchy in TI is the way in which he appropriates elements of this Heideggerian project in developing his own ethical phenomenology. For Levinas, the ethical relation is not a property or activity in which the self may or may not be engaged. Rather, as with being-in for Heidegger, it is the fundamental characteristic of existence. To put this another way, we might say that if Heidegger's great insight is that *Dasein* is never not in the world, Levinas's appropriation of this insight is that the self is never not responsible for the other. Thus, the anarchic world of facts is not chronologically prior to the ethical as a kind primordial demiurge out of which responsibility emerges. Rather, for Levinas, interiority is not chronologically or ontologically prior to call of exteriority which introduces order but rather they are, in Heideggerian terms, equiprimordial.

But in order to properly analyze Heidegger, in his attempt to go beyond or escape Heideggerian philosophy, Levinas must engage directly with the account of being as interiority, which leads him to the vocabulary of the *il y a* in EE. There Levinas defines this concept in dramatic and ominous terms:

> This impersonal, anonymous, yet inextinguishable "consummation" of being, which murmurs in the depths of nothingness itself, we shall call by the term *there is (il y a)*. The *there is*, inasmuch as it resists a personal form, is "being in general."… We have not derived this notion from exterior things or the inner world — or from any "being" whatsoever. For the *there is* transcends inwardness as well as exteriority; it does not even make it possible to distinguish between these. (LEVINAS, 1947, p. 93-4, my translation)

Levinas's cryptic tone reflects not only the conditions in which the work was written, at least partially composed in a German prison camp, but his profound disillusionment and resentment with Heidegger's thought. This "horror" of the *il y a* is carefully distanced from Heideggerian anxiety or being-towards-death. For Heidegger, our mortality or finitude is what gives our existence meaning, or rather, our selfhood emerges against the inevitability of death. Importantly this is not against inevitable death in general or an abstract conception of how death relates to

human beings, but my own personal death, which is not relatable or knowable through the death of others. This authentic solitude of death, the non-relational interiority of the finitude of existence, is possibly the most fundamental insight in all of Heidegger's great work. Thus, it is important to note the way in which Levinas rebels against this authentic interiority of being-towards-death in TI: "The solitude of death does not make the Other vanish, but remains in a consciousness of hostility, and consequently still renders possible an appeal to the Other… A social conjuncture is maintained in this menace." (TI, p. 234) The sociality of death, and the fact that my own death is fundamentally an event which "I" will never be able to experience, serves as a key moment in Levinas's rejection of the very specific solipsism at the heart of Heidegger's project. Phenomenologically, the only death I will ever have the possibility of experiencing will be the deaths of others, and this sociality is what informs my own experience of my own mortality rather than the dread or anticipation of an event which is beyond the possibility of experience.

The shadow of being, which Levinas draws out in a long passage on Macbeth in EE, lies in this withdrawal into Heideggerian interiority, which gives rise not to anxiety in anticipation of death, but horror. He notes:

> The horror of the night, as an experience of the *il ya a*, does not then reveal to us a danger of death, nor even a danger of pain. That is the essential point of this analysis. The pure nothingness revealed by anxiety in Heidegger's analysis does not constitute the *il ya a*. There is horror of being and not anxiety over nothingness, fear of being and not fear for being; there is being prey to, delivered over to something that is not a "something." When night is dissipated by the first rays of the sun, the horror of the night can no longer be defined. The "something" appears as "nothing." (LEVINAS, 1947, p. 102, my translation)

There is a clear parallel here between the horror of the *il y a* and what Levinas developed later as anarchic spectacle of Gygean liberty. Levinas views the *il y a* as impersonal and non-substantive event, "being in general" which is detached from responsibility. The horror of being in general, the central threat of Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology, is that responsibility becomes thematized as one aspect of self or simply another part of the imperialism of the same. Heidegger is certainly not alone in this reduction of responsibility to an aspect of self, and this is a central characteristic of Levinas's general critique against western philosophy, but his critique is especially pointed when addressing the way that Heidegger understands being as being in general or the *il y a.*

Levinas makes a clear link between this concept of the *il y a* and his conception of anarchy near the end of TI. He notes:

> The absolute indetermination of the *there is*, an existing without existants, is an incessant negation, to an infinite degree, consequently an infinite limitation. Against the anarchy of the *there is* the existent is produced, a subject of what can happen, an origin and commencement, a power. (TI, p. 281)

The individuated self is produced through responsibility against this anarchy of the *il y a*. This is a crucial point for understanding Levinas's early thinking on anarchy because it is only through overcoming anarchy that the ethical subject emerges. In Heideggerian terms, this equates to viewing responsibility as an individuating ordering (*Verfügung*) while the emergent ethical subject must be understood as the origin (*Ausgang*) of individuation. This means that while responsibility is not reducible to an aspect of selfhood, the origin of the self lies in this encounter with what lies beyond the totality. But since this does not indicate a chronological progression, the anarchy of the *il y a* is not simply primordial precondition out of which ethical subjectivity emerges, rather it is a constant tendency or gravitational pull towards the solipsism of Gyges. The production of the ethical subject, the commencement which gives order to the anarchic spectacle of perfect liberty, shatters this indetermination. But the crucial point is that this rupture does not emanate from the self, rather the self is produced via the rupture, via the call of responsibility which emanates from the face of the Other.

V. Anarchic Responsibility in OTB

None of this account of responsibility as archic would be especially surprising were it not for Levinas's more famous account in his later work which developed a systematic account of the way in which responsibility in fundamentally anarchic. While there clearly are elements of both sides of the double meaning of arche in TI, the archic nature of responsibility in that work, as I have argued, tends towards the understanding of arche as *Verfügung*. As Heidegger insists, due to the unity of this double meaning, there will always be some conceptual overlap between the activity of ordering and the principle according to which that ordering occurs. However, on my reading, there is a stronger tendency to understand the anarchic nature of responsibility in OTB in terms of an absence of principle (*Ausgang*). As he makes clear in the opening paragraph of Substitution in OTB, he associates arche with an ideal principle, self-possession and sovereignty (OTB, p. 99).

But to say that responsibility in OTB is anarchic is not simply to affirm that ethical responsibility does not follow a single guiding principle, such as a Kantian categorical imperative or a hedonic calculus of utility. Rather, in OTB Levinas views the anarchic dimension of responsibility in terms of its ability to disrupt and overcome any such ideal principle. More fundamentally, he directly attacks the notion that responsibility can be understood as an activity or aspect of consciousness or agency in the traditional western philosophy paradigm of subordinating ethics to ontology. He describes the anarchic function of responsibility as rupturing and halting the "ontological play" of consciousness. Again, as in TI, the call of responsibility disrupts interiority, but Levinas's emphasis in OTB is no longer in overcoming the anarchy of the *il y a*. Rather, Levinas stresses the way in which anarchy signifies a disruption of interiority that refuses to re-establish itself as a new order. Against Bergson, Levinas maintains that disorder does not necessarily constitute a new order and true non-thematizable anarchy is indeed possible, at least in terms of ethical anarchy.

Of course, in a well-studied footnote to these passages in OTB, Levinas directly opposes the link I am attempting to draw here between his concept of ethical anarchy and political anarchy. For Levinas, unlike ethical anarchy, political anarchy is fated to collapsing into the elevation of disorder as a new order. This claim, which is affirmed but not elaborated on in any detail, is notable for its dismissive nature towards the entire tradition of political anarchism. He notes:

> The notion of anarchy we are introducing here has a meaning prior to the political (or anti political) meaning popularly attributed to it. It would be self-contradictory to set it up as a principle (in the sense that anarchists understand it). Anarchy cannot be. sovereign. like an *arche*. It can only disturb the State - but in a radical way, making possible moments of negation *without any* affirmation. The State then cannot set itself up as a Whole. But. on the other hand, anarchy can be stated. Yet disorder has an irreducible meaning, as refusal of synthesis. (OTB, p. 194n3, translation modified)

This footnote serves as the centerpiece of Miguel Abensour's profound analysis of Levinas in *Democracy Against the State*, which we will discuss in greater detail in a later chapter along with a more in-depth analysis of the particular "popular" sense Levinas evokes here. Levinas's insistence that this ethical anarchy radically disturbs the state, yet cannot be understood in a political or anti-political sense, seems self-contradictory. The fundamental question for understanding a political sense of Levinas's ethical anarchy is not what kind of State does it call to be established, or what archic principle must guide the State, but rather how can the critique of ethics be engaged *against* the State. To be clear, Levinas affirms that political anarchy is the

elevation of disorder as a new order, but this affirmation, in my view, is ultimately based on a fundamental misunderstanding of political anarchism.

While I have stressed the Greek and Heideggerian roots of Levinas's concept of anarchy, it is important to note that in OTB, these above citations always appear in dialog with Bergson. Indeed, from his earliest post-war writings Levinas had already begun engaging Bergson's concept of disorder in ways that remain relevant to his mature definition of anarchy in OTB. Returning to the 1957 article "Phenomenon and Enigma" Levinas had already begun to address Bergsonian disorder in a way that anticipates this later language:

> Bergson has taught us that disorder, like nothingness, is a relative idea. For there to be an absolute disturbance, must there erupt into the same an absolute alterity, that of the other? Someone unknown to me rang my doorbell and interrupted my work. I dissipated a few of his illusions. But he brought me into his affairs and his difficulties, troubling my good conscience. The disturbance, the clash of two orders, ends in a conciliation, in the constitution of a new order which, more vast, closer to the total, and in this sense ultimate or original, order, shines through this conflict. (PE, p. 63-4)

Bergsonian disorder cannot be result in the immediate creation of a new order. The order of interiority, of Levinas working at his desk as well as the interiority of the guest at the door, is ruptured by the appearance of the Other. But immediately this anarchy leads to a conciliation, which is to say, a new synthetic order which incorporates the separate totalities and reduces the alterity that provoked the rupture to simply another characteristic of the new order. Levinas continues:

> The other can also not appear without renouncing his radical alterity, without entering into an order. The breaks in the order reenter the order whose weave lasts unendingly, a weave these breaks manifest, and which is a totality. The unwonted is understood. The apparent interference of the other in the same has been settled beforehand. (PE, p. 64)

Levinas's phenomenological investigations of TI attempt to describe the way that this radical alterity resists a reduction to the same as a synthesis of a new totality. But it is important that in the years preceding the publication of TI, Levinas was already engaged with the way in which thinkers such as Bergson understood a dynamic of disorder which cannot do otherwise but to create a new order. Responsibility, in OTB, must be described in terms of an anarchy which is not simply a Bergsonian disorder because it resists exactly this tendency to collapse the alterity of the other into a condition of a new kind of interiority.

And yet, the anarchy of responsibility is not a return to a Heideggerian impersonal spectacle that he views in the anarchy of the *il y a*. Elaborating this complex dynamic of individuation through responsibility, the emergence of anarchic ethical subjectivity against the anarchy of interiority, is the paradoxical aim of OTB. To put this in another way, in OTB Levinas is no longer looking for the way that responsibility introduces order into consciousness of an anarchic world. Instead, his work turns to towards understanding how the anarchic subject disrupts that anarchic world without producing a new archic foundation, which would threaten to lapse back into the anarchy of interiority. What this means, then, is that in shifting his attention from the anarchy of the *il y a* to the anarchy of responsibility itself, Levinas seems to be embracing sides of the double meaning of arche as both ordering and the principle by which that ordering occurs. This shift seems evident when Levinas defines the anarchic relationship of proximity as that which is without the mediation of any principle or any ideality, and as the anarchic relationship called obsession which undermines thematization, and thus escapes domination by any principle, origin, will, or arché. (OTB, p. 86-7).

At stake in this shift is Levinas's challenge to the identity of the self. In TI, this is only approached near the conclusion of the book, especially in the sections on fecundity, which calls into question the indetermination of the I. He notes: "The relation with the child-that is, the relation with the other that is not a power, but fecundity-establishes relationship with the absolute future, or infinite time. The other that I will be does not have the indetermination of the possible, which does, however, bear the trace of the fixity of the I that grasps that possible." (TI, p. 268) Levinas carries on this line of thought of the indeterminacy of the I into his account of ethical subjectivity in OTB, which brings him to reconsider not just the overly ontological language of TI, but also the archic role of responsibility. While responsibility in TI introduces order into anarchy, in OTB responsibility disrupts not only the anarchy of being in general but also its own tendency to supplant one order with another.

Conclusion

Levinas's use of the term anarchy in TI differs greatly from the more elaborate and systematic way the concept is employed in his later works. The language of anarchy in TI draws attention to the absence of responsibility in Heidegger's fundamental ontology and deliberately appropriates

Heidegger's own reading of the Greek arche in an attempt to undermine the fundamentality of ontology in Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. By viewing the role of responsibility as archic, as giving order to chaos, Levinas risks an overdetermination of the identity of the self, which presents the central problem he attempts to overcome in his later works that view responsibility as anarchic and embraces the indetermination of the self. In the concluding remarks of TI, Levinas himself begins to problematize this archic view of responsibility and self, especially in the passages describing the self in fecundity that persists beyond one's own temporality.

By using the vocabulary of anarchy to critique Heidegger's concept of being-in-general, as well as Glaucon's thought experiment utilizing the myth of Gyges, Levinas draws an unmistakable connection between Heideggerian individualism and the solipsism of unrestrained liberty. By viewing anarchy and interiority as synonymous in his early work, Levinas takes the position that Heideggerian being-in-general is anarchic precisely in the sense that it lacks the only principle which could give order to being, which is responsibility. His ethical phenomenology attempts to show the fundamentality of responsibility, not just as a critique of Heidegger, but also as a critique of the kind of political view that would view human sociality in terms of a self-interested autonomous agent.

But perhaps the more fundamental message of TI is that overcoming the separation that Gyges achieves through the power of anonymity is impossible at the political level. Rather, at the political level of the contractarianism of Glaucon or Hobbes, the baser appetites of citizens will only be restrained so long as they have greater fear of the consequences of misdeeds. Removed from the threat of violent consequence, like Gyges, they will accept the rules of the game but will choose to cheat the system to their advantage. This is the central point of the Tragedy of the Commons[46], where each agent will selfishly pursue their own self-interest, even at the detriment of their fellow citizens. The problem with this worldview is that these agents choosing rationally in pursuit of their own self-interest have no motivation to yield to the call of the ethical dimension of life. Politically rationality closes over and becomes a totality. Levinas rejects that the only solution to political problems is more political answers within the totalized realm of political rationality. This does not mean, however, that Levinas's work is not political in nature. On the contrary, it is a central preoccupation with political themes that drives Levinas to understand how political

[46] HARDIN, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons" in SCIENCE 13 DEC 1968 : 1243-1248.

problems can be overcome with solutions beyond the reach of political rationality. Put another way, politics does not have access to that which lies beyond its own totality, only ethics can achieve this transcendence. Levinas's central task, then, is not to develop an ethical phenomenology for its own sake, but rather for the sake of politics which remains closed off in its totality. Within a political totality, Gyges's solipsism makes perfect sense, it is only by viewing his actions from an ethical perspective in which their pathological nature becomes apparent.

But the thought experiment of Gyges is an extreme example of the basic human condition. We can easily imagine more commonplace situations in which breaking the rules of the game holds no consequence, or those consequences do not outweigh the benefits of cheating. A purely self-interested individual, in those situations, would find themselves in the same position as Gyges. If the only thing that constrains us morally is fear of punishment, purely self-interested individuals will always be tempted by the potential benefits of unjust acts. If, as Richard Bernstein has argued, Levinas's entire philosophy is best understood as "an ethical response to evil" (BERNSTEIN, 2004, p. 253), it must be noted that the evil which he opposes is not just the radical evil of sadistic cruelty, but the banal evil of indifference. Gyges, it must be remembered, was not described as a cruel or evil individual, but he found himself in a situation wherein acting unjustly brought greater personal benefit than acting justly.

While Levinas's later work presents his concept of anarchy against Bergson's disorder, it is clear that his earlier engagement with Heidegger's complex rendering of the double sense of arche is a motivating force behind Levinas's vocabulary of anarchy. It is this explicitly Heideggerian vocabulary, especially as it appeared in his early seminars, which Levinas uses to directly attack the project of fundamental ontology as lacking the archic dimension of responsibility.

But this gives rise to a new problematic in which the role of responsibility is taken to be the origin of a new archic origin or ordering of being. Levinas attempts to escape this problematic, even in TI, but goes much farther in his later work to embrace the indeterminacy of the ethical subject. Anarchic responsibility, in its ethical sense that Levinas emphasizes in OTB, refuses synthesis and the collapsing of alterity into a new totality. It is this indeterminacy, this constant vigilance against the calcification into archic order, that lies at the heart of political anarchy.

Despite Levinas's insistence that "popular" political anarchy is necessarily the elevation of disorder as a new order, applying Levinas's own framework of ethical anarchy to political anarchy

helps us understand how political anarchism can resist this tendency. For Levinas, liberalism resists the tendency towards calcification as totality through the admission of human rights which signify a justice that resides beyond the limits of the state, as an unreachable ideal to which the state aspires. And yet, as Levinas declares in a 1990 prefatory note for a republication of his 1934 article "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism"[47]: "We must ask ourselves if liberalism is all we need to achieve an authentic dignity for the human subject." (RPH, p. 63) Clearly Levinas's answer to this question is negative, as no politics can achieve the transcendence of ethical responsibility. However, his works on human rights, along with scattered statements from various interviews of the 1980s, do seem to endorse a particular vision of the western liberal state, especially in the case of Israel. Thus, it is necessary to ask, in our attempt to understand the political implications of Levinas's work, what justice is achievable through the liberal state and what justice lies beyond the state.

[47] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism". Trans. Seán Hand. In *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (Autumn, 1990) pp. 62-71. Hereafter RPH.

Chapter 3: The Pluralist Society Against Nationalism

As with the concept of anarchy explored in the previous chapter, Levinas's use of the term "pluralism" relies on a double meaning. On the one hand, Levinas's entire philosophical project seeks to describe a metaphysical pluralism at the heart of human subjectivity, while on the other, a more practical sense of social pluralism emerges at various points in his writings in which he focuses on what he calls the "pluralist society" (*societé pluraliste*). This is especially clear in the concluding remarks of TI where Levinas notes that ethical goodness manifests as plurality against the State. It is remarkable that Levinas's *magnum opus* concludes with this call for pluralism, noting that "Transcendence or goodness is produced as pluralism." (TI, p. 305) While Levinas's ethical phenomenology clearly has the metaphysical sense of pluralism as its primary concern, in this chapter I will attempt to show that this ethical metaphysics cannot be understood outside of the context of social pluralism which motivates and informs his work.

It should be kept in mind that Levinas insists that his critique of totality is undertaken within the historical context of the experience of totalitarianism. This point is especially salient in the dedication of OTB, which reads: "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.." (OTB, p. v) In my view, it is this exact social context which inspires and orients Levinas's metaphysical project from his earliest writings to his final works. Pluralism functions within this project in terms of a double opposition, first as metaphysical pluralism's opposition to the totalizing tendencies of egoistic solipsism and social pluralism's opposition to the totalizing tendencies of the State. In my view, these are not two distinct tasks between which his work can be seen to oscillate, but rather that these two senses of pluralism complement one another and should be understood as the consonance that links his ethical phenomenology and its political implications. By deploying the language of pluralism in this way, Levinas offers us a way to engage in a double critique of totality, both in terms of a solipsistic view of human subjectivity as well as in the political terms of the totalized State.

I. Social Metaphysics

In order to animate this double conception of pluralism, we must explore the necessary link between the metaphysical and social aspects of pluralism. In order to fully understand this somewhat challenging connection, we might begin by examining the subtle influence of Durkheim's sociology on Levinas ethical project. This influence has been thoroughly documented by Howard Caygill in his 2002 book *Levinas and the Political*[48], which stresses the role of Durkheim's conception of the sacred on Levinas's later phenomenology. Caygill relies largely on the widely circulated interviews with Philippe Nemo from 1981 in which Levinas addresses not only his mature philosophical positions but the range of influences which contributed to his unique approach to philosophical questions. These interviews represent an especially important moment in Levinas's reflection on his own thought and are an indispensable resource for interpreting the political and social context of the pluralism evoked in the conclusion of TI.

One of the important characteristics of the largely informal interviews, which were subsequently collected and republished as *Ethics and Infinity*[49], is that Levinas makes a clear connection between his metaphysical project and the broader social context to which that project attempts to respond. For example, in response to a question as to whether his 1948 book *Time and the Other*[50] remained faithful to a metaphysical project in light of the political upheavals of the 1930s and 1940s, Levinas notes:

> Certainly, but do not forget that it was the time when Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty dominated the philosophical horizon, when German phenomenology arrived in France, and when Heidegger began to be known. One did not only debate social problems; there was a sort of general opening and curiosity about everything. I do not believe, however, that pure philosophy can be pure without going to the "social problem." (EI, p. 56)

In discussing this underappreciated 1948 book, he elaborates that this social problem haunts existentialist approaches to philosophy which understand existence in terms of "the despair of solitude, or as the isolation within anxiety." (EI, p. 57) This distances his own approach from that of his contemporaries within the early French reception of phenomenology, with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty engaging directly political themes from distinctly existential perspectives. Levinas

[48] CAYGILL, Howard. Levinas and the Political. London: Routledge, 2002.
[49] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985. Hereafter EI.
[50] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Time and the Other [and additional essays]. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh : Duquesne University Press, 1987. Hereafter TO.

emphatically argues against his contemporaries' view that human subjectivity is primarily understood in terms of its isolation from the social, ultimately concluding that "[t]he social is beyond ontology." (TO, p. 58) As we saw in the first chapter of the present analysis, Levinas was far more receptive to Merleau-Ponty's later work, especially *Signs*[51], which held the promise of a phenomenology untethered to a fundamental distinction between a perceiving subject and its perceived objects.

But unlike Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Levinas never undertook the task of addressing political issues at the level of political rationality. Rather, Levinas's work aims at describing the metaphysical pluralism of ethical subjectivity against his contemporaries who failed to grasp the vital role played by sociality on the very constitution of human subjectivity. It is here that Levinas draws on his early engagement with Durkheim and more specifically on his rather unorthodox metaphysical interpretation of Durkheim's conception of the social. In response to Nemo's question regarding his investment in the philosophical tradition, specifically asking: "Who are the first philosophers you read?" Levinas responds:

> Even before beginning my studies in philosophy in France, I had read the great Russian writers, as I have said. Serious contact with specifically philosophical literature and with philosophers—was at Strasbourg. There, at eighteen, I met four professors to whom, in my spirit, I attach and incomparable prestige: Charles Blondel, Maurice Halbwachs, Maurice Pradines and Henri Carteron. These were men! Naïve exclamation returning to me in thought each time I evoke those so very rich years, and that nothing in my life has disappointed. Maurice Halbwachs had a martyr's death during the Occupation. In contact with these masters the great virtues of intelligence and intellectual probity were revealed to me, but also those of clarity and the elegance of the French university. Initiation into the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and the Cartesians, Kant. Not yet Hegel, in those twenties, at the Faculty of Arts at Strasbourg! But it was Durkheim and Bergson who seemed to me especially alive in the instruction and attention of the students. It was they whom one cited, and they whom one opposed. They had incontestably been the professors of our masters. (TO, p. 26)

Nemo, who would go on to become a well-respected philosopher in his own right, seems surprised at the name of Durkheim included as one of the great philosophical influences on Levinas's work. This leads him to ask the follow up question: "Do you put the sociological thought of a Durkheim on the same level as the properly philosophical thought of a Bergson?" at which point Levinas elaborates:

[51] MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice. Signs. Trans. Richard McCleary. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

> Apparently, Durkheim was inaugurating an experimental sociology. But his work also appeared as a 'rational sociology,' as an elaboration of the fundamental categories of the social, as what one would call today an 'eidetic of society,' beginning with the leading idea that the social does not reduce to the sum of individual psychologies. Durkheim, a metaphysician! The idea that the social is the very order of the spiritual, a new plot in being above the animal and human psychism; the level of 'collective representations' defined with vigor and which opens up the dimension of spirit in the individual life itself, where the individual alone comes to be recognized and even redeemed. In Durkheim there is, in a sense, a theory of 'levels of being,' of the irreducibility of these levels to one another, an idea which acquires its full meaning within the Husserlian and Heideggerian context. (TO, p. 26-27)

Unfortunately for our purposes here, Nemo moves on to discuss Bergson rather than pressing Levinas on this possible connection between Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology with Durkheim's social metaphysics. This is, perhaps, the most revealing aspect of Levinas's reference to Durkheim as a great philosophical thinker on par with the titans of the philosophical canon. For Levinas, Durkheim provides the foundation for a critique of Husserl and Heidegger by insisting on the irreducibility of levels of sociality, that is, the irreducibility of social life to the actions or the consciousness of individual subjects. It is exactly this irreducibility, the radical alterity which cannot be accounted for within the consciousness of the Husserlian subject or *Dasein* which precedes *Mitsein* in Heidegger, that Levinas tries to capture in his ethical phenomenology. Even though Nemo leaves this tantalizing line of thought unexplored, we can formulate what Levinas might say had Nemo pressed him to elaborate further based on passages found in TI. There, Levinas clearly utilizes Durkheim's social metaphysics as a way to escape from Heidegger's solipsism at the heart of the project of fundamental ontology. He notes:

> … for Heidegger intersubjectivity is a coexistence, a we prior to the I and the other, a neutral intersubjectivity. The face to face both announces a society, and permits the maintaining of a separated I.
>
> Durkheim already in one respect went beyond this optical interpretation of the relation with the other in characterizing society by religion. I relate to the Other only across Society, which is not simply a multiplicity of individuals or objects ; I relate to the Other who is not simply a part of a Whole, nor a singular instance of a concept. To reach the Other through the social is to reach him through the religious. Durkheim thus gives an indication of a transcendence other than that of the objective. (TI, p. 68)

Levinas will go on to oppose Durkheim's reduction of religion to observable and quantifiable practices and rituals, which is necessitated by the positivistic methodology of his experimental sociology. But Durkheim's central insight which Levinas identifies and praises in TI, and again 20

years later in the Nemo interviews, is that his social metaphysics avoids the solipsistic trappings of existential phenomenology by viewing the social as beyond ontology.

This helps us better understand the way in which Levinas evokes Durkheim against Heidegger at length in EE. That book, which again was written in part while in a German prisoner of war camp, carries Levinas's most vehement philosophical response to Heidegger's political engagements, and finds Levinas attempting to formulate a philosophical escape from the climate of Heideggerian ontology. Levinas would go on to develop his own formal critique of the project of fundamental ontology, beginning in 1951 in the article "Is Ontology Fundamental?" and culminating in TI. In my view, it is in this context of Levinas's search for a way out of Heideggerian solipsism that we should read Levinas's references to Durkheim, not in terms of admiration for his sociological methodology or even the most basic conclusions of his experimental sociology, but rather in the limited sense of Durkheim as the source of a social metaphysics which accesses an aspect of sociality that is lost in the phenomenology of both Husserl and Heidegger.

This limited admiration for Durkheim is restricted to the way Durkheim's conception of the social evokes a sense of relationality which cannot be reduced to simple multiplicity or neutral intersubjectivity. The radical differences between Levinas's philosophical project and Durkheim's sociological approach are clear, as Levinas indicates immediately following the above quote by questioning Durkheim's account of religion as ceremonial practice. Even this clear admiration for Durkheim's account of intersubjectivity is tempered in other writings, such as in *Time and the Other*, wherein Levinas notes "Durkheim has misunderstood the specificity of the other when he asks in what Other rather than myself is the object of a virtuous action." (TO, p. 84) Levinas, of course, could never accept Durkheim's position that morality is a product of the collective and responsibility is generalized within sociality rather than the product of the direct face-to-face encounter with the specific Other.

While there are certainly aspects of methodological overlap between sociology and phenomenology, notably as developed classically by Alfred Schutz and more recently Zygmunt Bauman whose work draws specifically on Levinas, Durkheim's particular methodological approach has traditionally been seen as incompatible with phenomenology.[52] This stresses the

[52] One recent study, "Durkheim as the Founding Father of Phenomenological Sociology" by Carlos Belvedere, casts doubt on this traditional account of incompatibility arguing that despite his outward positivism, Durkheim's

radicality of Levinas's reading of Durkheim's social metaphysics, which he saw as not only compatible with Husserl and Heidegger but that these phenomenological perspectives are necessary to grasp it in its entirety. Further, by understanding the way Levinas critiques both Durkheim's social metaphysics as well as the solipsism of Husserl's consciousness and Heidegger's *Dasein*, we can begin to see how the metaphysical and the social aspects of pluralism overlap within his work. It is in this sense of the overlapping metaphysical and social dimensions of pluralism that we must understand Levinas's assertion that a pure philosophy cannot be pure without addressing the social.

The necessity of including social questions at the core of pure philosophy shows the influence of Durkheim's social metaphysics, especially on Levinas's earliest writings including his "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism". That text address a range of issues in Levinas's typically unsystematic philosophical style, complicated in part by the fact that Levinas wrote the article specifically for publication in a radical Catholic journal. Thus, it is not surprising that Levinas's usual hostility towards Christianity is somewhat muted in this article and no attempt is made to criticize the role of Christian faith as an aspect of the social dimension of Hitlerism. But what is clear from the text is that Levinas was eager to escape Heideggerian ontology even though he had not yet formulated the critique that would define his mature work. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the text is that Heidegger is never mentioned by name despite Levinas's unbridled enthusiasm with Heideggerian philosophy up to that point. The target of his critique is clearly not only the philosophy of Hitlerism or even political rationality more generally as he will develop in TI, but rather he attacks the collapse of the social into the individual as a more fundamental philosophical problem at the heart of both Hitlerism and Heidegger's concept of *Miteinandersein*. This aligns Levinas more directly, on this one specific point, with Durkheim's social metaphysics against Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

II. Levinas's Reflections on Hitlerism

The short text of Levinas's article on Hitlerism is perhaps the most directly political of his published philosophical writings and sheds a great deal of light on how his later ethical

ultimate goal is to develop a phenomenological ontology of the social world. While this unorthodox reading offers a way of uniting Levinas's ethical phenomenology to Durkheim's experimental sociology, this methodological question is beyond the scope of the present analysis.

phenomenology applies in its political context. Originally published shortly after Hitler came to power, the text categorically avoids mentioning Heidegger who had publicly embraced the Nazi party in 1933. Instead of attacking ontology and the philosophical traditions that culminate in Heideggerian solipsism, Levinas employs language similar to Durkheim's use of "elementary forms" by describing the "elementary feelings" at the core of Hitler's appeal and the philosophy imbued within the Nazi movement. Levinas notes that these elementary feelings "express a soul's principal attitude towards the whole of reality and its own destiny. They predetermine or prefigure the meaning of the adventure that the soul will face in the world." (RPH, p. 64) This predetermination is central to how Levinas understands the politics and philosophy of Hitlerism as undermining the spirit of freedom which lies at the heart of Western civilization. Levinas is emphatic that this freedom is not limited to the liberal sense of political freedom, but rather evokes a more fundamental sense in which the subject chooses her own destiny within the context of temporality. Still drawing heavily on Heidegger's language from *Being and Time*, Levinas writes: "Time, which is a condition of human existence, is above all a condition that is irreparable. The fait accompli, swept along by a fleeing present, forever evades man's control, but weighs heavily on his destiny." (RPH, p. 65) Thus, Levinas emphatically opposes the subordination of individual freedom within the logic of Hitlerism, but also outlines the problematic conception of freedom within liberal politics as placing "the human spirit on a plane that is superior to reality, and so creates a gulf between man and the world." (RPH, p. 66) In the next chapter we will develop Levinas's problematic relationship with liberalism in greater detail, but in the context of pluralism which occupies us at the moment, it is important to understand the way in which Levinas attacks this predetermination of meaning as "the Germanic ideal of man" contained in Hitlerism's false promise of sincerity and authenticity. (RPH, p. 70) Levinas's denunciation of this degenerate Germanic ideal is undertaken in the name of defending civilization itself. He notes that under the spell of this ideal, "Civilization is invaded by everything that is not authentic, by a substitute that is put at the service of fashion and of various interests… Such a society loses living contact with its true ideal of freedom and accepts degenerate forms of the ideal." (RPH, p. 70)

At the core of the short essay we find a compelling case against not only the politics and philosophy of Hitlerism, but Levinas's attempt to describe a conception of the social which opposes this degenerate Germanic ideal at a fundamental level. Skepticism and nihilism are rooted within this ideal as the awakening of the elementary feelings and "secret nostalgia" within the German soul.

Levinas would later write, in a 1990 prefatory note to the article, that his interest in writing these reflections in 1934 was to oppose the tendency of understanding the rise of Hitlerism as some sort of collective madness or anomaly within human reason, and to expose the "*elemental Evil* into which we can be led by logic and against which Western philosophy had not sufficiently insured itself." (RPH, p. 63) Clearly in 1934 Levinas could not have anticipated the scale this elemental Evil would reach over the next decade, but his early account of Hitlerism already anticipated the way in which the degenerate Germanic ideal necessarily undermines "the very humanity of man" (RPH, p. 71) The fundamental core of Hitlerian racist ideology is not primarily anti-Semitism, but rather a skepticism towards "[a]ny rational assimilation or mystical communion between spirits that is not based on a community of blood…" (RPH, p. 70) For Levinas, the core of racism lies in accepting the principle that "[u]niversality must give way to the idea of expansion…" (RPH, p. 70) If we are to follow Bernstein's reading that Levinas's work can be understood as an attempt to create an ethical response to the problem of evil, it is important to understand that the specific kind of evil that Levinas opposes is exactly what he refers to here as the degenerate Germanic ideal. While his earliest work did not elaborate this critique in the context of opposition to Heideggerian ontology, there is a clear overlap in the way he views this Germanic ideal as the negation of social pluralism and Heidegger's ontology as the negation of metaphysical pluralism.

This further helps us to understand the footnote on Kurt Schilling in TI, as discussed in the previous chapter. For Levinas, Schilling's racist philosophy is rooted in the subordination of enjoyment to the mundane biological drive for survival. But what is remarkable about the footnote on Schilling's book is the way it renders Schilling's racist philosophy in opposition to the multiplicity or pluralism within the social realm. Levinas summarizes the work, which he regards as typical of racist philosophy in general, in terms which echo his early account of Hitlerism:

> According to this book, typical of racist philosophy, individuality and sociality would be events of life that proceed individuals and create them for better adaptation, in order to ensure life. The concept of happiness, with the individualness it evokes, is lacking in this philosophy. Want -*Not*- is what threatens life. The State is but an organization of this multiplicity, in view of making life possible. To the end the person-even the person of the leader-remains at the service of life and of the creation of life. The principle of personality proper is never an end. (TI, p. 120n)

As we saw in Bernasconi's reading of this footnote, this account of Schilling is an oblique attack on Heideggerian ontology, but here in the context of the themes developed in the reflections on

Hitlerism, Levinas is especially preoccupied with the way that this racist philosophy coincides with a particular conception of the State. According to this conception of the State, the individual is entirely subsumed in pursuit of the single archic principle of survival. This State necessarily conceives of plurality as mere multiplicity of impersonal life which is understood in purely biological terms. Levinas connects this impersonal universality to the way ontology as first philosophy manifests as the tyranny of the State. He notes:

> Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power. It issues in the State and in the non-violence of the totality, without securing itself against the violence from which this non-violence lives, and which appears in the tyranny of the State. Truth, which should reconcile persons, here exists anonymously. Universality presents itself as impersonal ; and this is another inhumanity. (TI, p. 46)

Levinas's attempt to elucidate the phenomenological structure of ethical responsibility takes shape against the background of this inhumanity of impersonal anonymous universality. But here it is essential to follow Levinas's logic closely in that this impersonal universality is not only attributed to the Heideggerian philosophical conception of fundamental ontology, but to the tyranny of the State. Further, both TI and the article on Hitlerism emphasize the way in which western philosophy, by conceiving ontology as first philosophy, is intrinsically linked to a particular conception of the power of the State. By linking the conception of ontology to power, specifically tyrannical political power, we see the way Levinas views the link between the metaphysical and the political. For Levinas, that traditional ontologically-rooted philosophy has failed to sufficiently guard against the pathological tendencies of political totality is not coincidental, but rather an inevitable outcome of subordinating the ethical to the ontological. Levinas continues this line of thought arguing that tyranny, as the concrete social and political manifestation of totality, is rooted in conceiving the ethical as mere opinion:

> For the philosophical tradition the conflicts between the same and the other are resolved by theory whereby the other is reduced to the same--or, concretely, by the community of the State, where beneath anonymous power, though it be intelligible, the I rediscovers war in the tyrannic oppression it undergoes from the totality. Ethics, where the same takes the irreducible Other into account, would belong to opinion. (TI, p. 47)

It is here that we can see the overlap, if not a direct influence, of Durkheim's social metaphysics and Levinas's ethical phenomenology, especially in the similarity of diagnosing a specific German ideal at the core of the collapse of social pluralism into metaphysical universality. Given Levinas's affirmed admiration for Durkheim's social metaphysics, and further that this irreducibility of the

social is required for the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger in order to find their full expression, understanding the way that Durkheim resists the collapse into political totality can help us better orient Levinas's oblique engagement with the political context of his ethical phenomenology. This is especially relevant for understanding the context in which Levinas concludes TI with a call for pluralism, both in the metaphysical sense as well as in the sense of opposing the particular politics of the Germanic ideal of absolute nationalism. For both Levinas and Durkheim, this ideal must necessarily culminate in territorial expansionism and rejection of the pluralist society. In light of their overlapping critiques of the German ideal, especially considering Levinas's affirmed admiration for Durkheim's social metaphysics and the way a pure philosophy cannot remain detached from fundamentally social questions, Durkheim's critique of nationalism can help us better orient the way in which Levinas himself understands the State as the political totality which is called into question by pluralism.

III. Durkheim and Levinas Against Nationalism

It is important to note that both Levinas and Durkheim attribute this Germanic ideal of expansionist nationalism to the rediscovery of the philosophy of Nietzsche and the awakening of elemental feelings within the German people. Levinas's understanding of politics as necessarily the politics of war seems to also be influenced by his early engagement with Durkheim. The text that unites these themes in Durkheim's oeuvre is the brief 1914 propaganda pamphlet "Germany above All"[53], written against the rising tide of German Nationalism at the outset of the First World War. There, Durkheim elaborates a view of a particular kind of nationalistic politics that has clear and distinct parallels with Levinas's conception of totalized politics in TI as well as with contemporary forms of authoritarian populism. Dominick LaCapra explains the context of the pamphlet within Durkheim's thought:

> One important problem which the propagandistic World War I pamphlet *Germany above All* emphasized was the crisis generated by a conflict between legal imperatives and the demands of a humanistic ethic. Although the severity of this conflict challenged his optimistic evolutionary assumptions about the non-authoritarian and democratic course of law and government in modern society, Durkheim's answer was unequivocal. In contrast to the school of juridical positivism in Germany, which had exercised some influence on

[53] DURKHEIM, Émile. "Germany above all": German mentality and war. Trans. J.S. Paris : Armand Colin, 1915.

> his early thought, Durkheim without hesitation placed the humanistic *conscience collective* of modern society above legal duties to the state. (LaCAPRA, 2001, p. 87)[54]

As I emphasized in the previous chapter, this interest in the conflict between legal obligation and ethical obligation resonates throughout Levinas's work. Durkheim's rejection of the authoritarian absolute State rests on a similar account of the primacy of collective moral consciousness, which he develops in great detail in the pamphlet. Durkheim advocates an almost Kantian position of European cosmopolitanism against which Germany had rebelled. He emphatically accuses Germany of leaving the great family of civilized people that comprises European society.

> It is beyond belief, they say, that Germany, which yesterday was a member of the great family of civilized peoples, which even played amongst them a part of the first importance, has been capable of giving so completely the lie to the principles of human civilization. It is not possible that those men, with whom we used to consort, whom we held in high regard, who belonged without any reservation to the same moral community as we ourselves, have been capable of becoming those savage creatures, aggressive and unconscionable, whom we hold up to public indignation. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p 3-4)

Durkheim goes on to examine the way in which this withdrawal from collective civilized morality can be understood through a particular German mentality embodied in the work of Heinrich von Treitschke. Durkheim explains Treitschke's views of an exaggerated independence released from all limitation and reservation that culminates in the absolute State. In terms that resonate with Levinas's critique of the State, Durkheim notes that for Treitschke, "the State is *autarkès* (self-sufficient), in the sense which the Greek philosophers gave to that word; it must be completely self-sufficient; it has, and ought to have, need only of itself, to exist and to maintain itself; it is an absolutism. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 8, translation modified) This definition of the State as absolute self-sufficiency, of the utter closing off to the critique of exteriority, is the foundation of Treitschke's political theory. Durkheim thus focuses on Treitschke's rejection of international law, or more specifically, his view that international law or treaties cannot be binding since a State cannot admit an authority superior to itself. Unlike contracts between individuals, who can and must yield to the superior authority of the State, contracts between States can have no such external force of law. Durkheim summarizes this point in Treitschke's view of the State:

> Whilst in contracts between private persons there is at the base a moral power which controls the wills of the contracting parties, international contracts cannot be subject to this superior power, for there is nothing above the will of a State. This follows not only when

[54] LaCAPRA, Dominick. Emile Durkheim: Sociologist and Philosopher. Aurora: The Davies Group, 2001.

> the contract has been imposed by force, as the sequel of a war, but not less when it has been accepted by a free choice. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 10)

Durkheim's point is that while relations between individuals are guided or at least limited by ethical responsibility, no such mechanism exists in international relations. The Kantian cosmopolitanism of European morality, the great family which Germany has decided to leave behind, offered one way of solidifying a trans-national morality, which has subsequently been lost due to German aggression. In terms that Levinas will echo in the preface to TI, Durkheim diagnoses within Treitschke's doctrine of the absolute State the inevitability and necessity of war. Because competing interests and rivalry will undoubtedly arise between States that are equally unrestrained by the moral power which compels contracting parties, the inevitable result will be war since the States cannot yield to the arbitration of any external authority. Moreover, those nations incapable of imposing their collective will onto other nations cannot rightfully be called States, he continues:

> Without war, the State is not even conceivable. Again the right of making war at its own will constitutes the essential quality of sovereignty. It is by this right that it is distinguished from all other human associations. When the State is no longer in a position to draw the sword at its will, it no longer deserves the name of State. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 12)

Thus, in Treitschke's view of the State, since there is no distinction between politics and war, the essential quality of sovereignty is the power to make war. But Durkheim diagnoses the true pathology of Treitschke's absolutism as not only the inevitability of war, but in the sanctity with which warfare becomes invested. Warfare itself becomes sacred in two ways: first as a necessary condition for the existence of the State, which is in turn necessary for the survival of its citizens, and second as the actual embodiment of moral virtues. Durkheim explains, quoting Treitschke at length:

> War is not only inevitable, it is moral and sacred. It is sacred first because it represents a condition necessary to the existence of States, and without the State humanity cannot live. "Apart from the State, humanity cannot breathe". But it is sacred also, because it is the source of the highest moral virtues. It is war which compels men to master their natural egoism; it is war which raises them to the majesty of the supreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of self. By it, individual wills, instead of dissipating themselves in the pursuit of sordid ends, are concentrated on great causes, and "the petty personality of the individual is effaced and disappears before the vast perspective envisaged by the aspirations of the State". By war, "man tastes the joy of sharing with all his compatriots, learned or simple, in one and the same feeling, and whosoever has tasted that happiness never forgets all the sweetness and comfort that it yields". In a word, war connotes "a political idealism", which leads a man forward to surpass himself. Peace, on the contrary, is "the reign of materialism" ; it is the

> triumph of personal interest over the spirit of devotion and sacrifice, of the mediocre and sordid over the noble life. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 12-3)

This inversion of morality functions in accord with the logic of Durkheim's account of the sacred in that by making war itself sacred and selfless while peace is seen as profane and egoistic. Durkheim could not have anticipated the degree to which war propaganda would be perfected during the 20th century in order to ensure this moral inversion, although his work already explains the fundamental principles by which it will function. Following this "political idealism", the State itself becomes a personality, which Durkheim notes is necessarily "a personality, imperious and ambitious, impatient of all subjection, even of the appearance of subjection : it is only really itself in proportion to the measure in which it belongs completely to itself." (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 13) Again we see the language which will appear in Levinas's work as a closure to exteriority in the sense of completely belonging to oneself, but here rendered in broad socio-political terms. The State's inability to admit a power beyond itself, to close over into totality, forces the State to collapse all conception of power into the State itself. Weaker States are inevitably dominated as their dependence on others negates their absolute sovereignty. Durkheim continues:

> A weak State naturally falls into dependence on another, and, in proportion as its sovereignty ceases to be complete, it ceases itself to be a State. Whence it follows that the element, which essentially constitutes a State, is Power. *Der Staat ist Macht* — this axiom, which constantly falls from the pen of Treitschke, dominates all his teaching. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 14)

This view that the State is Power is the underlying logic to all of Treitschke's politics and ultimately collapses the distinction between politics and war at a fundamental level. This necessarily implies that smaller countries who lack the physical strength to defend and maintain themselves in conflict against their stronger or more aggressive neighbors, cannot properly be understood as States. Thus, powerful States who are "true" States by virtue of that power, have no moral or legal obligation to respect the rights of weaker non-States who have no legitimate claim to their own sovereignty.

In terms that become a familiar refrain in Levinas's confessional writings, especially in "The State of Caesar and the State of David"[55] which will be discussed extensively in the following chapters, Durkheim is especially interested in the way the State subordinates and must subordinate all

[55] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "The State of Caesar and the State of David" in Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures. Trans. Gary D. Mole. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Hereafter SCSD.

morality to its own immediate necessities. One of the central claims of Durkheim's pamphlet is that German nationalism in particular harbors a notable aversion to any morality which resides beyond the totality of the State. Any external or universal morality, such as Kantian cosmopolitanism, which could serve as a critique of the State, would be a threat to the absolute sovereignty which Treitschke insists is the essential characteristic of the State. Durkheim elaborates that the way that Treitschke responds to the potential challenge to the sovereignty of the State posed by morality is via a return to Machiavelli as a thinker who "did not hesitate to maintain that the State is not under the jurisdiction of the moral conscience, and should recognise no law but its own interest." (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 18) This view of the State as a closed totality, unbound by any external morality is rediscovered by Treitschke and other German nationalists seeking to solidify the absolute sovereignty of the State which is above all moral critique. Of course, acting in a moral way may well suit the interests of the State, to gain a reputation of trustworthiness might enhance the political power of the State, for example. But Durkheim makes clear that in this Treitschkean-Machiavellian conception of the relation of morality to the State, all morality serves the single purpose of reinforcing the State's authority, which is to say, to increase the Power of the State. Increasing the Power of the State becomes the Supreme Good, above all else within the moral schema dictated by the exaggerated independence of the absolute State. Durkheim notes:

> Here we have a logical demonstration of the famous formula the German learns to repeat from his earliest childhood : *Deutschland über alles*; for the German there is nothing above the German State. The State has but one duty : to get as large a place in the sun as possible, trampling its rivals under foot in the process. The radical exclusion of all other ideals will rightly be regarded as monstrous. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 23)

Because the absolute self-sufficiency and autonomy of the State can admit no higher power, this would seem to necessarily enter into conflict with any claim of universal values, especially those of religion when not subordinated to the State. Monotheism presents an especially problematic challenge since the God of monotheistic religions does not refer to a particular God of a tribe or a city, but to the God of the entire human race, a universal lawgiver and guarantor of an absolute morality which applies to all of humanity. It is this monotheistic conception of the divine that Durkheim notes: " Now the very idea of this God is alien to the mentality which we are studying." (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 24) While nationalists like Treitsckhe often claim divine or religious moral

grounding of their political ideology, Durkheim views any admission of a divinity beyond the State as merely a "formal reservation".

For Durkheim, this denotes the total inversion of the sacred dimension of human life, the interconnectedness of social solidarity, which is entirely supplanted by the political objectives of the State. But this is not a suspension of morality in the Kierkegaardian sense of obligations to the State forcing us to renounce or suspend the beliefs that we know to be morally right. Rather, this "political idealism" represents a new morality taking the place of the old morality, which is then cast as weak and decadent since it contributes nothing to the one true duty of the State, which is to increase its power. This new morality does not only guide the actions of the State at the international level, but also in terms of the regulation of the internal life of society. Thus, Treitschke represents not only the elevation of the State over morality, but more fundamentally over civil society itself. Durkheim makes clear the source of this antagonism:

> To designate what we call the People as distinguished from the State, Treitschke and a number of other German theorists prefer the term Civil Society (*die bürgerliche Gesellschaft)*. Civil Society includes everything in the nation which is not immediately connected with the State, the family, trade and industry, religion (when this is not a department of the State), science, art. All these forms of activity have this characteristic in common, that we embrace them voluntarily and spontaneously. They have their origin in the natural inclinations of man. Of our own free will we found a family, love our children, work to satisfy their material wants and our own, seek after truth, and enjoy aesthetic pleasures. Here we have a whole life which develops without the intervention of the State. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 27)

This voluntary spontaneity cannot be incorporated into the mechanism of the State, and thus presents a necessary antagonism. This civil society, in Levinas's terminology, is what refuses synthesis into the totalized relation within the State. Levinas, of course, will emphasize "the marvel of the family" exactly in this context near the end of TI. This realm of life, which exists outside the purview of the authority of the State, Durkheim notes is:

> … a mosaic of individuals and of separate groups pursuing divergent aims, and the whole formed by their agglomeration consequently lacks unity. The multiplicity of relations that connect individual with individual, or group with group do not constitute a naturally organised system. The resulting aggregate is not a personality; it is but an incoherent mass of dissimilar elements. [Treitschke] "Where is the common organ of Civil Society? There is none. It is obvious to everyone that Civil Society is not a precise and tangible thing like the State. A State has unity; we know it as such; it is not a mystic personality. Civil Society has no unity of will". (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 28, translation modified)

This mosaic of civil society is, in my view, largely synonymous with Levinas's vocabulary of the pluralist society, both of which are marked by the absence of an organized system of imposed order. It is in this sense that we can understand Durkheim's civil society in terms of Levinasian anarchy, not only as lacking a principle by which organization occurs but also by resisting organization itself. This necessarily presents an antagonism with the absolute morality of the State, which demands unity, order and organization above all else. Because civil society lacks a kind of spontaneous harmony, each of its competing interests will invariably enter into conflict, resulting in the chaos of disorder, which is anathema to the objectives of the State. The State, in turn, must inevitably resort to coercive action and commanding obedience to impose order, making obedience to the State the first civic duty. This does not require the coercion of belief, for Treitschke, merely the coercion of action, since the State has no interest in the private lives of citizens, only external obedience to the formal law. He quotes from Treitschke: "[The State] says: what you think is a matter of indifference to me; but you must obey.... Progress has been made when the silent obedience of citizens is reinforced by internal and well considered acquiescence ; but this acquiescence is not essential. " (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 32) The silent obedience of the masses, yielding to the power of the State not out of agreement but out of coercion, supplants moral solidarity and fraternity. Since the first task of politics, in Treitschke's view, is to assert its own Power, this requires the overcoming mere sentimentality and aversion to harshness on the part of the sovereign. Durkheim further quotes, with evident distaste, Treitschke's view that "Politics cannot be carried on without harshness; that is why women understand nothing about them." (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 33)

But this logic of Germany Above All, the logic of the State above morality, allows for unrivaled levels of brutality, as Durkheim describes German conduct up to that point during the First World War. Durkheim notes:

> the individual atrocities committed by the soldiery are but the methodical application of these principles and rules. Thus the whole system is homogeneous and logical; a pre-determined concept of the State is expressed in rules of conduct laid down by the military authority, and these rules are, in their turn, translated into action by the individual. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 39)

Again, we see evidence of Durkheim's influence on Levinas's preface to TI, in which politics is equated to the task of winning wars by any means. At the level of individual action, atrocities are carried out not out of any particular malice or hatred, but out of a systematic and methodological

application of the self-sufficient mentality of the State. Durkheim points to a connection between the State placing itself above both morality and civil society in such a way as the actions of its agents (specifically soldiers in this case) cannot be judged by any logic external to the State. Put another way, if the only good is the good of the State, moral agency must be oriented around the arche of the only goal the State can have, which is to increase its power. Thus, overthrowing weaker States, who are not "real" States in the sense that they are incapable of exerting their own power, is the inevitable outcome of this radical autonomy. Which is to say, beyond the reach of any punishment, why should a State not act out of its own solipsistic desires? This is, in a sense, the political version of the myth of Gyges that we explored in the previous chapter. By orienting all citizenship around the goal of increasing the power of the State, Treitschke opposes the very conception of nationality in terms of various social groups living collectively under a set of established laws. Powerful States, in pursuit of greater power, desire to impose order on these non-States, via coercion rather than their consent. This, for Durkheim, explains German aggression: "Hence the passion of Germany for conquest and annexation. She cares so little what men may feel or desire. All she asks is that they should submit to the law of the conqueror, and she herself will see to it that it is obeyed." (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 40)

Durkheim concludes the essay by making clear that the fundamental pathology of this mentality is not simply collective insanity or brutal sadism, but rather lies in defining the State via "a morbid hypertrophy of the will, a kind of will-mania" (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 44) For Durkheim, this idealism of exaggerated sovereignty leads to the inability of Germany to accept the legitimacy of international law, of the right of "lesser" States to exist, or even accept the existence of "equal" States which might serve as rivals. This produces a "frenzied race to power" (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 43) which will inevitably oblige Germany to attempt to outgrow any possible challenge which might come from any external forces. This is the task set forth by the political idealism that Durkheim describes, but remains impossible to realize for the individual, rather it is the State alone which "but the State can and must attain to it by gathering firmly into its hand the sum of individual energies and directing them all to this supreme end.." (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 45) Durkheim then pronounces the philosophical underpinnings of the German mentality:

> The State is the sole concrete and historic form possible to the Superman of whom Nietzsche was the prophet and harbinger, and the German State must put forth all its strength to become this Superman. The German State must be "über Allés" (above all).

> Superior to all private wills, individual or collective, superior to the moral laws themselves, without any law save that imposed by itself, it will be able to triumph over all resistance and rule by constraint, when it cannot secure voluntary acceptance. (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 45)

This absolute superiority of the State, above all other individual or collective wills, admits no possibility of the critique which emanates from exteriority. By subordinating all wills, even morality itself, to the one task of increasing its power, the State not only becomes a personality characterized by its desire for unity, order and organization, but it becomes the only possible concrete personality.

This association of the German mentality of aggressive nationalism and the philosophy of Nietzsche is a theme that Levinas echoes in his essay on Hitlerism, where he concludes the work noting: "Nietzsche's will to power, which modern Germany is rediscovering and glorifying, is not only a new ideal; it is an ideal that simultaneously brings with it its own form of universalization: war and conquest. (RPH, p. 71) It should be noted here that this is, at best, this is a highly selective reading of Nietzsche's concept of will to power, and must necessarily ignore Nietzsche's critique of mass culture and the herd mentality that would subordinate individual wills to any kind of collective will, including the State. Clearly neither Durkheim nor Levinas are offering a particularly nuanced reading of Nietzsche as a social theorist, but the dimension I wish to emphasize here is that they both view the German mentality in the same light of subordinating individual wills to a general will for the sake of increasing the power of the State.

Ultimately, Durkheim concludes his essay optimistically, noting: "When all the nations whose existence it threatens or disturbs — and they are legion — combine against it, it will be unable to resist them, and the world will be set free." (DURKHEIM, 1915, p. 47) That optimistic view, in 1915, could not have anticipated the events of the next three years of the First World War, let alone the horrors that played out over rest of the first half of the 20th century and persist in similar forms of "political idealism" into the 21st century.

IV. Durkheim and Levinas on the Concept of "Elemental" Evil

Returning to Levinas's article on Hitlerism, which we should remember was written only 19 years after Durkheim's pamphlet on Treitschke, we find both a condemnation of the rise of fascism as well as a lamentation of liberalism's failure to resist the degenerate Germanic ideal. Levinas

demonstrates a remarkable interest in the political reaction to the fundamental social changes which accompany the shift from pre-modern to modern society, or to use Durkheim's technical vocabulary, in the shift from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. Levinas does not approach this question as a strictly sociological or political problem, but rather something which is pervasive in the philosophical foundations of all modern society. Liberalism and fascism are addressed as political movements derived from the modern conception of the human subject, which is to say they both seek to understand the human condition strictly in terms of separation, or more specifically, in terms of their separateness from one another. Levinas notes:

> The whole philosophical and political thought of modern times tends to place the human spirit on a plane that is superior to reality, and so creates a gulf between man and the world. It makes it impossible to apply the categories of the physical world to the spirituality of reason, and so locates the ultimate foundation of the spirit outside the brutal world and the implacable history of concrete existence. (RPH, p. 66)

For Levinas, Hitlerism signifies a rediscovering of a primal aspect of human existence that he calls, in terms that echo Durkheim's analysis of Treitschke, "the secret nostalgia within the German soul" and represents "an awakening of elementary feelings [*sentiments élémentaires*]" which "questions the very principles of a civilization." (RPH, p. 64) This stirring of primal drives, however, is not simply a matter of a return to a more primitive human nature as Freud would have it, but rather is itself a product of social forces. Again, it is crucial to understand Levinas's philosophical analysis of Hitlerism in light of his affirmation in the 1990 prefatory note that western ontological philosophy has left us unequipped to respond to the barbarism of this elemental evil, especially in regards to Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology.

This interest in "elemental forms", both in the prefatory note and the original article, indicate profound connection to Durkheim at the core of Levinas's understanding of the political sphere. Levinas repeatedly evokes Durkheim's phraseology in referring to the elementary force [*force élémentaire*] of the simplistic [*primaire*] philosophy of Hitler, and the way it awakened these elementary feelings [*sentiments élémentaires*] within the German people. The way in which these repeated references derive their terminology from Durkheim's examination of "elementary forms" has been extensively explored by Caygill, emphasizing Levinas's insistence on the paganistic religiosity at the core of social life within the Germany. Levinas notes: "For these elementary feelings harbor a philosophy. They express a soul's principal attitude towards the whole of reality and its own destiny. They predetermine or prefigure the meaning of the adventure that the soul

will face in the world." (RPH, p. 64) By returning to the language of Durkheim's social metaphysics that he encountered in his early education at Strasbourg, Levinas attempts to pronounce a fundamental conflict of modern society of which Hitlerism is merely one instantiation. The philosophy of Hitlerism, he is clear to point out, cannot be reduced to the philosophy of Hitlerians themselves, but necessarily draws on the entire western philosophical tradition leading up to that point. While Levinas required another 30 years to develop his critique of ontology in TI, it is clear that he was already engaging at a fundamental level with the themes that would go on to motivate his work throughout the rest of his life.

At this point, it might be tempting to argue that Levinas, in his shock at Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism, briefly eschewed phenomenological methodology altogether and sought methodological refuge in the sociology he studied with enthusiasm in Strasbourg. This would, perhaps, be overstating the methodological importance of the article on Hitlerism, which differs from Levinas's customary approach in his philosophical writings not only in method but also in subject matter. One inescapable observation, however, is that Levinas's most directly political writings adopts a completely different vocabulary than the more formal works of his philosophical oeuvre. This raises the question of whether Levinas's phenomenological approach is at all equipped to address fundamentally political questions or whether it must be abandoned when addressing these more directly applied themes. If Levinas's ethical phenomenology aims to formulate an ethical response to the problem of political evil, this would account for necessitating a gap between the political and ethical in Levinas's work. And while Levinas never returns in his formal philosophical work to either the directly political content or sociological language that guided his reflections on Hitlerism after 1934, his work consistently remains preoccupied with these same fundamentally political questions. And while these questions are only addressed in subtle ways in his formal philosophical writings, they come to the forefront in his Talmudic commentaries or "confessional" writings that we will explore in greater detail in the following chapters.

By combining this reading of Levinas as a response to political evil with his acknowledged debt to Durkheim's social metaphysics, we can begin to understand how to orient Levinas within the field of political theory in terms of how various political regimes conceptualize the sacred. As Durkheim makes clear, Treitschke's "political idealism" of the absolute German State must

necessarily subordinate the sacred to the practical aims of the State, which is to increase its power. This means that in Treitschke's State, the selfless sacrifice of noble soldiers takes on the air of sanctity, and peace is a profanity which is only desirable for the mediocre and selfish. Perhaps the most tangible situation in which this conceptualization of the sacred consistently arises throughout political history is in the question of religious tolerance, which seems to weigh heavily on Levinas's understanding of the "pluralism" of the pluralist society. We will develop this theme of how the State relates to the sacred in the context of Levinas's analysis of Mendelssohn in the following chapter, but for now it is important to note that because particular forms of politics must conceptualize the sacred in particular ways which establish and maintain certain types of social bonds within society. And again, for Levinas, the core of Hitlerian philosophy is the skepticism of all relationality that does not derive from biological blood relations.

This helps us contextualize Levinas's concept of the pluralist society as opposing the Hegelian conception of the absolute State and the declaration that pluralism is the concrete form of relation produced by transcendence and goodness. This necessarily implies a concrete political context for the ethical relation in terms of a juxtaposition of the intimacy of family and the "anonymous universality of the State." (TI, p. 306) Put another way, I take Levinas to be evoking the pluralist society in agreement with Durkheim as the inevitable anarchic antagonist to the necessarily archic nature of the State. Thus, the pluralist society resists the State's constant tendency to collapse all alterity into totality by remaining anarchic.

For Durkheim, the concrete example of this political collapse of alterity to totality is that of Treitschke's absolute State. But Levinas's own personal experience and philosophical engagements might better explain another tendency towards archic political totality in Heidegger's political commitments. While it would be oversimplifying Levinas's philosophy to reduce his ethical phenomenology to a response to Heidegger's politics, it seems clear that Heidegger's vulnerability to the "elemental evil" of Nazi ideology is a central motivation for Levinas's critique of western ontological philosophy in the article on Hitlerism. Thus, we might understand the closing over of the state into a totality in terms of what Heidegger infamously noted in his 1933 Rectorial address as the "spiritual mission" of the German University. Echoing the "German

mentality" of Treitschke and the "total mobilization" called for by his friend Ernst Jünger[56], Heidegger announces the end of "academic independence" and the alignment of science itself with the destiny of the People/State [*Volk/Staat*]:

> The will to the essence of the German university is the will to science as will to the historical mission of the German people as a people that knows itself in its state. Together, science and German fate must come to power in this will to essence. And they will do so if, and only if, we—this body of teachers and students—on the one hand expose science to its innermost necessity and, on the other hand, are equal to the German fate in its most extreme distress. (HEIDEGGER, 2003, p. 3)

It must be noted that Heidegger's rectorial address can indeed be interpreted in a number of different ways, with Heidegger himself declaring it to be a critique of the Nazi regime's call for a "political science" in his reflections on the address in 1945. Indeed, apologists for Heidegger have long argued that the core of the address affirms the continued autonomy of the university, as a subtle but subversive screed against Hitlerism, although these apologies have become more difficult to defend following the recent publication of various anti-Semitic passages found in the infamous Black Notebooks and correspondence between Heidegger and his brother, Fritz. But what stands out in reading the address, at least through the lens of Levinas's critique of Heideggerian ontology, is the way in which Heidegger questions the autonomy of the university. Heidegger's address questions whether the university should be beholden to a pursuit of truth itself rather than the truth according to the narrative of the State. What this implies is that Heidegger was open to the possibility that the narrative of the German *Volk* and the needs of the *Reich* supersede any objective or theoretical truth. The autonomy of the university would clearly threaten the basic foundation of the Reich's monopoly on truth as the product of its own totality. In terms of the total mobilization called for by Jünger, applied to the logic of the university or science itself, is that the State which mobilizes its knowledge service [*Wissensdienst*] to serve the needs of the State would find itself at an advantage over States which permit academic freedom. In responding to this totalizing "elemental evil" which enthralled even Heidegger himself, we might understand Levinas's ethics in political terms of an attempt to elucidate an opposition to the totality of the State which aims at guarding against the appeal of the secret nostalgia that Heidegger could not resist. Or, we might say, Levinas attempts to show how the subordination of ethics to ontology

[56] Their relationship, and particularly Heidegger's admiration for Jünger beginning in the early 1930s, is documented in the recently published Correspondence 1949–1975: Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger, Trans. Timothy Sean Quinn, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

within philosophy made for fertile ground for philosophers like Heidegger to fall into the logic of totality, which is to say into the internal totalized logic of Treitschke's absolute State or Jünger's total mobilization.

Durkheim's influence on this response to Heidegger's ontology is made explicit early on in TI. Levinas shows an unmistakable affinity for the way Durkheim's sociological project escapes exactly this ontological trap into which Heideggerian philosophy is fated to collapse. For Levinas, Heidegger's understanding of coexistence, *Mitsein* or *Miteinandersein*, denotes a relationship "irreducible to objective cognition ; but in the final analysis it also rests on the relationship with *being in general*, on comprehension, on ontology." (TI, p. 67) This Heideggerian view of intersubjectivity, which Levinas refers to as "optical" in the sense of neutral perceiving of the other which is inescapably distant, is overcome not only by ethics, but already in Durkheim's conception of society. Levinas notes:

> Durkheim already in one respect went beyond this optical interpretation of the relation with the other in characterizing society by religion. I relate to the Other only across Society, which is not simply a multiplicity of individuals or objects ; I relate to the Other who is not simply a part of a Whole, nor a singular instance of a concept. To reach the Other through the social is to reach him through the religious. Durkheim thus gives an indication of a transcendence other than that of the objective. (TI, p. 68)

In the task of overcoming ontology, which is the central pursuit of Levinas's ethical phenomenology, he finds a common ally in Durkheim's social metaphysics. Because Levinas engages with Durkheim only in a very limited sense, in terms of a social metaphysics of irreducible to individual egoisms, he finds an account of intersubjectivity that does not fall prey to the ontological trap which ensnares Heidegger and indeed all of western philosophy. Clearly Levinas's admiration for Durkheim's concept of society falls short of a full endorsement of sociology over philosophy, since he continues the above passage making clear the limitations of Durkheim's sociological approach: "And yet for him the religious is immediately reducible to collective representation : the structure of representation, and consequently of the objectifying intentionality that subtends it, serves as an ultimate interpretation of the religious itself." (TI, p. 68) But in my view, this caveat is a methodological critique rather than a critique of the content of Durkheim's work. Because of Durkheim's positivistic sociological approach, his focus tends towards objective "social facts" which can be isolated and examined, which leads his account of religion to focus almost exclusively on the practice of ritual. Despite this methodological objection to Durkheim,

the influence of his social metaphysics on the way Levinas critiques Heideggerian ontology is made explicit here.

A second important reference to Durkheim in TI repeats this logic that Durkheim's work indicates a kind of transcendence beyond the objective grasp of the I, but fails to fully appreciate its significance. Grouping together Durkheim's conception of the social with Hegel's universal, the statistical laws that govern our freedom, Freud's unconscious, and the existential that sustains the existentiel in Heidegger, Levinas notes: "All these notions represent not an opposition between diverse faculties of the I, but the presence behind the I of a foreign principle which is not necessarily opposed to the I, but which can assume this enemy demeanor." (TI, p. 272) Levinas will go on to conclude, the relationality between human beings, which Levinas calls the curvature of intersubjective space, rests on this exteriority of the other which appears in a marginalized form in each of these conceptions. This exteriority is the nagging reminder against the Cartesian subject and the fundamental premise of western ontological philosophy that autonomy is never absolute. Or as Levinas notes more poetically, that the Gygean liberty supposed by the autonomous Cartesian subject is simply "is the very myth of the I and interiority …" (TI, p. 61) But while this resistance to interiority and openness to alterity clearly functions at a fundamental level within Durkheim, Levinas insists that sociology, along with psychology and physiology, are "deaf to exteriority." (TI, p. 291) That is to say, methodological approaches which are primarily sociological or political must understand exteriority in terms which still prioritize the interiority of the I.

V. Politics Against Totality

The way that Levinas adopts elements of Durkheim's social metaphysics into his ethical phenomenology is essential for understanding how his work implies a politics without prioritizing the political over the ethical. But this interest in the works of classical sociology is not limited to Durkheim, as Levinas refers to a possibility of escaping the trappings of solipsism through the work of Marx. While Levinas's later work largely avoids both Marx and Durkheim, the article on Hitlerism offers a tantalizing glimpse into Levinas's early openness to Marx's directly political attempt to avoid modernity's problem of "elemental evil". At length in the second section of the article, Levinas addresses Marxism's attempt to escape the pathological separation into interiority that lies at the core of modernity, noting that "Marxism was the first doctrine in Western history

to contest this view of man… Marxism no longer sees the human spirit as pure freedom, or a soul floating above any attachment." (RPH, p. 66) By viewing Marx's work in the same context of a social metaphysics he describes in Durkheim, we see the appeal of Marxism as a social theory which resists the collapse into ontology. The way that this social metaphysics is derived from a resistance to the idea that the human spirit must be understood in terms of autonomy again links back to the appeal of the myth of Gyges as the socially detached condition of modernity.

This affinity for Marxism's attempt to escape the pathology of modernism is an idea that persists in a handful of Levinas's later writings, especially in his introduction to the 1977 French translation of Buber's *Netivot be-Utopia* [Paths in Utopia[57]], republished as "Utopia and Socialism" in *Alterity and Transcendence*[58]. While Levinas is largely critical of the actual existing Marxism in these later writings and interviews, he continues to express admiration for Marx's attempt to allow humanity to escape the utter collapse into individualistic solipsism. Levinas introduces Buber's thought to the French readership framing Utopian Socialism within the context of the liberation at the core of Marxism:

> The condemnation of Stalinism by the very society it wrought marked the end of a certain idea of doctrinal infallibility that had settled into people's minds… In its faithfulness to Marxism, which, as one cannot forget, was able to transform concepts into movements, the search for new syntheses is beginning to make itself felt. (UaS, p. 111)

This shows a remarkably hopeful view of contemporary Marxism's attempt to escape the totalitarianism of Stalin, and might be surprising to readers of Levinas who are more familiar with his formal philosophical rejection of politics at the outset of TI. That he finds this common ground with political socialism challenges the more common assertion that Levinas's political leanings are best understood as an endorsement of the liberal State, which we will discuss at greater length in the next chapter. But the socialism that preoccupies Levinas in the context of Buber's book is not orthodox economic socialism, but rather Buber's utopian socialism which follows in the tradition of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon. Levinas describes Buber's task in the book as examining the opposition between the political and the social, noting that the driving force behind Buber's work is questioning Hegel's insistence on the subordination of civil society to the State. Levinas argues that while Hegel views freedom as only achievable through the universality of

[57] BUBER, Martin. Paths in Utopia. Trans. R.F.C. Hull Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.
[58] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Utopia and Socialism" in Alterity and Transcendence. Trans. Michael B. Smith. London: Athlone Press, 1999. Hereafter UaS.

thought and will made possible by the State, Buber's utopianism offers an alternative possibility of civil society beyond the State. By juxtaposing the social to the State, Buber is able to describe human relationships, the famous I-Thou, in terms which are irreducible to mere civility enacted out of fear of violent retribution by the State.

This theme appears emphatically in Levinas at the conclusion of TI in which his description of the marvel of the family attempts to describe a social relation irreducible to the actions of autonomous agents within a State. Here we see Levinas's deep affinity with Buber's social project. But whereas Buber juxtaposes the State to a broad sense of the social realm of human life, Levinas more explicitly establishes this opposition between the State and the family. Buber's category of the social is clearly a larger category than Levinas's concept of the family, but it is important to remember that Levinas emphasizes that the familial bonds he describes in TI should not be understood in biological terms. Echoing the central themes of myth of Gyges, Levinas emphasizes the way that Buber is able to describe relationality which does not depend on the formal structure of the State, which is to say, the realm of reward and punishment. Levinas notes that Buber begins with what passes for morality in Hegel's absolute State: "It is the idea of domination, coercion – or as we would say today, repression – that is the starting point for Buber's thinking on political relationships between men." (UaS, p. 113) Buber's socialism resists this Hegelian reduction of relationality to political necessity or mutually beneficial social contract. It rests on a more fundamental relationship that in Buber's context is considered camaraderie, which is synonymous with what Levinas develops in his formal phenomenology as fraternity.

Levinas emphasizes that while Buber's writing of Utopian Socialism preceded the era of de-Stalinization in the USSR, there is a sense that at the time of his writing of the introduction in 1977 the USSR might rediscover what we might call the fraternal core of Marxism. Again setting Marxism and Leninism against Stalin, Levinas continues: "Aren't Marxism and Leninism mistrustful of the State to the highest degree? The division of society into classes and the domination of one class by the other, against which the proletarians unite, are the reason or secret of State." (UaS p. 114) The possibility of linking Levinas to an anarchic reading of Marx,

specifically in Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, is the centerpiece of Miguel Abensour's *Democracy Against the State*[59], to which we will return in a later chapter.

But what stands out most about these two distinctly political writings, the essay on Hitlerism and the introduction to Buber's Paths in Utopia, is Levinas's growing disenchantment with political rationality and the committed belief that any political rationality will ultimately be inadequate for opposing the human capacity for solipsism and indifference. For him, even this fraternal core of Marxism remains rooted in the political rationale of the self-preservation of the proletariat. Levinas insists the escape from this potential for elemental evil requires a transcendence that remains out of the grasp of sociological, political or even philosophical rationale. But it important to understand the way the irreducible social metaphysics Levinas finds in Durkheim, along with the resistance to the trappings of modernity in Buber and Marx, continue to inform his critique of Heideggerian ontology and the task of setting ethics as first philosophy.

VI. Sacred Society

Perhaps even more dramatically than in either TI or the essay on Hitlerism, Levinas sides with Durkheim's social metaphysics against Heideggerian ontology in EE. There, Levinas associates the collapse of the sacred-profane distinction, a central theme in Durkheim's work, with Heidegger's concept of being in general, which as we saw in the previous chapter Levinas renders as the *il y a*. In order to deploy Durkheim's concept of the social against Heidegger, Levinas associates Heidegger with the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Caygill explains what is at stake in their respective approaches to this dichotomy:

> For Durkheim, the sacred invests the collective representations of a given society, undergoing a process of transposition moving from 'the "still" impersonal God from which will one day issue the God of advanced religions'. For Lévy-Bruhl, the sacred and profane are collapsed in the concept of participation – there is no process of separation that distinguishes the two realms but only their ineluctable mingling. (CAYGILL, 2002, p. 57)

We can see elements of the above discussion of Treitschke in this context of formal participation in ritual as acquiescence without belief that the absolute State requires of its citizens. Caygill emphasizes that this distinction is fundamental for understanding how Levinas links both Heidegger and National Socialism to a kind of paganism which collapse the sacred-profane

[59] ABENSOUR, Miguel. Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment. Trans. Max Blechman and Martin Breaugh. London: Polity Press, 2011.

distinction following Levy-Bruhl. Near the end of EE, Levinas makes clear the social categories at stake:

> The social relationship is not initially a relationship with what surpasses the individual, something that exceeds the sum of individuals, in Durkheim's sense, higher than the individual… Heidegger's *Miteinandersein* also remains a collectivity of the *with*, and it is around <truth> that its authentic form is found… in Heidegger sociality is entirely found in the solitary subject. The analysis of Dasein is carried out in terms of solitude in its authentic form. (LEVINAS, 1947, p. 161-2, my translation)

By emphasizing the way that Heidegger's *Miteinandersein* is mere participation, that the authentic individual is understood explicitly as solitude, Heidegger's position is equated with Lévy-Bruhl's collapse of the sacred and profane distinction. This threatens the basic core of sociality in the sense of Durkheim and Levinas, wherein sociality itself rests on the sacredness of the social bonds. If all social bonds can be accounted for on the basis of merely formal participation, the superficial performative level required by Treitschke, authentic sociality is rendered impossible. This is the sense of paganism which Levinas attributes to Heidegger and National Socialism, not as a rejection of religious life, but of a collapse of the sacred into the profane, of a negation of authentic sociality in favor of performative obedience.

This sense of paganism, thus, is evoked in the technical sense of the term used by Durkheim. For Durkheim, paganism signifies "a system of ritual practices backed up no doubt with a mythology, but vague, inconsistent and without any expressly obligatory authority" as opposed to how Durkheim understood Christianity to be "an idealistic religion, a system of ideas and a body of doctrines." (DURKHEIM, 1977, p. 22) Given Levinas's views of Christianity as a Machiavellian State religion, which we will discuss below, we would expect him to take issue with Durkheim's insistence on the idealistic core of Christianity here. But this critique of paganism resonates with how Levinas associates the absolute State as a closed totality, or more fundamentally with ontology itself. Levinas's ethics functions as a critique of both paganism and ontology by showing how each is fundamentally rooted in a closing-off to the critique of exteriority. He sides with Durkheim against Lévy-Bruhl and Heidegger exactly because the collapsing of the sacred and profane into a State religion signifies a kind of paganism in which sanctity of the divine is merely appropriated for immediate political needs.

By associating National Socialism with this technical conception of paganism as detached from any ideal, we can better understand the relation of ethics to politics in the specific sense that Levinas deploys in the concluding remarks of TI. There, as we have seen, Levinas describes the way transcendence and goodness manifest as plurality against the State, which he understands in concrete terms as the marvel of the family. There, he notes that the marvel of the family:

> … does not only result from a rational arrangement of animality ; it does not simply mark a step toward the anonymous universality of the State. It identifies itself outside of the State, even if the State reserves a framework for it. As source of human time it permits the subjectivity to place itself under a judgment while retaining speech. This is a metaphysically ineluctable structure which the State would not dismiss, as in Plato, nor make exist in view of its own disappearance, as Hegel would have it. The biological structure of fecundity is not limited to the biological fact. In the biological fact of fecundity are outlined the lineaments of fecundity in general as a relation between man and man and between the I and itself not resembling the structures constitutive of the State, lineaments of a reality that is not subordinated to the State as a means and does not represent a reduced model of the State. (TI, p. 306)

That this passage marks the final concluding remarks of the entire work suggests Levinas's entire ethical phenomenology might well be understood as leading up to exactly this opposition to the State. That Levinas both begins and ends the book with this opposition to the formal, political State cannot, in my view, be overlooked as the necessarily political context in which his ethical work is directly elaborated critique against the State. What is clear, in my reading, is that Levinasian ethics seeks a foothold, a point of leverage, which can resist this absolutism of the State. Reading Levinas in this sense of a direct and consistent concern with the totalizing nature of politics helps us orient the conception of the pluralism that resists the State. By firmly distinguishing his terminology of family from its biological sense, Levinas seems to guard against conceptions of the family which might itself avoid this sense of pluralism and thus instituting a new totality based on the interiority of blood relation that he denounces earlier in the article on Hitlerism.

However, since Levinas does not elaborate on what exactly he means by the State, beyond the hints at Hegel's absolute State as particularly prone to reducing relations to an anonymous universality, it is necessary to understand this not only in the context of a critique of Heideggerian ontology, but more fundamentally of a critique of the kind of political idealism Durkheim diagnosed in the work of Treitschke. Clearly Levinas is not dismissive of general relation, as he makes clear in the second part of the long quote above. The familial relation which his ethical phenomenology attempts to lay bare is not the I-Thou of Buber, but necessarily must be understood

in the context of the general relation which Levinas understands as the relation to the third party. While there is a sense in which Marxism itself resists this absolutism, Levinas is clearly more drawn to the social metaphysics of Durkheim as the path away from the trappings of excessive individualism or exaggerated self-sufficiency.

VII. Political Monotheism

While I have tried to focus on Levinas's exclusively philosophical and sociological influences on how he arrives at his conception of the absolute State, the most concrete references to a practical politics contained in his works are found in his Talmudic commentaries or what he sometimes calls his "confessional" writings. These writings shed light not only on how Levinas conceives of existing States, but how we might rethink politics in a radically new sense that can resist this collapse into totality. This analysis centers on the way he understands the State to be fundamentally rooted in a dialectical opposition of the ideal and the practical. Going beyond the diagnosis of the pathology within the modern State to a sketch of a prescriptive account of something beyond the State forces Levinas to imagine the way in which this his dialectical relation of the ideal and practical can be united in what he poetically calls "monotheistic politics". Levinas develops the article "The State of Caesar and the State of David". In the concluding section of the article he notes:

> Would the political philosophy of monotheism be a summary one, even if the utopia, as is evident, has rights over a thought worthy of this name? ... The question is not raised in order to claim the idolatrous politics of the world, which in actual fact is the only one to exist, and which Christian monotheism has been unable to destroy. It is raised in order to expect from Zion the formulation of the political monotheism that nobody would have formulated yet. (SCSD, p. 186)

Levinas's primary concern here is the role of Zionism as it relates to the existing State of Israel. The messianic ideal of the State of David is defined by its always-unfinished nature, and Levinas's Zionism must always be understood within this context. The existing State of Israel strives for the utopian ideal, but is itself subject to collapse into idolatry and to close itself off from the justice that lies beyond the State. But by "political monotheism" Levinas gives perhaps his most detailed description of a truly ethical politics as not only utopian in the sense of a striving towards an ideal, but of the way the ideal functions as a critique of the actual existing State.

Political monotheism, then, represents a fundamental union of the practical and ideal which allows Levinas to describe a two-part legitimacy of the State. On the one hand, a purely practical State would be illegitimate in that it would fail to strive for a justice beyond immediate necessity. On the other hand, a purely ideal State would inevitably fail to achieve the immediate practical needs of its citizens. As the State is necessitated by the immediate needs of the hour, it is legitimated by the degree to which it strives to achieve those needs in accordance with a radical ideal. For Levinas, because neither the practical nor ideal can be self-justifying, justice necessarily oscillates between the realms of the practical and the ideal.

In order to describe the tension between these two realms, Levinas draws this vocabulary from the Christian New Testament, specifically citing a phrase attributed to Jesus in Matthew 22:21: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." The State of Caesar, following this logic, is the formal political State while the State of David refers to a messianic ideal State which remains unrealized, as a kind of promised deliverance which retains a political form. In my view, this dynamic, which reflects elements of his formal phenomenology of ethical responsibility, is the key to understanding the political context of Levinas's ethical work.

He begins the article developing a distinctly unsympathetic view of the relationship between Christianity and the State. Levinas notes:

> In Christianity, the kingdom of God and the earthly kingdom are separated yet placed side by side without touching and, in principle, without contesting each other. They divide the human between themselves, and do not give rise to conflicts. It is perhaps because of this political spirit of indifference that Christianity has so often been a State religion. (SCSD, p. 177)

The tension created between political authority and religious authority, the central theme of Moses Mendelssohn's Jerusalem to which we will return in the following chapter, is approached in radically different ways in Christianity and Judaism. Unlike Christianity, Judaism does not maintain this necessary gap between the divine and political order. Levinas emphasizes that while the divine and political orders are not identical in Judaism, the Christian "political spirit of indifference" has never been the message of Judaism. Rather, as Judaism was systematically excluded from political power, incapable of installing itself as a State religion, it necessarily became a kind of exteriority beyond the State. Levinas continues:

> Being beyond the State was an era that Judaism could foresee without accepting, in an age of States, a State that was removed from the Law, and without thinking that the State was not a necessary path, even for going beyond the State. The doctrine of the prophets was perhaps only this anti-Machiavellianism anticipated in the refusal of anarchy. (SCSD, p. 177)

Levinas here is aligning Christianity's tendency to entrench itself as a State religion with a Machiavellian appropriation of civil religion for utilitarian purposes. He seems to have in mind the specific way that Machiavelli viewed the divine as an instrument for maintaining political order, as a kind of useful consecration of the will of the sovereign to placate the faithful masses. As Machiavelli notes, for example, in book one of his *Discourses on Livy*[60]:

> And truly there was never any orderer of extraordinary laws for a people who did not have recourse to God, because otherwise they would not have been accepted. For a prudent individual knows many goods that do not have in themselves evident reasons with which one can persuade others. Thus wise men who do wish to take away this difficulty have recourse to God. (MACHIAVELLI, 1996, p. 35)

In this view, wise men seeking to impose laws on a people must resort to an appeal towards the divine which can serve as coercion for lesser citizens. This subordination of the divine to political expediency is anathema to Levinas's understanding of the ethical relation. At the core of Levinas's ethical project is an attempt to avoid the anarchy of negating one's responsibility for the other without resorting to the arbitrary whims of Hobbes' tyranny of the sovereign. In Levinas's view, both Judaism and Machiavellian politics oppose this anarchy (which here is synonymous with the negative sense of disorder) but in radically different ways. While Machiavellian politics sees Christian divinity as a useful tool for maintaining civic order, Judaism must be understood as attempting to preserve divinity as something which is utterly beyond the grasp of the State, and thereby resists any attempt to be appropriated by the State for its own ends.

Levinas's critique here captures not just a fundamental problem he finds in western liberal politics, but perhaps more fundamentally with Christianity itself. By subordinating itself to the State, by allowing political necessity to supersede the divine order, Christianity would elevate practicality above the "absolute law". This leads Levinas to a deep suspicion regarding the political authority,

[60] MACHIAVELLI, Niccolò. Discourses on Livy. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

especially in this Machiavellian case of the sovereign claiming to represent divine authority. Referring to I Samuel, Levinas notes:

> The prophet foresees the ruler's enslavement of his subjects, the attack on their property, their person and their family. Power eventually becomes tyranny. 'And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.' It is impossible to escape the State. (SCSD, p. 178)

This brings out the central tension of Levinas's article: while it is impossible to totally escape the State, the State's tendency towards tyranny should never be allowed to hold a monopoly on authority. That is to say, the authority of the State must never be seen as self-justifying or a closed totality of customs and laws. Rather, the State exists in order to facilitate what Levinas calls "the necessities of place and time" and can only do so through "the 'provisional abdication' pronounced by the 'spirit of the absolute'… which is thinkable only if the temporal order in which it arises itself receives some justification in the absolute." (SCSD, p. 179) What Levinas seems to have in mind here is the inevitability of conflict between the ideal and the practical, or more explicitly between the eternal order of justice and immediate necessities.

VIII. Messianic Politics

Since Levinas frequently evokes imagery of the refugee, it is illustrative to view this conflict in contemporary political terms of the hysteria surrounding the potential threat posed by refugees and asylum-seekers. The eternal order of justice, the unfulfillable demand of responsibility, calls on us to offer refuge regardless of any potential consequence. Levinas hints at the impracticality of this demand even in TI where he notes:

> No human or inter human relationship can be enacted outside of economy ; no face can be approached with empty hands and closed home. Recollection in a home open to the Other—hospitality—is the concrete and initial fact of human recollection and separation ; it coincides with the Desire for the Other absolutely transcendent. (TI, p. 172)

In our own contemporary political arenas, especially within the United States and Europe, there is an understandable preoccupation with what Levinas calls here the "necessities of place and time" in the specific context of refugees which might conceivably pose a security risk. In reading Levinas's reflections, nearly 60 years after the text's original publication, this insight as to the ethical demand to offer unconditional hospitality has never been more relevant. But Levinas's concern here is not the way in which any particular politics can achieve the moral ideal, which

would be impossible, but the necessity to remember the political realm is only granted a 'provisional abdication' of authority. It is exactly this limited authority which is constantly placed in question by the moral ideal, being held to account based on its distance or proximity to the absolute order of the moral ideal. To be clear, the provisional abdications granted to political authority cannot contradict the absolute order. Levinas's implication, then, is that the legitimacy of political authority is both derived from and limited by the moral ideal which remains an exteriority to the political regime, preventing its closing over into totality.

But again, this is not an attempt to construct a Judaic political regime in which Judaism serves as a State religion in the sense that Levinas attributes to Machiavelli's exploitation of Christianity. Rather, this is the role of justice that resides beyond the State, to which Judaism has been able to access through its historical displacement from the State of Israel. Levinas is clearly conflicted on questions of Zionism which he sees as necessary for safeguarding the lives of Jewish people, what he calls "the necessities of the hour", at the cost of elevating Judaism to a State religion. But that political authority granted to the State of Israel must always be understood in these terms he describes as a provisional abdication of authority, not for the sake of the State, but for the sake of the fulfillment of an ethical obligation to meet the necessities of the hour. He notes: "What is most important is the idea that not only does the essence of the State not contradict the absolute order, but it is called by it." (SCSD, p. 180) Thus, for Levinas the State must be understood as a limited sphere of political influence whose legitimacy is constantly called into question by the moral ideal or absolute order.

This is crucial for understanding the political theory behind Levinas's messianic understanding of the State as it appears in SCSD. Whereas contractualist or contractarian positions would hold that the political order must exist in order to achieve the necessities of the hour, specifically restraining the baser impulses of citizens, Levinas would argue that there is a more fundamental ethical call of the absolute order that precedes and exceeds any practical necessity. But this absolute order must not be understood as a call to religious fundamentalism. The sense in which Levinas uses the expression "absolute order" evokes what he calls in other places the core teaching of the Torah, which is the fundamentality of ethical responsibility for the other. And it is that absolute order, ethics, which guides and limits the State, and thereby legitimizes it only when the pursuit of immediate necessities does not come at the cost of the moral ideal.

Levinas makes this clear in the opening section of the article approximating the traditional Jewish accounts of legitimate political authority in the Torah and the conception of the State in modern political philosophy:

> The Rabbis cannot forget the organizing principle of Rome and its law! They therefore anticipate, with remarkable independence of spirit, modem political philosophy. Whatever its order, the City already ensures the rights of human beings against their fellow men, taken to be still in a state of nature, men as wolves for other men, as Hobbes would have it. Although Israel would see itself as descended from an irreducible fraternity, it is aware of the temptation, within itself and around it, of the war which pits everyone against everyone else. (SCSD, p. 183)

It is worth noting the rarity of Levinas referring to both Machiavelli and Hobbes in such proximity within the short article, especially since his purely philosophical texts rarely address the traditions of political theory overtly. But here we can perceive a political logic which is present within Levinas's ethical project against a particular western political conception of the State that traces its lineage to the Roman Republic. Since the ethical order is what limits and legitimizes political authority, understanding the phenomenological structure of the ethical relation can be understood as an attempt to understand the basic foundations of legitimate political authority.

But for Levinas here, concluding his account of "Yes to the State" which opens the article, there is a legitimate need for the practical State, the State of Caesar, which both the Jewish tradition and modern political philosophy would attribute to the need to address the "necessities of the hour". But against modern political theorists such as Hobbes and Machiavelli, Levinas's primary preoccupation is the closing over of political rationality into a totality. To this end, he continues the article addressing the limitations of these practical, existing States.

Because no politics can achieve the radical asymmetry of the ethical demand, Levinas must turn to the critique of the State which he just elaborated as legitimated through the guarantee of immediate necessities. But while the striving towards this noble goal is both the foundation and limitation of the "provisional abdication" of political authority to the State of Caesar, Levinas is cautious about the scope of this abdication. He begins the second section with this preoccupation:

> But the State of Caesar, despite its participation in the pure essence of the State, is also the place of corruption *par excellence* and, perhaps, the ultimate refuge of idolatry… The State of Caesar separates humanity from its deliverance by developing without hindrance and reaching the plenitude (or hypertrophy - natural, as it were) of the form it received from the Graeco-Roman world, the pagan State, jealous of its sovereignty, the State in search of

> hegemony, the conquering, imperialist, totalitarian, oppressive State, attached to realist egoism. Incapable of being without self-adoration, it is idolatry itself. (SCSD, p. 183-184)

Here we see closer parallels to the better-known critique of politics found at the outset of TI. Levinas is understandably preoccupied with the totalizing tendencies which push the State to close itself off from the critique of exteriority and the limits placed upon the State by the absolute order of ethics. Interestingly, Levinas refers to this as idolatry, again echoing moments in TI wherein politics is opposed not only by morality, but by religion in the technical sense discussed above as "the bond that is established between the same and the other without constituting a totality" (TI p. 40) Idolatry lacks this openness to alterity and, unlike religion, inevitably constitutes a totality in the sense of understanding the divine through objects as a mere idea, which is to say, another aspect of self.

Anabel Herzog offers a provocative, and I think correct, reading that Levinas's concept of idolatry should be understood as intractably connected with the concept of ontology as refusals of transcendence. Clearly drawing on Derrida, she notes: "the refusal of transcendence is found both in non-openness to the other *person* and in non-openness to exegesis, to *otherness in texts*. Such refusal means closure in relationships both with people and with books. As a result, ontology and idolatry share common features." (HERZOG, 2011, p. 137) This connection of idolatry to ontology is invaluable to understanding the way Levinas's philosophical critique of Heidegger resonates with his critique of the State in his Talmudic commentaries. The State as a kind of idolatry, as a kind of refusal of transcendence, inevitably tends towards totalization even in attempting to achieve the "necessities of the hour". That is to say, even the noblest of goals which the State can have beyond the mad race for power Durkheim diagnoses in Treitschke's nationalism, are inevitably fated to collapse into this sense of idolatry. As Levinas notes in TI, politics is the realm of reciprocal and symmetric relation as opposed to the asymmetry and height of ethical relation. He notes:

> Politics tends toward reciprocal recognition, that is, toward equality ; it ensures happiness. And political law concludes and sanctions the struggle for recognition. Religion is Desire and not struggle for recognition. It is the surplus possible in a society of equals, that of glorious humility, responsibility, and sacrifice, which are the condition for equality itself. (TI, p. 64)

The excessive nature of responsibility, always preceding and exceeding any potential response to the ethical demand, cannot be accounted for within the confines of political logic. Idolatry,

ontology and politics are thus rendered incapable of achieving this transcendence, and yet, each is both necessary and inescapable in a practical world.

This is why Levinas sets out in SCSD to demonstrate that the sheer inevitability of the State alone does not grant its legitimacy. On the contrary, the corruption and idolatry of the State of Caesar is exposed and critiqued by the State of David. For Levinas, Israel represents the uneasy contradiction between the necessary but corrupt State of Caesar and the impossible ideal of the State of David. This inevitable contradiction must be understood within its context of the Judaic Messianic tradition. He notes:

> From behind the State of David, safeguarded from the corruption which already alienates the State of Caesar, the beyond of the State announces itself. In certain texts, Israel is thought of as a human society having gone beyond Messianism, one which is still political and historical. In others, the future world or the 'world to come' is announced - Messianism and this 'world to come' being radically distinguished. (SCSD, p. 185)

Here, Levinas is content with the ambiguity of Israel understood in both senses as political/historical and post-political/post-historical. In other texts, he emphasizes a kind of universal messianism that cannot be ascribed to any particular ethnic or national group, following the teachings of M. Chouchani. This apparent contradiction between messianism as both particular to Judaism and universal serves as the centerpiece of Michael Morgan's recent book, *Levinas's Ethical Politics*[61], which we will examine in the following chapter. But what is clear from the above passage, and what motivates Morgan's investigation, is that Levinas's messianism is distinctly political. That is to say, Levinas's messianism necessarily refers to a kind of universal social character which cannot be understood in terms of the universal anonymity of the Hegelian State or by Treitschke's political idealism. He notes:

> The Messiah institutes a just society and sets humanity free after setting Israel free. These Messianic times are the times of a reign. The Messiah is king. The divine invests History and State rather than doing away with them. The end of History retains a political form. But the Messiah is a descendant of David. Yet what does a family tree of the line of David matter to the Messiah who is justified by his justice? It is of the utmost importance to David himself, and to the political structure that his name signifies. The State of David remains in the final stage of Deliverance. The epoch of the Messiah can and must result from the political order that is allegedly indifferent to eschatology and preoccupied solely with the problems of the hour. (SCSD, p. 180-181)

[61] MORGAN, MICHAEL L. Levinas's Ethical Politics. Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2016.

Unlike Christian messianism, the deliverance offered in Jewish messianism does not refer to the deliverance of the individual, but rather the deliverance of the entirety of the Jewish people. Thus, the messianic end of History does not bring about the end of politics or the end of the State, but incorporates the divine into politics. Messianic politics, to be clear, does not imply the negation of practical politics. Because this final stage of deliverance is understood in political terms, specifically in the event of the installation of a descendent of David as King, the institution of a divine and universal justice signifies a new political form which emerges from older political forms. But crucially here Levinas insists that the elevation of the messiah, the institution of a just society and liberation of humanity, occurs **through** the existing political order. This means that while the State of David is impossible without the State of Caesar, this relation is not understood in terms of a chronological progression or causality, but rather as a symbiotic coexistence in which one cannot survive without the other. The divine ideal of ethics must permeate the practical needs which are the realm of the State of Caesar, but the practical State alone cannot be allowed to isolate itself from the ethical, becoming a totality. And, in turn, the tendency towards complete preoccupation with practical needs necessitates the ideal State of David.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to contextualize the concept of pluralist society that appears in the conclusion of TI. By showing how this concept draws on Durkheim's social metaphysics that Levinas encountered in his early studies at Strasbourg, we can better understand the way the ethical phenomenology elaborated in TI serves not as an escape from politics but a critique against politics. Following through on this logic, we can contextualize the way in which Levinas associates Heideggerian ontology with a particular kind of paganism or idolatry of the State. The State's inevitable tendency towards totality, the refusal of alterity, is directly opposed not by ethics but more directly by pluralism. This pluralism, I argue, must necessarily be understood in its double sense as both metaphysical and social pluralism. This allows us to associate Levinas's ethical phenomenology with a specific kind of anarchic resistance to political totality or what Durkheim diagnosed as the nationalistic pathology of the "German mentality" early in the First World War. This resistance is necessarily anarchic because any resistance to totality must avoid the tendency to offer a new archic principle around which a new totality can orient itself.

Levinas insists against the modern conception of the State that the sheer necessity of the State does not imply its legitimacy. His call for a pluralist society at the end of TI can be better understood in light of the directly political nature of his confessional writings, which explore the link between the lofty ideals of his philosophical work in their concrete practical sense as messianic or monotheistic politics. We can see the way Levinas conceives of this link in his emphatic critique of Christianity's exploitation of divine authority for political expedience when utilized as a State religion. Levinas's own conception of the State, which is hinted at in the close of TI without much elaboration, rests on the collapse of pluralism into anonymous universality. Pluralism is exactly the anarchic refusal of the synthesis that Levinas diagnoses in political totality. Thus, the pluralist society is necessarily anarchic in exactly the same sense that Durkheim uses to describe what he calls "civil society". This, as he makes clear in the pamphlet on Treitschke, is the refusal of the State's demand for unity, order and organization. Thus, Levinas's pluralist society and Durkheim's civil society can be understood as equally anarchic in the sense explored in the previous chapter. In the case of pluralism, it is important to keep in mind that this anarchism is not only in the formal sense of lacking its own internal principle of organization, but that pluralism itself cannot be the arché of monotheistic politics. Rather, pluralism is the anarchic critique of the archic tendencies of the State, the constant disturbance against the State's tendency towards totalization.

In the next chapter, we will examine the degree to which this call for pluralism can be understood as an endorsement of liberalism. While Levinas's personal political assertions from various interviews often express enthusiasm for the liberal State, the limitations of liberalism are never far from his mind.

Chapter 4: Liberalism and Zionism

In this chapter I will examine Levinas's somewhat tenuous endorsement of liberalism and more direct endorsement of Zionism. Because he expresses these personal commitments at various points in interviews and Talmudic commentaries, many prominent interpreters of his work have come to consider liberalism and Zionism to be the ultimate political fate of his formal philosophical positions. By addressing some of these endorsements in concert with his larger philosophical project, we will be better equipped, in the next chapter, to examine the degree to which his ethical work aligns political anarchism. Specifically, in this chapter, we will consider Levinas's relation to two distinct forms of liberalism, first in its classical Lockean formulation and second in the more robust sense of religious pluralism found in Moses Mendelssohn. In my view, Levinas's work certainly has elements of overlap with these forms of liberalism, although neither should be understood as the proper political fate of his ethical phenomenology. Still, by examining his comments on liberalism in their broader contexts, especially his embrace of the terminology of human rights in the 80s, we can better understand the political implications of his ethical work. Further, Levinas's endorsement of liberalism offers crucial insight into what it would mean to read his work politically, although this endorsement could be easily overstated, as we will see with our examination of Richard A. Cohen's work. In order to analyze what the liberal nation-state might mean for Levinas, it is necessary to thoroughly understand his complex and sometimes conflicting reflections on Israel and Zionism. Levinas's engagement with liberalism, in my view, is inseparable from his account of Zionism as simultaneously referring to a Jewish territorial State and a universal "ambition of Spirit" that goes beyond territorial politics. As such, we will examine Levinas's most extensive political commentary as found in his Talmudic commentaries and writings directly defending Israel, wherein he elaborates on the way Zionism describes the possibility of a just State and yet remains utterly incapable of satisfying the infinite demand of the ethical ideal to which it aspires. This is crucial for understanding the degree to which justice can be achieved through the State and the way in which the State necessarily falls short of achieving its ultimate goal.

I. "Is Liberalism All We Need?"

Let us begin with the context in which Levinas asks this question. His Reflections on Hitlerism, which we explored in the previous chapter, bares the hallmarks of Levinas's youth and early break with Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Since Heidegger remains unnamed in the text, the work might be mistakenly interpreted as a simple denouncement of the politics of Germany's rising fascism and a defense of religious thinking against political rationality. The work was, as we mentioned, written for publication in a radical Catholic journal which necessarily opposed the totalized politics of the day from a religious perspective. Perhaps the most striking thing about the article is how prescient and perceptive Levinas's political observations were even in 1934 while Hitlerism was in its infancy. What I mean is that long before the full extent of the horrors of the Holocaust could even be fathomed, Hitler was widely seen to be a somewhat aggressive politician fighting against the political and economic woes of the Weimar Republic, not unlike many aspiring tyrants of our own contemporary political climate. In the same sense current movements in nationalist or authoritarian populism are commonly perceived, there was no general sense of urgency or anticipation of the horrors that would emerge shortly after his rise to power. Even as the nation-States of western Europe pursued a doomed strategy of appeasement, naively hoping for the "Peace for our time" which would be prematurely declared by Neville Chamberlain in 1938, Levinas immediately perceived the threat and underlying pathology within the rise of Hitlerism.

In revisiting these early insights with the benefit of historical perspective in 1990, Levinas addresses the role of Heidegger's reduction of humanity to ontology as the unsaid message of the article, and ties it to the underlying pathology he attempted to lay bare. But Levinas shows a keen awareness of how his critique of Hitlerism might overshadow his more fundamental critique of political rationality in general. He asks the question which will occupy us in the present chapter: "We must ask ourselves if liberalism is all we need to achieve an authentic dignity for the human subject. Does the subject arrive at the human condition prior to assuming responsibility for the other man in the act of election that raises him up to this height?" (RPH, p. 3) This, in my view, is the most important dimension of his critique in the Hitlerism article, which not only exposes the pathology of Hitlerism, but also the fundamental problems within liberalism itself. Although Hitlerism can be understood as a rejection of liberalism, Levinas refused to be drawn into the false dilemma in which opposing Hitlerism necessarily means siding with the western liberalism that Hitlerism rejects. Rather, Levinas shows both Hitlerism and liberalism harbor underlying

pathologies which are each incapable of achieving the "authentic human dignity for the human subject" because both radically misunderstand the nature of human subjectivity. And so, while in the previous chapter we focused on how Levinas frames his critique of Hitlerism, in this chapter we will turn to the subtler critique of liberalism developed in the same article.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Hitlerism article, especially when seen from today's historical perspective, is the degree of admiration Levinas expresses for fascism's ability to touch upon "elementary feelings" and get at something which is lost under liberalism. From a liberal perspective, one might read that Levinas, in choosing to reject the dilemma offered between fascism and liberalism, ends up granting a certain degree of philosophical legitimacy to the project of fascism. This point is made by Samuel Moyn in his *Origins of the Other*[62], when he notes:

> The very title of Levinas's article, "Some Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism," … suggests that for its author the issue of coming to terms with National Socialism had special, metaphysical stakes. In later years, Levinas excluded these reflections from his list of publications, regretting an attribution of philosophical status to his subject that conferred on it a dignity he did not think it deserved. Yet it is of extraordinary moment that Levinas attempted to understand Nazism in philosophical terms. (MOYN, 2005, p. 97)

Moyn's claim about Levinas's exclusion of the Reflections from his later publications, which he explains in a footnote he draws from an unattributed claim in Adriaan Peperzak's *To the Other*[63], is somewhat problematic given the 1990 prefatory note and Levinas's overt connection of Nazism and Heidegger's fundamental ontology. But Moyn seems to be correct in pointing out the stakes of siding with Nazism in its critique of the pathology within liberalism if we were to ignore that Levinas refuses both sides of the dilemma. But by addressing national socialism philosophically, or attributing philosophical status to Nazism as Moyn would put it, Levinas is able to find common ground with its critique of liberalism. This is what is at stake in a philosophical rather than political examination of the rise of Hitlerism, and via this philosophical investigation Levinas is able to analyze the way Hitlerism awakens the "elementary feelings" that are masked or obscured by modern liberalism.

One way of understanding Levinas's article, then, is an attempt to uncover what was so appealing about Hitlerism to the throngs of Germans who took up the cause in the 1930s (and indeed who

[62] MOYN, Samuel. Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
[63] PEPERZAK, Adriaan. To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993.

continue to do so 90 years later under the banners of contemporary purveyors of the same corrupted logic). There might be a vein of thought in which the German critique of liberalism overlaps with his own ethical work, as pointed out by Gad and Asher Horowitz[64] who note: "… Levinas, in rejecting the right wing's notion of unlimited obligation to the Volk, is taking a first step towards the idea of infinite obligation to the Other without returning to the traditional idea of freedom inherited by liberalism." (HOROWITZ and HOROWITZ, 2006, p. 12) And while the essay cautions against the awakening of "elementary feelings" as an obviously dangerous historical movement, Levinas is keenly interested in how those "elementary feelings" are hidden and obscured within liberalism. By granting philosophical status to the rise of Hitlerism, by using the tools of phenomenological analysis to examine the underlying structure of experience rather than the political superstructure of the Nazi State, Levinas is able to gain access to the core of the appeal of Hitlerism in its rejection of liberalism. What Levinas seems to have in mind is that Hitlerism is responding to a particular pathology within liberalism, that it is exploiting a shortcoming via the "Nietzschean" appeal to the elementary feelings which oppose civilization itself.

So clearly liberalism is not "all we need" in the sense Levinas evokes in the prefatory note. In addition to harboring its own deep pathologies, Levinas emphatically declares throughout his work there is no formal political institution capable of achieving the moral ideal. No politics can achieve the Good as it lies beyond political rationality. For this reason, in the next chapter we will consider whether the disembodied and informal politics of anarchism can overcome this limitation. But for now, we are primarily preoccupied with the question of liberalism as Levinas understands it and the degree to which it addresses both the "necessities of the hour" and "demands of the ideal" as described in the previous chapter.

The key to understanding Levinas's account of liberalism is that he views liberalism as the political corollary of idealism, or more specifically as the political incarnation of the idealist conception of the human subject rendered terms of solipsistic autonomy and unrestrained personal liberty. He makes this connection early on in the text, after addressing the kind of idealization of liberation as pure detachment of the soul from its worldly context:

> If the liberalism of these last few centuries evades the dramatic aspects of such a liberation, it does retain one of its essential elements in the form of the sovereign freedom of reason.

[64] HOROWITZ, Asher and HOROWITZ, Gad. "Is Liberalism All We Need?" in Difficult Justice: Commentaries on Levinas and Politics. Eds. Asher Horowitz and Gad Horowitz. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. Pp. 12-23.

> The whole philosophical and political thought of modern times tends to place the human spirit on a plane that is superior to reality, and so creates a gulf between man and the world. It makes it impossible to apply the categories of the physical world to the spirituality of reason, and so locates the ultimate foundation of the spirit outside the brutal world and the implacable history of concrete existence. It replaces the blind world of common sense with the world **rebuilt by idealist philosophy**, one that is steeped in reason and subject to reason. (RPH, p. 6, emphasis added)

This passage rings of Levinas's early proximity to Heidegger in its abject dismissal of the modern conception of the subject. But more fundamentally, here Levinas is calling attention to the way the modern autonomous subject necessarily culminates politically as liberalism as a rejection of the concrete world for an idealist abstraction. The implication here, which might only be discernable in historical hindsight, is that Heidegger's embrace of national socialism aligns with Hitlerism's rejection of liberalism as a false concreteness as a double rejection of modernism. Because Heidegger rejects the abstract conception of a worldless subject, he also rejects its political incarnation as liberalism.

The question which preoccupies Levinas in the article, and is reinforced by the prefatory note, is whether the only recourse against this is a return to liberalism. As we saw in the previous chapter, he briefly entertains the idea of Marxism as an alternative to both fascism and liberalism which opposes "the whole of idealist liberalism, wherein 'being does not determine consciousness,' but consciousness or reason determines being." (RPH, p. 7) But ultimately, Levinas argues, Marxism does not break radically enough with the individualistic conception of subjectivity in that it aims at becoming consciousness of one's social situation in order to "shake off the social bewitchment" which is "foreign to its essence." (RPH, p. 7) For Levinas, despite Marx's openness to the sociality at the very heart of human subjectivity, Marxism remains entirely too invested in the modern conception of the subject.

While Marxism and Hitlerism both respond to a particular pathology of liberalism, which is the adherence to a conception of the subject which "creates a gulf between man and world", there remains a certain appeal to Levinas in the conception of rights as established in the liberal tradition. This concept of rights will go on to become a dominant theme in his later writings, and even in this early article he identified the French tradition of the 18th century as the precursor of "democratic ideology and the Declaration of the Rights of Man." (RPH, p. 6) He ties this precursor to the basic conception of freedom at the core of liberalism as the condition in which "man is not weighed down by a History in choosing his destiny. He does not experience the possibilities open

to him as a series of restless powers that seethe within him and already push him down a determined path." (RPH, p. 6) This connection of modern idealist philosophy with the conception of freedom that grounds the classical conception of the rights of man is crucial to understanding Levinas's positive affirmation of liberalism. This affirmation is tempered by his cautious approach in light of the pathology he identifies within liberalism, and yet the concept of rights remains a powerful theme within his work.

II. Human Rights

In order to contextualize what Levinas means by rights, we must examine the degree to which his use of the term coincides with classical conceptions as well as the degree to which it diverges from this modern idealist conception of the human subject. Despite his cautious skepticism of liberalism in the Hitlerism article, and echoed in the later prefatory note, Levinas's later writings demonstrate a clear affinity for western liberalism, especially is his growing commitment to the language of human rights in the 1980s. The theme of rights dominates a number of the articles written at the height of the cold war, such as "The Rights of Man and Good Will" (1985)[65], "The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other (1985)[66], and "The Rights of the Other Man" (1989)[67]. The near constant presence of the concept of rights within his later works has been highlighted by Burggraeve in *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love*. Burggraeve notes: "As Levinas' thinking progresses, peace and human rights become increasingly important themes. In the writings of the last two decades of his life, they even become virtual synonyms for his central concept of responsibility." (BURGGRAEVE, 2002, p. 41) Burggraeve traces out the way that Levinas conceives this account of peace and human rights in terms of a responsibility which is prior to freedom in terms which radically diverge from the traditional western conception of rights.

This, again, sets Levinas against Hobbes in terms of a conception of rights which are the sovereign property of the individual and serve as a limitation on the legitimate government's ability to violate

[65] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "The Rights of Man and Good Will" in Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other. Trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Pp 155-158. Hereafter RMGW.
[66] Levinas, Emmanuel. "The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other" in Outside the Subject. Trans. Michael B. Smith. New York: Continuum Press, 1993. Pp 91-98. Hereafter RMRO.
[67] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "The Rights of the Other Man" in Alterity and Transcendence. Trans. Michael B. Smith. London: Athlone Press, 1999. Pp 145-150. Hereafter ROM.

individual sovereignty. For Levinas, as we might anticipate given the titles of the three articles mentioned above, rights are first and foremost the rights of the Other. While for the western liberal tradition of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, rights are primarily "my rights", Levinas will attempt to show an underlying structure in which rights are nothing other than the respect for the rights of the other. This inversion is a typical Levinasian philosophical move and necessarily follows from his rethinking of the human subject in ethical rather than ontological or psychological terms. Because Levinas understands human subjectivity in terms of a response to the call of the Other, as a kind of original heteronomy, he must reformulate the concept of rights from its origin in the autonomous modern subject.

Simon Critchley's work has extensively explored the dynamics of this distinction, which results in the casting of Levinasian subjectivity as "dividualism" against the "individualism" of the modern subject. Critchley defines "dividual" in terms of a rejection of autonomy, or more specifically as a rejection of the collapsing of consciousness into autonomy. He notes "*dividual*, in my parlance, is a way of thinking about the way that conscience structures and breaks apart what it means to be an individual." (CRITCHLEY, 2009, p 14)[68] This accounting for the unmaking or disarticulation of the individual is drawn directly from Levinas's conception of the ethical subject (and indirectly from Derrida's program of deconstruction). What this means is that unlike the autonomous, indivisible unity which defines the political subject in the tradition of Hobbes and Locke, by rooting itself in the asymmetrical heteronomy of the ethical relation we can see that Levinas's ethical subject is precisely the disarticulation of that modernist autonomous conception of the individual. That is, while "individual" signifies an indivisibility, a structure of absolute separation, "dividual" necessarily signifies an unbreakable attachment of self and world at a fundamental level which is prior to autonomy. This clearly resists the trends of modernism and provides further context for Levinas's insistence that his work is a "return to Platonism" which does not conceive of human subjectivity in terms of the pure autonomy assumed by modern individualism.

Thus, the question we might take up here is how Levinas's vocabulary of rights breaks from its liberal roots in light of this radically different conception of human subjectivity. To utilize

[68] "Interview: Simon Critchley – Infinitely Demanding Anarchism" in Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy, Volume II, Autumn 2009
http://www.ucd.ie/philosophy/perspectives/resources/Simon_critcheley_interview.pdf (accessed 2/10/2019)

Critchley's vocabulary, we might ask what "dividual rights" might mean if we follow the logic of Levinas's ethical subject as a disarticulation of autonomy against the familiar liberal tradition of "individual rights." The discourse of right, after all, is a theme which only emerged with modernity and thus would seem to be indelibly tied to the modern conception of the subject. Levinas's remarkable reformulation of the concept of rights, which I have described at greater length elsewhere[69], is rooted in a conception of fraternal duties which precede and exceed legal or moral obligation to the other. Indeed, Levinas's conception of fraternal duty precedes any kind of will or autonomy which we might understand as the response to the ethical demand. Rather, in Levinas's phenomenological formulation, the ethical demand itself is constitutive of the self and is thus necessarily prior to the conditions for the possibility of acting or even willing to act. This is necessarily a phenomenological accounting for rights, against the modern idealist conception, in that it begins from the first-person accounting of the experience of rights. For Levinas, this means that the phenomenological description of rights must necessarily begin with accounting for the structure of responsibility in which rights are respected rather than the affirmation of rights claims. This would set Levinas against not only classical liberal conceptions of rights, but also contemporary conceptions such as Ronald Dworkin's famed positivistic account of rights as formal affirmation of rights holders.

A close examination of the three 1980s articles can help us to better understand Levinas's own particular version of human rights. The first, "The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other", takes direct aim at the formalistic accounting of rights "in the rigorous and almost technical sense which that expression has taken on since the eighteenth century". (RMRO, p. 91) More than just a guiding principle for western liberalism, these rights have come to be seen as "more legitimate than any legislation, more just than any justification. They are probably… the measure of all law and, no doubt, of its ethics." (RMRO, p. 91) What appeals to Levinas in this classical conception of rights is their utter universality, which is given a priori as "independent of any power… independent of the merits of the human individual may have acquired by his or her efforts and even virtues." (RMRO, p. 91) It is this unconditional quality of being beyond all vested interests, beyond all authority for the granting of rights, that appeals so strongly to Levinas's later political writings.

[69] See my Master's Thesis available here: https://repositorio.ufpe.br/handle/123456789/17152

But Levinas points out the inherent social conflict that this classical conception of rights inevitably brings about: "But do not the rights of man… also run the risk of being belied or infringed upon by the rights of the other man? What Kant calls 'a kingdom of ends' is a plurality of free wills united by reason. But is the freedom of one not, for another's will, the latter's possible negation, and thus at least a limitation?" (RMRO, p. 95) This plurality of opposing wills, which Levinas calls the pluralist society in TI, is brought together under the banner of universal reason in Kant's formulation and inaugurates peace among men via universal law. But Levinas expresses extreme skepticism about this formalization of peace, noting:

> … does not the fundamental principle of the rights of man remain repressed, and does not the peace it inaugurates among men remain uncertain and ever precarious? A bad peace. Better, indeed, than a good war! But yet an abstract peace, seeking stability in the powers of the state, in politics, which ensures obedience to the law by force. Hence recourse of justice to politics, to its strategies and clever dealings: the rational order being attained at the price of the necessities peculiar to the state caught up in it. (RMRO, p. 96)

Derrida will go on to make this break from Kant's cosmopolitanism a centerpiece of his reading of Levinas in *Adieu*[70], noting that Kantian conceptions of morality still rely on a kind of universal citizenship as a contingency that Levinas could not accept due to his own insistence on the unconditional character of responsibility. Against the formalization of rights in the Kantian sense of universality, Levinas announces "the defense of the rights of man corresponds to a vocation *outside* the State, disposing, in a political society, of a kind of extra-territoriality…a vigilance totally different from political intelligence, a lucidity not limited to yielding before the formalism of universality, but upholding justice itself in its limitations." (RMRO p. 96-97) Thus we see emerge the themes which define Levinas's own conception of rights as informal, extra-territorial, outside the State and unconditional. In perhaps his most emphatic endorsement of liberalism, Levinas continues: "The capacity to guarantee that extra-territoriality and that independence defines the liberal State and describes the modality according to which the conjunction of politics and ethics is intrinsically possible." (RMRO, p. 97) What is clear from this passage is that Levinas understands that rights are the defining characteristic of liberal States, but not in the sense of the creation or institution of political rights. We can immediately see the appeal of rights for Levinas because the discourse of rights follows the same structure he describes phenomenologically in ethical responsibility which emerges from beyond the totality of the self. As the self responds and

[70] DERRIDA, JACQUES. Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas. Paris: Galilée, 1997.

is called into question by the alterity beyond one's own totality in the ethical encounter, the liberal State is called into question by the extra-territorial unconditional rights of liberalism. There is a clear shared appeal of ethical relation and the liberal State's respect for rights for Levinas. They share the same structure in which an unconditional obligation to that which lies beyond the totality serves as a kind of orienting disarticulation that is both constitutive and disruptive.

But Levinas offers a radically different conception of rights than the classical liberal tradition of rights as the sovereign inalienable property of the rightsholder and recasts rights as nothing other than the responsibility to respect the rights of the other person. He addresses this at length in the conclusion of the article, noting:

> Should not the fraternity that is the motto of the republic be discerned in the prior non-indifference of one for the other, in that original goodness in which freedom is embedded, and in which the justice of the rights of man takes on an immutable significance and stability, better than those guaranteed by the state? A freedom in fraternity, in which the reasonability of one-for-the-other is affirmed, and through which the rights of man manifest themselves *concretely* to consciousness as the rights of the other, for which *I* am answerable. **Their original manifestation as rights of the other person and as duty for an I, as my fraternal duty – that is the phenomenology of the rights of man**. (RMRO, p. 98, emphasis added)

The "motto of the republic" mentioned here, of course, refers to France and its enduring commitment to Fraternity, Liberty and Equality, which should not be overlooked as the political context of Levinas's own vocabulary of fraternity. But what is most remarkable about this passage is Levinas's affirmation of an account of the "phenomenology of the rights of man", which is rooted in his description of the structure of the experience of responsibility. That is, in accounting for rights phenomenologically from a first-person perspective, the primary experience to be described is the responsibility to respect the rights of the other which is prior to the affirmation of my own rights. That Levinas affirms this phenomenologically in line with his earlier work on the structure of responsibility makes clear that his later preoccupation with rights is not a radical turn from his overall philosophical project, but its logical culmination in overtly political terms. By accounting for the foundation of rights within the phenomenologically accessible first-person experience of responsibility for the other, Levinas is offering a radical rethinking of rights which disarticulates the autonomous subject assumed in classical liberalism.

In "The Rights of Man and Good Will", written the same year and later published in the collected articles of *Entre Nous,* Levinas again directly affirms the double nature of rights as a simultaneous

ordering and disordering of the State, noting that due to their classical status as derived from God in natural law, rights emerge from beyond the totality of the State.

Since the two articles were written in such close proximity, there is a clear overlap of many themes, although here Levinas makes a clear case for the coherence of his account of rights with his better-known account of the phenomenological structure of responsibility. After establishing some limitations of the accounts of rights that emerge from classical liberalism and Kantian cosmopolitanism, Levinas notes in the concluding passage of the article:

> What I have called an interruption or rupture of the perseverance of beings in their being, of the *conatus essendi* in the dis-inter-estedness of goodness does not indicate that the right of man gives up its absolute status to revert to the level of decisions made by I know now what compassionate subjectivities. It indicates the absolute of the social, the for-the-other which is probably the very delineation of the human. It indicates that 'nothing greater' of which Descartes spoke. No doubt it is important in good philosophy not to think the rights of man in terms of an unknown God; it is permissible to approach the idea of God setting out from the absolute that manifests itself in the relation to the other. (RMGW, p. 158)

Here we see the two aspects of his account of rights come together with his overall phenomenological project. He dismisses the theological grounding of "natural" rights in classical liberalism and offers in its place his own account of rights which is grounded more concretely in the responsibility that manifests in the relation to the other person. In addition to grounding rights in the undeniably secular experience of the proximal other, Levinas is able to show that even in its classical formulations rights have always relied on the catalyst of exteriority even in modernist conceptions of human subjectivity which follow Descartes. By reminding us that Descartes's account of subjectivity only functions via an appeal to the absolutely other of the "nothing greater" in the third meditation, Levinas is attempting to show that rights never make sense within a framework of absolute autonomy of the individualistic subject. In a sense, what Levinas's philosophical project seeks to overcome is exactly the forgetfulness of exteriority and the vital role it plays in the foundational texts of modern philosophy.

In "The Rights of the Other Man", published 4 years later, Levinas repeats his critique of the "formal characteristic" attributed to rights and again argues for an informal conception of rights which retains the a priori character of being "prior to all agreed upon law". (ROM, p. 145). The order of judicial determinism and legal positivism seeks to establish and codify these rights, but Levinas warns against allowing the institutionalization of rights overshadow their priority. This, it

should be noted, is the exact opposite of his contemporary phenomenologist Hannah Arendt[71], whose famed "right to have rights" argument specifically decries the philosophical postulation of rights without concrete political guarantees.

Again, as with the two earlier articles, Levinas presents a critique of the rationalist Kantian formulations of rights, but he also offers an indirect attack against Hobbes and the very foundation of the classical liberal conception of rights:

> … the conception of the right of man as the right to free will – a content suggested by the form of this right, by it's a priori – would it not be immediately put back into question by the coexistence and the very multiplicity of the 'holders of rights,' who, all 'unique and free,' would violate each other's rights or freedoms in limiting them? The war of each against all, based on the Rights of Man! Unless we attribute the essence of free will to a propensity for the rational, and, thus, a respect for the universal, thanks to which the imperative and normative of the intelligible would impose themselves on the free will of each, consenting to limit itself in such a way as to not limit others. A limitation of its own freedom. But also a free limitation of its freedom. (ROM, p. 149)

The "war of each against all" mentioned here evokes the same spirit of Levinas's critique of Hobbes discussed in an earlier chapter where he derides Hobbes's acceptance of the proverbial "*homo homini lupus*" in his vision of the State of nature as an account of "men as wolves for other men." (SCSD, 183) But in critiquing this savage and brutal vision of humanity, what Levinas has in mind here is not the supplanting of classical liberalism with Kantian cosmopolitanism. That would still subordinate the ethical relation to a rational evaluation, which Levinas cannot abide. Rather, in place of Kantian rationality, Levinas offers his own conception of goodness which precedes agency, again following the examples of exteriority he draws from Descartes and Plato. He questions the way Kantian rights would conceive of duty in terms of a submission rather than a gesture of generosity, questioning what the right to freedom would even mean in Kant's formulation: "unless a pre-eminent excellence were granted to the other out of goodness: unless good will were will, not just out of respect for the universality of a maxim of action, but out of the feeling of goodness." (ROM, p. 149) He seems prepared for this response to seem simplistic, noting that while "goodness" is "a simple feeling that we speak to children about" it fundamentally describes a deeper structure which Levinas considers "an attachment to the other in his alterity to the point of granting him a priority over oneself." (ROM, p. 149) This, to be sure, is radically different than the mutual recognition of rights among citizens as a way of avoiding conflict in

[71] See ARENDT, Hannah. The Origins of Totalitarianism. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973.

classical liberalism. Levinas's account of rights is fundamentally a rejection of the account of rights as vested interests in which I respect the rights of others in order to ensure they, in turn, respect my rights. By rooting his own conception of rights in goodness or dis-inter-estedness, Levinas refuses this game of reciprocity and thus places rights alongside his account responsibility as a kind of political outcropping of a deeper ethical structure.

III. Classical Liberalism

While Hobbes is addressed only indirectly in these articles on rights, his presence is unquestionable as the source of Levinas's ire towards reciprocal rights as a way of avoiding conflict between citizens. The instrumentality of Hobbes' classical conception of rights weighs heavily on Levinas's deployment of the term, even as he addresses Kant more directly as a preferable alternative to classical liberalism. Reading Levinas's philosophical project in relation to the egoistic political philosophy of Hobbes has been a line of thought carried out by Robert Bernasconi, who emphasizes a subtle critique of Hobbes as a core insight of Levinas's ethical project. Bernasconi developed this reading in the 1980s and a number of his contributions have strongly influenced the way English-speaking readers engage with Levinas in overtly political terms. In his own more recent work, Bernasconi seeks to overcome what is often seen as Levinas's most glaring political shortcoming, which is a kind of Eurocentric parochialism that blinds his account of ethical subjectivity to practical alterity in terms of race, sexuality or gender identity. We will return to this theme in the context of the particularly sharp critique leveled at Levinas by Judith Butler in her most recent works.

In his article "What is the question to which 'substitution' is the answer?"[72] Bernasconi points to a somewhat innocuous passage from the article Substitution[73] to highlight this critique:

> All the transfers of sentiment which theorists of original war and egoism use to explain the birth of generosity (it isn't clear, however, that there was war at the beginning; before wars

[72] BERNASCONI, Robert. "What is the question to which 'substitution' is the answer?" in The Cambridge Companion to Levinas, eds. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002. Pp 234-251.

[73] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Substitution" in Basic Philosophical Writings, Eds. Simon CRITCHLEY, Robert BERNASCONI and Adriaan PEPERZAK. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 79-96. Hereafter S.
Note: In his article, Bernasconi references this 1968 version of "Substitution" published as a freestanding article in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* rather than the more formal 1974 version which appears in OTB and underwent several substantial revisions. We will return to the subtle differences between these two versions of this publication in the following chapter.

> there were altars) could not take root in the ego were it not, in its entire being, or rather its entire nonbeing, subjected not to a category, as in the case of matter, but to an unlimited accusative, that is to say, persecution, self, hostage, already substituted for others. (LEVINAS, 1996, p. 91)

Bernasconi, commenting directly on this passage, notes:

> Levinas obviously has Thomas Hobbes in mind, and this is in fact only one moment in an ongoing polemic against Hobbes… although Levinas never engages with Hobbes textually. Levinas is strongly committed to the claim that egoism cannot give birth to generosity, but that, by contrast, egoism arises from 'an intrigue other than egoism' (BPW, p. 88). If egoism is true, then sacrifice would be impossible, except perhaps under extreme conditions of self-deception. Levinas moves beyond egoism but without having recourse to altruism… (BERNASCONI, 2002, p. 235)

Avoiding a collapse into altruism or moral sentimentalism is clearly a strong motivation throughout Levinas's work. What Bernasconi emphasizes here is the way that Levinas conceives of responsibility in such a way as to be utterly incompatible with both Hobbes's vision of humanity and the kind of selfless sacrifice which is a negation of the self. Levinas's for-the-other is not a forgetfulness of the self, but a call to responsibility. Even within altruism, the other is thematized and instrumentalized as a tool by which the self can exercise his/her own responsibility.

Rather, as Bernasconi insists here, Levinas's intention is to overcome the egoist assumptions of modern philosophers like Hobbes at a more fundamental level. And while we might read Levinas in terms of a more general opposition to the assumptions of modern philosophy, Hobbes is a particularly appealing foil for Levinas's ethical phenomenology specifically because unlike Descartes, Hobbes' philosophical system admits no point of radical exteriority. What this means is that Descartes' philosophy begins from the interiorization of the self, but immediately encounters the need to reach out to the infinitely other in the third meditation. It is exactly this step that is refused by Hobbes, and indeed we might say by modern philosophy in general after Descartes.

Even in his earliest work, where Levinas was still beholden to the methodological core of Husserl's phenomenology of the epoché, Levinas pointed to this error of modern philosophy as compounded by philosophers after Descartes. He notes, in *Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*: "Empiricism has identified transcendental and psychological consciousness; that is its great mistake. The origin of this error can be found in Descartes. In Locke, Berkeley, and Hume it reaches a manifest absurdity, as a purely naturalistic study of consciousness leads to the negation

of the reality and categories of nature." (TIHP, p. 146) Aside from being one of the extremely rare references to Locke in Levinas's writings, this passage points to a rejection of modern conceptions of consciousness at the very outset of his own philosophical career. While his mature work breaks substantially from Husserl's phenomenological method, this commitment is a persistent presence throughout Levinas's work and helps us contextualize his critique of Hobbesian egoism.

But while Bernasconi has held enormous sway over contemporary readings of Levinas's politics in Anglophonic philosophical circles, other commentators have pushed against this critique and attempted to describe Levinas's political implications in terms which adhere to the basic principles of classical liberalism. Richard A. Cohen in particular has advocated for a Lockean reading of Levinas's politics, especially in his article "Political Monotheism"[74] which argues that the preservation of individual freedom is the fundamental core of Levinas's ethical work. Drawing largely on the SCSD article discussed at length in the previous chapter, Cohen summarizes Levinas's political commitments within a framework of a specific distinction of Machiavellian and Utopian politics. He opens the article by elaborating this distinction: "There are only two kinds of politics. Machiavellian politics uses and justifies sovereign authority for its own sake. Utopian politics uses and justifies sovereign authority for the sake of one or many supra-political ends." (COHEN, 2003, p. 2) Following this distinction, Cohen systematically shows the way that Levinas aligns with Utopian politics against Machiavellian politics that is not based on his own personal political commitments (especially to Israel) but rather follows a "philosophical conviction that is ethical, political and metaphysics." (COHEN, 2003, p. 3) For Cohen, this necessarily culminates in a liberal politics as the philosophical antagonist of any totalitarian State or totalized Machiavellian politics.

This is important for our present investigation because Cohen reads Levinasian politics as a direct and unflinching endorsement of liberalism. This reading is supported by various interview comments, which we will explore below, but Cohen's affirmation of Levinas's liberalism presents an especially challenging position to overcome if we are to arrive at an anarchic rather than liberal

[74] Cohen, Richard. "Political Monotheism: Levinas on Politics, Ethics and Religion." In Essays in Celebration of the Founding of the Organization of Phenomenological Organizations. Ed. CHEUNG, Chan-Fai, Ivan Chvatik, Ion Copoeru, Lester Embree, Julia Iribarne, & Hans Rainer Sepp. WebPublished at www.o-p-o.net, 2003.

reading of Levinas's politics in the next chapter. Cohen's most direct affirmation appears early in the article:

> For Levinas the primary aim of politics, and the more specific meaning of justice - including its necessary concerns regarding work, pleasure, knowledge, health, security, the environment, etc. - lies in its service to the moral improvement of each individual as a social being. That is to say, quite simply, politics must be regulated according to justice but justice must serve morality. Humanity, or what Levinas calls "the humanity of the human," is determined neither by the state, in contrast to a "state of nature" which would be essentially brutal and violent, nor by a state of nature, in contrast to the state which would be essentially brutal and violent. Rather and foremost, moral character – individual and social at once – determines the humanity or the morality of the human.
>
> Clearly, then, what Levinas is defending, namely, a state regulated by justice, and justice guided by morality, and morality understood as that of independent individuals in social relation, is what has been known in modern political theory as liberal politics, "liberal" in the classic sense first articulated by John Locke. Contrary to the totalitarian politics of a Spinoza or a Hegel, the state, though regulated by justice does not establish what is just or what is good. Rather, the state institutionalizes and promotes justice to the extent that it ensures and promotes the moral independence of individuals in their social relations. (COHEN, 2003, p. 7)

The first point to make against Cohen here is his repeated use of the term "morality", which, in my view, reveals a profound misunderstanding of Levinas's philosophical project. Cohen ambitiously offers a definition of morality as a preface to his article as the "priority of 'good' over 'evil' in social relations." (COHEN, 2003, p. 1) But Levinas is not attempting to formulate a moralist critique of the State in the fashion proposed here by Cohen as a mere preference to some ambiguous conception of 'good' over an equally ambiguous conception of 'evil'. Cohen is right that Levinas seeks to establish a critique of the State, and the liberal State is far more open to this critique than the State oriented around the "totalitarian politics of a Spinoza or a Hegel". But by affirming that it is "moral character" which determines the humanity of the human, Cohen seems to be lumping Levinasian ethics into the tradition of virtue ethics. That is to say, he is proposing that for Levinas, the ethical encounter can be thematized into a moral system by which the legitimacy of the State can be evaluated in terms of its degree of adherence to a moral litmus test following the ambiguous 'good' and 'bad' which Cohen seems to find unproblematic.

But this approach, again in my view, wildly misunderstands Levinas's language of justice and ethics which are in no way reducible to mere morality. On the contrary, as we will see below, for Levinas the value judgements of morality aspire towards a fundamental ideal. The crucial difference between morality and ethics, which are often taken to be synonymous outside of

philosophical discourse, is that morality is situationally or historically contingent while ethics refers to a more idealized universal level of relationality. In Levinas's terms, which Cohen understands exceptionally well from his engagement with the SCSD article, ethics refers to the demands of the eternal ideal while morality refers to the immediate necessities of the hour. By focusing on the way that the State relates to the moral rather than the ethical, Cohen is missing Levinas's most crucial point that the State is necessary to achieve the moral but its legitimacy is determined by its adherence to the ideal of the absolute.

A second point we might make following this line of thought from the above passage is questioning Cohen's problematic assertation, which he admits is an oversimplification, that "politics must be regulated according to justice but justice must serve morality." Again, following the logic of a dual conception of justice as both the guarantee of immediate necessities and a pursuit of an unattainable ideal, we see that Cohen is privileging the immediate over the ideal in his conception of justice. Because he begins by regarding the pursuit of justice as fulfilling the "necessary concerns regarding work, pleasure, knowledge, health, security, the environment, ect…" Cohen is starting from a position in which justice is limited to the pursuit of immediate necessities. This follows from Cohen's privileging of morality over ethics in the sense described above and helps us understand how he accounts for Levinas's politics in liberal terms which is rooted in the mediation of competing interests rather than an orientation to an unreachable ideal.

This returns us to Cohen's opening position in the article wherein he addresses the "Utopian" nature of Levinas's politics. Cohen begins by insisting on a distinction between the "pejorative sense" of Utopian as "'impractical,' 'impossible' or 'featherbrained,'" and his preferred practical sense of utopianism as "the transcendence that drives non-Machiavellian politics". (COHEN, 2003, p. 2) Here we see the way Cohen is deeply committed to reading Levinas not only as a political thinker but as an instrumental political thinker who seeks to establish ethical rules by which political order can be imposed. But by dismissing, in the opening paragraphs of the article, the "impractical" or "impossible" as "featherbrained", Cohen clearly mistakes Levinas's political intentions as being limited to their practical dimension. The impracticality of Levinasian Utopianism, the aspiration for an unreachable ideal, is not "featherbrained" in the sense Cohen dismisses it here, but rather describes the familiar phenomenological structure of responsibility which pervades Levinas's ethical work. That the demands of ethics exceed the capability to

adequately respond is the fundamental core of asymmetrical responsibility and is the overwhelming force of Levinas's entire philosophical work. In my view, Cohen's assertion that politics must be understood in terms of its **achievement** of immediate goals rather than its **aspiration** towards unachievable goals profoundly misses the entire point of Levinas's philosophical enterprise.

A final point we should make about this passage in Cohen's article is how it concludes with his assertion that the goal of the State, for Levinas, is to promote "the moral independence of individuals in their social relations." As described earlier, the use of the term "individual" in relation to Levinas's understanding of ethical subjectivity gives rise to a number of difficulties. But what is interesting here is not only that Cohen is attempting to read Levinas's conception of subjectivity as individuality, but he is attempting to read Levinas himself as an individualist. Indeed, this might be feasible if we were to take the concept of responsibility as always my own unique responsibility in the sense that Levinas frequently insists. But Cohen here seems to understand Levinas in terms of social relations as an activity superadded to a pre-defined self as an individual. One's "moral independence", in the way Cohen phrases it here, would seek to render responsibility itself as a quality of the self rather than as the very constitution of the self. Further, Levinas would in no way support the idea that the State "institutionalizes" justice in the thematized and systematic way Cohen would have us believe. If there is a singular enduring message of TI, it is Levinas's unequivocal claim against formalized politics from the conclusion of the book: "… politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus as in absentia." (TI, p. 300) Cohen's valiant attempt to read Levinas's politics in light of his own liberal commitments is certainly a powerful argument, but tends towards this overly formal understanding of politics and a degree of institutionalization of justice that, in my view, is the very antithesis of Levinas's conception of justice. However, while Cohen overstates Levinas's adherence to the formal institutionality of liberalism, he is clearly right to emphasize the admiration that Levinas expresses for liberalism over alternative forms of government. For Levinas, despite its faults, liberalism does aspire to a kind of justice which lies beyond the State in the form of rights and while liberalism alone is insufficient to achieve human dignity, the question we might ask whether liberalism is the best starting point.

We can see various themes that resist Cohen's reading in Levinas's Warwick interview (PM) which we explored earlier. In this interview, which Cohen does not address in his article, Levinas clearly establishes his admiration for liberalism as morally preferable to the soviet-style socialism, which he discusses somewhat reductively in terms of Stalinism[75]. But contrary to Cohen's reading, Levinas immediately emphasizes the important distinction between practical and ideal which functions in his somewhat oblique engagement with political issues. In response to a question about the impracticality of TI's political dimension, Levinas begins by noting:

> That is the great separation that there is between the way the world functions concretely and the ideal of saintliness of which I am speaking. And I maintain that this ideal of saintliness is presupposed in all our value judgments. There is no politics for accomplishing the moral, but there are certainly some politics which are further from it or closer to it. For example, I've mentioned Stalinism to you. I've told you that justice is always a justice which desires a better justice. This is the way that I will characterize the liberal state. The liberal state is a state which holds justice as the absolutely desirable end and hence as a perfection. (PM, p. 177-8)

This "great separation" between the practical and ideal is what Cohen hastily overlooks in his collapse of justice into the immediate necessities of the hour. While Levinas repeats his familiar claim that politics alone cannot accomplish the moral, his willingness to engage with forms of politics as further from or closer to the ideal is remarkable here. Here he very quickly arrives at his characterization of the liberal State as a kind of dissatisfaction with the immediate justice of the hour. This reflects his work on human rights, which was developed around the time of the interview, where Levinas claims that the defining characteristic of liberalism lies in its striving towards unconditional universal rights beyond the scope of the State. Justice, which might be taken as synonymous with rights at this point, is this striving for unattainable perfection of the ideal. Thus, Levinas continues this account of the liberal State as it relates to his conception of rights:

> Concretely, the liberal state has always admitted—alongside the written law—human rights as a parallel institution. It continues to preach that within its justice there are always improvements to be made in human rights. Human rights are the reminder that there is no justice yet. And, consequently, I believe that it is absolutely obvious that the liberal state is more moral than the fascist state, and closer to the morally ideal state. (PM, p. 178)

Here again we see Levinas repeat the logic of proximity to the ideal as the measure of a State's legitimacy, against Cohen's reading of the justice of liberalism as strictly a response to the

[75] It is interesting to note that in this interview Levinas seems to have far less sympathetic a view towards socialism and Marxism than he does in the earlier Hitlerism article or the introduction to Buber's Paths in Utopia, which Cohen does reference in his article.

necessities of the hour. Rights are, in Levinas's definition, unattainable by the State and present a radical ideal to which the State must aspire without the possibility of achieving. In this sense, rights serve as both the orientation and disorientation of the State which aspires towards the ideal which it cannot achieve. This necessitates the sense of insatisfaction with present justice that Levinas emphasizes as the way in which the liberal State approaches the moral ideal, although he will always insist that that moral ideal remains tantalizingly out of reach for any politics. Levinas then concludes his response to the objection that TI lacks a concrete political dimension:

> There is a Utopian moment in what I say; it is the recognition of something which cannot be realized but which, ultimately, guides all moral action. This utopianism does not prohibit you from condemning certain factual states, nor from recognizing the relative progress that can be made. Utopianism is not a condemnation of everything else. There is no moral life without utopianism— utopianism in this exact sense that saintliness is goodness. (PM, p. 178)

It is unfortunate that Cohen does not engage with this interview in his article because Levinas's definition of utopia here seems to contradict the practical sense that Cohen insists upon. Levinas's utopianism clearly has a practical dimension, but it is crucial that he immediately describes this practicality in terms of a critique "condemning certain factual states" and "relative progress" rather than the complete satisfaction of utopian aspirations. By describing his vision of utopianism in terms of saintliness and goodness, Levinas directly opposes the sense of utopianism as the immediate practicality that Cohen uses to justify his reading of Levinasian liberalism as an embrace of utopian politics against Machiavellian politics.

IV. Prophetic Liberalism

But while Cohen overstates this point in order to align Levinas with classical liberalism, the approving sense with which Levinas addresses liberalism as "preferable" to more totalized forms of governance should be explored in more detailed. Thus, we will now examine Levinas's limited and hesitant endorsement of liberalism as "preferable" by elaborating a specific kind of liberalism to which his ethical system seems to find more affinities, specifically the prophetic liberalism of Moses Mendelssohn. Prophetic, in this sense, refers to the sense of the practical incarnation of the ideal, as we developed earlier in relation to the discussion of SCSD. But perhaps a more fundamental sense in which this Mendelssohnian framework of prophetic politics aligns with Levinas can be found in TI where he expounds on the relation of prophetic language to the

epiphany of the face. Because for Levinas this epiphany is not limited to the I-Thou relation to the proximal other but also evokes the third party, the ethical relation is always contextualized by the political. He notes:

> This is why the relation with the Other, discourse, is not only the putting in question of my freedom, the appeal coming from the other to call me to responsibility, is not only the speech by which I divest myself of the possession that encircles me by setting forth an objective and common world, but is also sermon, exhortation, **the prophetic word**. By essence the prophetic word responds to the epiphany of the face, doubles all discourse not as a discourse about moral themes, but as an irreducible movement of a discourse which by essence is aroused by the epiphany of the face inasmuch as it attests the presence of the third party, the whole of humanity, in the eyes that look at me. (TI, p. 213, emphasis added)

This interplay of the political and the ethical, the unmistakable social dimension of the ethical relation, provides a window into a particular aspect of Mendelssohn's liberalism that appeals to Levinas. As Critchley has observed regarding this passage[76], Levinas seems to be thinking of "prophetic" exactly in the terms of the way a prophet unites a community under the word of God. The prophetic nature of this refers not to the prophecy itself, but to the social cohesion which the prophecy is meant to inspire. But importantly, Levinas insists this is a doubling of discourse which incorporates both the ethical and the political rather than the subordination of the ethical to the political.

One remarkable contribution to this possibility of reading Levinas as embracing prophetic liberalism has been recently developed by Michael Morgan in his 2016 book *Levinas's Ethical Politics*[77]. While a number of authors have written about Levinas's political implications, Morgan goes a step farther and argues that Levinas's work can be understood **only** in terms of its political implications, which he interprets as an endorsement of a kind of "Mendelssohnian or prophetic liberalism" as embodied by a particular conception of territorial Zionism. (MORGAN, 2016, p. 135) Morgan clarifies that unlike classical liberalism, which is disengaged from the concrete world, this prophetic liberalism:

> … is intimately and deeply engaged with the world and with nature. It is attentive to our needs and to our responsibilities, and it takes normativity to be originally intertwined with nature and not something reducible to it or detached from it. In a sense, one might say that this mode of liberalism—of welfare liberalism and of liberal democracy—was a normative necessity… (MORGAN, 2016, p. 135)

[76] See The Ethics of Deconstruction, 2nd Edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999. (Esp. p 226-227)
[77] MORGAN, Michael L.. Levinas's Ethical Politics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.

Rather than shying away from or seeking excuses for Levinas's commitment to political Zionism, Morgan uses the example of the nation-state of Israel as the definitive expression of Levinasian ethics. This includes an extensive defense of Levinas's "infamous interview" with Shlomo Malka and Alain Finkielkraut[78] following the Sabra and Chatila Massacre in 1982, wherein Levinas refused to denounce the role of Israeli soldiers in a clear act of genocide against Lebanese refugees at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps over three days in September of that year.

The massacre occurred following an Israeli invasion of Lebanon and resulted in the murder of 700 to 3500 civilians. The massacre would be later officially designated by a UN commission as an act of genocide against the Arab refugees. The killings were carried out by Phalangist Lebanese Christian militias, who were tasked by the Israeli Defense Force to clear out suspected terrorists within the refugee camp. While the timeline of events is somewhat unclear even today, what was known at the time of the interview was that the Israeli military had been aware that a massacre of civilian refugees was underway by the third day and refused to intervene. Dismissing international critique of the Israeli role in the massacre, Prime Minister Menachem Begin famously declared "*Goyim* kill *goyim*, and they immediately come to hang the Jews." (qtd. in MORGAN, 2016, p. 266)

The "notorious" aspect of the interview hinges on Levinas's response, or lack thereof, to the simple and direct question posed to him by Rabbi Malka: "whether Israel is innocent or responsible for what happened at Sabra and Chatila." (qtd. in MORGAN, 2016, p. 268) Rather than offer an unambiguous condemnation of Israel's role in the massacre, Levinas takes issue with the presumed distinction in Malka's question between innocence and responsibility. Levinas's interest in responsibility, of course, is not in the purely political responsibility that Malka seems to be implying, but rather the ethical responsibility that precedes and exceeds the limits of any potential response. For readers already familiar with Levinas's philosophical work, his response is entirely consistent with his overall phenomenology, although it does present an especially difficult challenge for Morgan. If Morgan is right and Levinas's ethics is inseparable from its political consequences, how can we accept Levinas's silence in the face of a clear violation of the responsibility-for-the-other that lies at the very foundation of his ethical thought? Levinas's choice

[78] In 2019, during the composition of this chapter, Finkielkraut received international attention as the target of fervent antisemitic attacks during the *gilets jaunes* protests in France, demonstrating once again the ease with which nationalist populist movements embrace antisemitism.

to express regret without condemning the Israeli agents involved in the massacre seems to undermine the basic claim that Morgan sets out to prove in the book. But Morgan's response relies on the way in which Levinas's notion of Zionism embodies not a particular responsibility for the proximal other, but a general universal responsibility for all others regardless of the particularities of any given situation. Levinas's interest is not in moral culpability or legal accountability, because when faced with these kinds of horrific events, they "discredit Judaism, Zionism, and indeed all of us simply by having occurred… in a deep and fundamental sense, we are all responsible and the events challenge all of us." (MORGAN, 2016, p. 296) But despite Morgan's apologetics and correct attribution of this universal responsibility as the heart of Levinas's ethical project, in this case of a specific act against a specific people, Levinas's response remains wholly unsatisfying. The challenge which arises from Levinas's indirect response is what is the point of developing a phenomenological investigation into the structure of ethical responsibility if it leaves one incapable of condemning even the most apparent act of genocide?

Similar to Cohen, Morgan makes no effort to mask his own political commitments or their influence on his reading of Levinas on this point. In Morgan's case, these commitments are to Israel and Zionism which orient the way he approaches Levinas. Readers not committed to Americanist politics might find Morgan's repeated casual endorsement of Americanism especially troubling. He notes early in the book that while there are many kinds of democratic States, "only one aims at being impartial in its constitutional and legal rights and privileges, that is, the United States." (MORGAN, 2016, p. 26).He repeats this claim, nearly word-for-word, later in the book and further develops its context in relation to Israel: "There are many varieties of democratic states currently in existence in the world, and only one aims at being impartial in its constitutional and legal rights and privileges; that is the United States. All the others have a place for a privileged group or collectivity, a state religion or ethnic group; Israel is one of those." (MORGAN, 2016, p. 197) This dismissal of religious or ethnic privilege within the legal framework of a State is rather jarring here and should cause us to question the motivations that drive Morgan to so casually offer a justification for viewing religious or ethnic minorities as second-class citizens. While Morgan's personal political commitments are, of course, irrelevant to our discussion, it is worth noting that his zealous defense of Levinasian Zionism is not presented in an objective or scholarly disinterested fashion, but rather as a committed Americanist and Zionist attempting to orient Levinas's work around those concepts. In fact, Morgan introduces the work framing it as a

response to Judith Butler's highly critical reading of Levinas's Zionism in *Parting Ways*[79], which has sparked a renewed interest in Levinas political implications in recent years.

For Butler, there is no possible reconciliation between Levinas's insistence on the universality or unconditionality of the ethical demand and his own denial of responsibility in the case of the suffering of "faceless" Palestinian victims of Israeli ethnic nationalism. This presents a challenge to our work here because, if Butler is correct, Levinas's political commitment to Zionism undermines our attempt to align his political fate with an anarchic rejection of the fundamental structure of the State. Because Butler's critique cuts to the core of Levinas's political implications, it deserves thorough consideration here.

The context of Butler's engagement with Levinas takes place as part of a general project to philosophically question the legitimacy of territorial Jewish nationalism, or more specifically, to question whether Judaism is itself compatible with the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism that have come to define the State of Israel. In the opening paragraph of the book, she notes the risk of this inquiry being dismissed as antisemitic by defenders of Israeli and describes the challenge she faces in formulating her argument:

> If I succeed in showing that there are Jewish resources for the criticism of state violence, the colonial subjugation of populations, expulsion and dispossession, then I will have managed to show that a Jewish critique of Israeli state violence is at least possible, if not ethically obligatory. If I show, further, that there are Jewish values of cohabitation with the non-Jew that are part of the very ethical substance of diasporic Jewishness, then it will be possible to conclude that commitments to social equality and social justice have been an integral part of Jewish secular, socialist, and religious traditions. (BUTLER, 2012, p. 1)

Levinas serves a vital role in this analysis as his work is taken as the quintessential expression of this "ethical substance of diasporic Jewishness" in his development of the project of ethics as first philosophy. Butler clearly aligns herself philosophically with Levinas and expresses admiration for his ethical insights, noting: "For Levinas, it comes to us in every present moment through "the face," which commands us not to kill, and is not dependent on any historical or textual precedent. For Levinas, this is a noninterpretive moment, though we know it is possible to quarrel over what counts as a face and what does not." (BUTLER, 2012, p. 10) It is exactly this quarrel over the

[79] BUTLER, Judith. Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

question of face, or more specifically to whom ethical responsibility is owed, that Butler raises her damning critique to Levinas's philosophical project:

> In the case of Jewishness, if not Judaism, this displacement characterizes a certain diasporic train of thought. It also confirms a set of ethical values that bind us to those who exhibit no readily available national, cultural, religious, racial similitude to the norms that govern our cultural self-definitions. It is interesting that Levinas insisted we are bound to those we do not know, and did not choose, and that these obligations are, strictly speaking, precontractual. He was, of course, the one who claimed in an interview that the Palestinian had no face,[fn1] that he only meant to extend ethical obligations to those who were bound together by his version of Judeo-Christian and classical Greek origins.[fn2] In some ways he gave us the very principle that he betrayed. And this means that we are not only free, but obligated to extend that principle to the Palestinian people, precisely because he could not. After all, Levinas also gave us a conception of ethical relations that make us ethically responsive to those who exceed our immediate sphere of belonging and to whom we nevertheless belong, regardless of any choice or contract. (BULTER, 2012, p. 23, footnote indications added)

We have seen that Morgan's response to Butler's challenge is to agree that Levinas's ethical politics culminates in Zionism and to defend the legitimacy and coherence of this culmination. In my view, however, Levinas's embrace of Zionism cannot in any way be understood within the context of territorial Jewish nationalism and the exclusionary politics of the current regime of Israel.

Butler offers two footnote citations to support her reading, first to the claim that Levinas claimed "the Palestinian had no face" she points to the infamous interview regarding Sabra and Chatila without a specific reference. She seems to have in mind one response Levinas gives to the question of whether "for the Israeli, isn't the 'other' above all the Palestinian?" to which Levinas responded:

> My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbour, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be. And in that sense, if you're for the other, you're for the neighbour. But if your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong. (LEVINAS, 1990, p. 294)

Clearly Butler's reading is an exaggeration if this is indeed the passage she has in mind. Levinas's response, while not entirely satisfactory, does not claim that the Palestinian has no face and no ethical responsibility is owed to the ethnic Other. This would, of course, be a shocking statement for Levinas to make considering he himself insisted that even the SS officers had "faces" and were

therefore entitled to defense and respect.[80] Indeed, following Butler's line of critique, one might be inclined to identify the inherent racism in Levinas's willingness to grant the status of ethical obligation to a European SS officer and not to an Arabic victim of genocide at Sabra and Chatila. But while Levinas's deployment of the term "neighbor" here does problematically evoke a certain limitation in his use of the term "kin" as a condition for ethical responsibility, Butler's accusation pushes his claim far beyond its original scope. While she overstates his position in dramatic fashion, Butler is undoubtedly correct in pointing out the incongruity of Levinas's position of an "unconditional" responsibility if that responsibility is, in fact, dependent on the condition of familial proximity. While in other works Levinas goes to great lengths to distance this account of the family from its merely biological sense, in this unguarded response to Rabbi Malka's question Levinas's problematic exaltation of family relations should not be ignored. We might be tempted to defend Levinas's answer by noting the limitations of the interview format and necessity for brevity in his response, as his answer is clearly more interested in describing how one can take sides in a dispute while remaining true to the spirit of ethical responsibility for the other.

But this brings us to Butler's second supporting footnote to this passage in which she references Levinas's infamous comments regarding "Asiatic hordes" in "Jewish Thought Today"[81]. There, he notes: "countless masses of Asiatic and underdeveloped peoples… under the greedy eyes of these countless hordes who wish to hope and live, we, the Jews and Christians are pushed to the margins of history…" (JTT, p. 165) This terminology, which sadly foreshadows the contemporary ethnic nationalist movements in Europe that have oriented themselves around questions of national identity in opposition to mass migration, is deeply troubling for anyone who takes Levinas's work seriously in a political context. Unlike the offhand and casual nature of his comments in the interview with Malka and Finkelkraut, these reflections are taken from his published work and are, in my view, indefensible. On this point, I think that any honest appraisal of Levinas's comments here will concede Butler's point that Levinas privileges those who share his "Judeo-Christian and

[80] In response to this question of whether an SS Officer had a face, Levinas notes: "a very troubling question that calls, to my mind, for an affirmative answer. An affirmative answer that is painful every time!" in Altez, Fleurdeliz. "Banal and Implied Forms of Violence in Levinas' Phenomenological Ethics. Kritike, Vol 1, No. 1, June 2007. Pg 56.
[81] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Jewish Thought Today" in Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism. Trans. Seán Hand. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, pg 159-166. Hereafter JTT.

classical Greek origins" and this failure represents an indelible stain upon his conception of alterity that we hope to overcome (rather than ignore) with the present reading.

But while Butler will rightly emphasize this shortcoming in Levinas's conception of alterity, she goes too far in her claim that for Levinas, the Palestinian has no face. Her claim, which might easily be regarded as a provocative rhetorical flourish rather than a serious philosophical position, is merely a jumping-off point for her broader evaluation of Zionism in general. In this, she seeks to deploy Levinas's own ethical phenomenology against his political commitment to territorial Zionism. She notes:

> Although in his rendition we receive an implausible and outrageous account of the Jewish people problematically identified with Israel and figured only as persecuted and never persecuting, it is possible to read Levinas against himself, as it were, and arrive at a different conclusion. Indeed, Levinas's words here carry wounds and outrages, and they pose an ethical dilemma for those who read them. Although he would circumscribe a given religious tradition as the precondition for ethical responsibility, thereby casting other traditions as threats to ethicality, it makes sense for us to insist, as it were, on a face-to-face encounter, precisely here where Levinas claims it cannot be done. (BUTLER, 2012, p. 47)

This task of reading Levinas against himself, a task not entirely unlike the anarchic reading Levinas we are proposing to develop here, is effectively an attempt to draw out the inherent contradiction between Levinas's philosophical positions and his political commitment to Zionism. In order to achieve this, in the opening chapters of her book Butler attempts to lay bare a conflict which arises in the incongruity of Levinas the Philosopher and Levinas the Zionist. While she finds herself in agreement with Levinas's philosophical position, his political commitment causes her to question the validity of his philosophical enterprise. To render Butler's critique in Levinas's own terms we might say that Levinas the Philosopher is preoccupied with the demands of the ideal while Levinas the Zionist emphasizes the necessities of the hour, which in the case of Zionism means the defense of the Jewish people.

This distinction between Levinas's philosophical thought and his own political commitments is central to the task currently at hand, and Butler's criticism offers an important perspective on the possible political implications of Levinas's formal philosophical work. But on this question, in my view, Butler overstates the degree to which Levinas embraced Zionism in terms which can be rendered as territorial ethno-nationalism. We see this clearly in his account of Zionism in "Politics

After!"[82], where Zionism is taken to include some degree of territoriality, but more fundamentally indicates a universal aspiration as "a great ambition of the Spirit." (PA, p. 191) He clearly understands the conflict of State violence against the Palestinians as a threat to exactly this universal ambition which "is both politics and already non-politics". He explains:

> Zionism, supposedly a purely political doctrine, thus carries in the depths of its being the inverted image of a certain universality, while also correcting that image. This splinter in the flesh is not a right to pity. It is the measure and strange steadfastness of an interiority - that is, of a lack of support in the world, the absence of all 'position of withdrawal prepared in advance' and all solution. The steadfastness of a final place in which to entrench itself. Such is the actual land that Israel possesses in its State. The effort to build and defend it becomes strained under the dispute and the permanent and growing threat from all its neighbours. A State whose existence remains in question in all that constitutes its essence; while the land of political nations is forever the famous 'depth which lacks least' and remains when all is lost. A land which is at stake, or an impasse for Israel. It is to this position in the impasse that the words heard in Israel refer: *En bererah*, 'no choice'! An armed and dominating State, one of the great military powers of the Mediterranean basin, against the unarmed Palestinian people whose existence Israel does not recognize! Is that the real state of affairs? In its very real strength, is not Israel also the most fragile, the most vulnerable thing in the world, in the midst of its neighbours, undisputed nations, rich in natural allies, and surrounded by their lands? Lands, lands and lands, as far as the eye can see. (PA, p. 193)

Butler's account of Levinas largely excludes these reflections on the precarious balance between necessity and the ideal that define the territorial State of Israel. In noting that Zionism is only "supposedly" a purely political doctrine, Levinas calls into question the basic assumption of Butler's analysis because his own account of Zionism is clearly not limited to its political dimensions. Further, Levinas's position as to the "armed and dominating" power of Israel directly contradicts Butler's assertion that Israel was only viewed "only as persecuted and never persecuting". The vulnerability of Israel as a safe-haven for Jews is certainly a central preoccupation that pervades Levinas's discourse on Zionism, but for Butler to claim that this singular dimension exhausts the full extent of his views of the practical State of Israel is deeply problematic. Fundamentally, Levinas's account of Zionism cannot be reductively understood in purely political terms of the territorial nation-state exclusively for Jewish citizens. Levinas's account of Zionism, as we have seen, emphasizes the universality of the ethical ideal towards

[82] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Politics After!" in Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures. Trans. Gary D. Mole. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, pg 188-195. Hereafter PA.

which Judaism must strive, over and above the practical necessity of securing the physical safety of the Jewish people.

Morgan's response to Butler, however, accepts her basic premise that Levinas's work implies a tacit endorsement of territorial Zionism and exclusionary ethnonationalism, but unlike Butler he does not find this position itself problematic. While he agrees with this central thrust of Butler's critique, he takes issue with the negative connotation she applies to the question of territorial ethnonationalism and defends the status of Jews as the "privileged group" of citizens within Israel as simply a reflection of the way States have always functioned as a routine matter of the banal politics of liberalism. While his work offers a unique insight into Levinas's attitudes towards Zionism, Morgan's political commitment to a program of ethnic nationalism overshadows any objective analysis of Levinas's political implications.

With this context in mind, Morgan's most important contribution is his insight into the possible link between Levinas and Mendelssohn. As a renowned scholar on the history of Jewish thought, having published works on thinkers including Mendelssohn, Buber, Rosenzweig, Fackenheim and Spinoza, Morgan's ability to contextualize Levinasian thought within the framework of Jewish intellectual history is unparalleled. Further, because Levinas's direct engagement with Mendelssohn is limited to a single essay[83] written as a preface for the 1982 French translation of *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism*[84] (along with a few minor references in *Difficult Freedom* mentioned in the previous chapter), Morgan's insight into the Jewish tradition is incredibly useful to draw out convergences between Levinas and Mendelssohn that might otherwise go unnoticed by readers less familiar with the history of Jewish thought.

While today Mendelssohn is rarely viewed as a canonical figure of modern philosophy, in his time he was considered at least the equal of Kant in terms of his influence on German philosophy and Kant himself wrote of his great admiration for Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*. That work responded to a crisis in the Prussian Monarchy which found increasing difficulty in maintaining cultural cohesion in an era of increasing social diversity. This historical context of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* is crucial to understanding its appeal to Levinas as Mendelssohn writes against the

[83] Republished as LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Moses Mendelssohn's Thought" in In the Time of the Nations, Trans. Michael B. Smith. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988. Hereafter MMT.
[84] MENDELSSOHN, Moses. Jerusalem or On Religious Power and Judaism. Trans. Allan Arkush, Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1983.

growing totality of the hegemonic State during the unification of the Prussian Kingdom under Frederick the Great. Frederick's grand ambition was the centralization of various semiautonomous estates under a single codified set of laws. Inspired by the Lockean themes of the early Enlightenment, Frederick sought to achieve equality among citizens throughout the Kingdom. But like Locke's call for limited tolerance (which infamously was not to be extended to Catholics, Muslims or Atheists for various reasons) Frederick's conceptions of universal equality and a universal code of laws were not applied universally, maintaining special exceptions reserved for Jews. As Michah Gottleib points out in *Faith and Freedom: Moses Mendelssohn's Theological-Political Thought*[85], despite the enlightened position of universal equality, Frederick's policies turned oppressive towards Prussian Jews:

> Under Frederick's enlightened absolutism, the autonomous structure of Jewish communal authority was gradually weakening as the Prussian authorities increasingly infringed on Jewish communal affairs. In theory, this decline in Jewish communal authority should have been replaced with an amelioration of the Jews' social and political standing in Prussia with them being placed on an increasingly even plane with Christians. Under Frederick, however, this did not happen. Not only was there was no relief from the "Jew" policies of his predecessors, under Frederick these laws became more oppressive. (GOTTLEIB, 2011, p. 22)

As with Locke, the theoretical universal equality of citizens did not extend to the civil equality of all religious faiths if that equality does not serve the immediate necessities of practical politics. This historical context sets the stage for Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, which sought to promote Jewish civil rights and describe how Jews must be regarded as full and complete citizens even within a Christian commonwealth.

Levinas's preface introduces this work to a French audience explaining its significance of the then 200-year-old treatise for post-Holocaust France:

> These pages formulate the philosophy (or the ideology, or the charter) of the emancipation of the Jews scattered among the modem nations, in which they were still, two centuries ago, without political rights. That emancipation, hoped for and initiated in the years leading up to the French Revolution of 1789, was pursued with confidence and exaltation throughout the entire nineteenth century. Integration with the nation-states of the West-political assimilation-was not (at least according to Mendelssohn's doctrine) supposed to rid Jews of their particular historical identity, which was interpreted as being essentially, even exclusively, religious. (MMT, p. 136)

[85] GOTTLEIB, Michah. Faith and Freedom: Moses Mendelssohn's Theological-Political Thought. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

For Levinas, Mendelssohn represents an important theme of what we described in the previous chapter as pluralism. Since Levinas's entire philosophical enterprise seeks to overcome the problem of totality, especially in the terms of political totality which occupy the present analysis, Mendelssohn offers a unique perspective on being a member of society and yet resisting the hegemonizing forces of the State. For Mendelssohn, the central question of his time was the so-called "Jewish question" in which emerging modern nation-states struggled with the non-conformity of their Jewish populations (much in the same way various forms of non-conformity remain similarly problematic for advocates of political totality today). In light of the previous chapter, we immediately see the appeal of Mendelssohn's project to Levinas in which the mere presence of pluralistic alterity within the State can resist the totalizing force of the State. In the case of Mendelssohn's Prussia, this means that the preservation of Jewish identity and the historical character of Judaism is itself a form of disarticulation of the totalization pursued by Frederick. Levinas's call for a "pluralist society" then, might be understood as a Mendelssohnian call for unrestricted toleration which goes well beyond the toleration of Locke's classical liberalism.

It is in this context of Mendelssohn's religious cosmopolitanism that Levinas frames his introduction to *Jerusalem* and we can begin to fill in the practical content of the ambiguous "pluralist society" announced in TI. Levinas indicates his admiration for Mendelssohn against the classical tradition of Hobbes in his refusal of the absolute power granted to the sovereign:

> According to Mendelssohn, the ruler could not, contrary to Hobbes's vision, dictate the forms of worships. Positive laws could never contradict or destroy natural law, nor the rights of man as defined and delimited by natural law. The laws derived from the contract are not sufficient to generate categories of rights and duties having no roots in the 'state of nature.' (MMT, p. 138)

Here we see, perhaps, a subtle convergence between Mendelssohn's rejection of absolute sovereignty and Levinas's critique of contractarian morality. But this distinction between Mendelssohn and Hobbes goes to the core of the argument of how we might understand Levinas's affinity for liberalism. For Mendelssohn, Hobbes's account of political authority necessarily enters into conflict with ecclesiastical authority. He notes: "Since God is infinitely superior in power to any civil authority, the right of God is also infinitely superior to the right of the latter. Consequently, the fear of God obliges us to perform duties which must not yield to any fear of the civil authority." (MENDELSSOHN, 1983, p. 35) This would clearly be unacceptable for Hobbes

who would necessarily subordinate religious liberty to civil authority, but importantly for Mendelssohn the internal mode of worship remains beyond the purview of civil authority, noting that "every innovation in church matters without [the State's] sanction is not only high treason, but blasphemy as well." (MENDELSSOHN, 1983, p. 35-6)

Mendelssohn's lasting legacy, at least in regards to *Jerusalem*, is his understanding of individual freedom which Levinas notes "was more radical than that of many of the legal scholars of his day." (MMT, p. 137) For Levinas, Mendelssohn represents a version of liberalism in which the meaning of individual freedom cannot be exhausted simply in terms of agents entering into a social contract. Levinas notes his admiration for a spirit of political emancipation at the heart of Mendelssohn's work, which is not only taken as the "great moment in modern political philosophy" but also "essential to the Jewish collectivity." (MMT, p. 137) He continues describing the terms of this political emancipation as extending far beyond mutually beneficial contractarianism, noting: "The freedom of natural law cannot be limited by any social contract; that he considered to be an impossibility inscribed in the essence of man... For man, freedom was both a right and an obligation: an obligation that would take precedence in the eventuality of any conflicting obligations." (MMT, p. 137) While Levinas's ethical responsibility cannot possibly be understood as a kind of natural law, there is an unmistakable affinity between Levinas's ethical obligation to the other and the beyond-the-State character of Mendelssohn's concept of natural law. Both concepts serve, in different ways, to critique Hobbes, but also attempt to describe a relation between individuals which cannot be reduced to the formal relations within the State.

When Levinas affirms that positive laws could never supplant or contradict natural law, he echoes the passages examined earlier from SCSD in which the practical concerns of the hour must never close over into totality, which would contradict or eliminate the divine ideal or 'spirit of the absolute'. Levinas and Mendelssohn share the conviction that the abdication of authority from the divine ideal is never absolute, but rather it is merely a provisional abdication. Levinas notes emphatically that for Mendelssohn: "Natural law is mankind's protection against oppression. No reason of state can do violence to the natural ethical law." (MMT, p. 138) Levinas's inclusion of the word "ethical" within the concept of "natural ethical law" here is revealing as to how he understands Mendelssohn's concept of natural law to be a fundamentally ethical concept. This would indeed seem to be a somewhat anachronistic reading of Mendelssohn, perhaps even a

deliberate misreading by Levinas which reorients Mendelssohn within the project of ethics as first philosophy. However, what is important to note for our purposes here is the admiration that Levinas shows for Mendelssohn's natural law, and this connection of ethics and natural law certainly supports Morgan's argument for aligning Levinas with a kind of Mendelssohnian prophetic liberalism.

Interestingly, Mendelssohn offers a perspective on a dimension of religious life which must necessarily remain beyond the grasp of civil authority in a way that coincides with Levinas's rejection of the absolute State. For Mendelssohn, in similar terms to those we saw in Durkheim's analysis of Treitschke, the State is unconcerned with the internal motivations of citizens and only with the mechanical conformity to laws. He notes:

> The state will therefore be content, if need be, with mechanical deeds, with works without spirit, with conformity of action without conformity in thought. Even the man who does not believe in laws must obey them, once they have received official sanction. The state may grant the individual citizen the right to pass judgment on the laws, but not the right to act in accordance with his judgment. (MENDELSSOHN, 1983, p. 44)

The obedience of the citizen, the acquiescence to civil authority, is all that is required by the State. The State seeks no control over the inner workings of moral responsibility or ethical commitments, but rather only the outward formality of obedient conduct. It is exactly this ethical responsibility which precedes any formal political obligations that preoccupies Levinas and is explained in explicitly religious terms as a resistance to totality, which is exactly the formulation arrived at by Mendelssohn continuing the above passage:

> Not so with religion! It knows no act without conviction, no work without spirit, no conformity in deed without conformity in the mind. Religious actions without religious thoughts are mere puppetry, not service of God. They themselves must therefore proceed from the spirit, and can neither be purchased by reward nor compelled by punishment. But religion withdraws its support also from civil actions, insofar as they are not produced by conviction, but by force. (MENDELSSOHN, 1983, p. 44)

The power of civil authority, the power to obtain outward peace and security, through coercion when necessary, does not extend to the internal life of citizens. Belief itself cannot be compelled, as that would reduce religious faith to mere puppetry. This inability to exert authority over religious life necessarily implies a kind of religious pluralism, and resists the collapse of the sacred into the profane.

Midway through his introduction, Levinas offers a systematic description of four central theses in Mendelssohn's work. He describes the general thesis of Mendelssohn's work as an attempt to show that religious truth is not communicated by oral or written supernatural revelation, but rather "in a more direct manner" as the conscience of every rational person (MMT, p. 139) The second thesis is defined as the necessity of expressing these beliefs in codified forms of formal religion or sacred texts, which then become calcified into mere idols that "give rise to all the idolatry of the world, separating man from God and setting man against man." (MMT, p. 140) A third proposition, according to Levinas, is that the Jewish people in particular received a revelation that monotheism finds its true expression as a body of laws which are experienced as "permanent reminders of innate beliefs and repeated explanations occasioned by the ritualistic and ceremonial acts with which the revealed law fills the lives of the faithful." (MMT, 140) And, finally, Levinas claims a 4th proposition to be that this religious law was set into political law, not in a sense of codifying religious law as political law, but rather in the sense in which "political order is not made up of beliefs and ideas, but of laws protecting the freedom of ideas that quickens beliefs." (MMT, p. 141) Levinas concludes his summary of the basic themes of the books noting: "… Mendelssohn's text, which appears to lament the failure of a noble ambition of the Human and the end of the ancient Jewish State, appears at the same time to rejoice in the new fraternity that will henceforth be possible, within the modern nation-States, between Jews and Gentiles." (MMT, p. 141)

What stands out about Levinas's analysis of Jerusalem is the way in which he casts Mendelssohn alongside Kant as the great defenders of cosmopolitanism against the excessive power granted to the sovereign in classical liberalism. He actively seeks to establish a link between a kind of utopian rationalism that distinguishes Kant and Mendelssohn from their classical liberal counterparts. He emphasizes "the so very demanding Mendelssohnian ideal of freedom and the rights of man" (MMT, p. 139) that rest on an ideal and universal foundation that cannot be accounted for by sheer mutual self-interest. But unlike Kant, Mendelssohn attributes this universal foundation to religious life rather than reason itself, although neither formulation of universal foundation rests on the power of the sovereign. In this, Mendelssohn clearly aligns with Levinas's own resistance to political totality, but in the distinctly secular sense of religion Levinas adopts from Comte which we discussed in a previous chapter. To be clear, for Levinas "religion" refers to the ethical relation in the secular world rather than the worship of the sacred or ritualized practices, which is a non-trivial difference with Mendelssohn's religious vocabulary.

But importantly both Mendelssohn and Levinas regard the religious dimension of human life as lying beyond the grasp of civil authority. For Mendelssohn this refers to the act of beneficence in the State of nature which is a corollary to what Levinas calls in his parlance "goodness". For Mendelssohn, the state of nature consists of the right to decide beyond all external coercion whether or not to engage in beneficence, when or to whom that beneficence must extend. This core natural right permeates civil rights at the political level, but is fundamentally rooted within the individual choice to be benevolent to others. He notes:

> My duty to be beneficent is *only a duty of conscience*, concerning which, externally, I do not have to render an account to anyone, just as my right to the beneficence of others is only a right to petition, which may be refused. In the state of nature, all of men's *positive* duties toward each other are only *imperfect* duties, just as their positive rights against one another are only imperfect rights, and not duties which can be exacted or rights that can be enforced. (MENDELSSOHN, 1983, p. 48)

Here we can see a clear alignment between Mendelssohn's theory of natural law and Levinas's repetition of the myth of Gyges as the fundamental condition of man. They each approach this question of human sociability from the perspective of un-coerced conscience and insist on the way religious life stands apart from the coercion of political authority. However, Mendelssohn's Jerusalem is not primarily a text of resistance to politics, but rather one of assimilation. Indeed, his work has often been criticized for collapsing Judaism into a form of internal life which could be seen as palatable by Christian political authorities. That is to say, Mendelssohn recasts Judaism in the exact terms that Levinas denounced Christianity in SCSD as placing "the kingdom of God and the earthly kingdom… side by side without touching and, in principle, without contesting each other." (SCSD, p. 177) Levinas's resistance to Christianity's role as a State religion seems incompatible with the way Mendelssohn folds Judaism into internal life in order to accommodate the demands of the Christian majority of the Prussian State.

At this point, there is a clear shortcoming in Morgan's argument. While Mendelssohn's call for unrestrained religious pluralism is undoubtedly closer to Levinas than the limited pluralism of Locke, Mendelssohn's political philosophy of assimilation and acquiescence to the State must be seen as an attempt to thematize alterity into the totality of the State. The threat of this assimilation is that Judaism itself becomes synthesized into the hegemonic totality, even as it is permitted to retain some formal degree of alterity. Levinas's understanding of alterity, of course, is always radical alterity which refuses any attempt at synthesis. By reading Levinas as endorsing

Mendelssohn's conception of prophetic liberalism, Morgan underestimates the role of metaphysical pluralism and overemphasizes social pluralism as sufficient to achieve Levinas's call for a pluralist society. By collapsing the religious dimension of human life into an aspect of interiority, Mendelssohn is proposing exactly the kind of primacy of solipsistic internal life that Levinas will go on to oppose so fervently in Heidegger. Religious or ethical life is the centerpiece of Levinas's entire phenomenology exactly because it is unthematizable to the internal life of Husserl's psychological consciousness or Heidegger's Dasein. While Mendelssohn's politics clearly seeks an admirable goal in its striving towards social pluralism, liberalism, even the prophetic liberalism of Mendelssohn, is not "all we need" to achieve human dignity. While he clearly sides with Mendelssohn against the classical liberal tradition, this shortcoming is unavoidable within any framework available to the liberal nation-State.

V. Zionism

Another issue which is raised by Morgan's reading is the degree to which Levinas's call for a pluralist society can be understood as an endorsement of a specific understanding of Zionism. That is, Zionism understood specifically as the political incarnation of Israel as a religious or ethnic nation-State which aspires towards a universal responsibility for the other. The fundamental question that this raises for the present investigation, then, is whether the political fate of Levinas's pluralist society can in any way be understood in terms of ethno-nationalism. This would seem to be a radical reading of Levinas given our previous discussion of pluralism and Mendelssohnian unconditional toleration. The fundamental question for understanding Levinas's connection to Zionism, in my view, is how to distinguish a kind of universalistic messianic Zionism that cannot be understood in terms of a territorial State with the particularistic ethnonationalism of the existing State of Israel. In my mind, despite Levinas's problematic endorsement of Israel, a distinction must be made between the particularistic territorial understanding of Zionism and the universalist non-territorial understanding he adopts from Chouchani. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this distinction repeats the same logic we have seen repeatedly in our analysis of Levinas's oscillation between the immediate necessities of the practical State and the universal immutable demands of the ideal. But it is worthwhile to ask here whether Levinas sacrifices too much of the ideal in his endorsement of Israel as a practical necessity.

Unlike his cautious and guarded endorsement of liberalism, Levinas leaves no room for doubt regarding his personal commitment to Zionism, even suggesting the equivalence of anti-Zionism to anti-Semitism at various points. But returning to the link between the Nietzschean politics and the feverish German nationalism he examined in the article on Hitlerism, Levinas clearly affirms that unlike other forms of political expression "Zionism is not a will to power." (NTR[86], p. 9) The tension between Zionism as a universal ideal and as a practical territory becomes an especially prevalent concern in his later writings, such the article "Politics After!". In a more direct fashion than his brief examination of Mendelssohnian liberalism in his introduction to *Jerusalem*, this article offers rare insight into Levinas's own political commitments. He begins the article with a brief analysis of the historical context of the Jewish-Arab conflict, which "has been acute since the creation of the State of Israel on a piece of arid land which had belonged to the children of Israel more than thirty centuries ago." (PA, p. 188) Levinas clearly understands the complexities of the political conflict and the competing claims of political legitimacy, but questions the way the conflict has traditionally been rendered in the public sphere. He notes "This conflict - which, for the moment, dominates all other Jewish-Arab questions – has always been treated in political terms by men of State, public opinion, and even intellectuals." (PA, p. 188) For Levinas, addressing political conflict at the level of political rationality is fundamentally misguided and results in the entrenchment of competing political interests rather than a true pursuit of peace for its own sake.

But here Levinas is interested in a more fundamental level of the conflict rather than the political superstructure that preoccupies "men of State." Against this political myopia, Levinas evokes the same sense of a pluralistic prophetic community discussed above: "A Jew does not need to be a 'prophet or the son of a prophet' to wish and hope for a reconciliation between Jews and Arabs; to foresee it, above and beyond becoming peaceful neighbours, as a fraternal community." (PA, p. 189) Levinas's evocation of his central category of fraternity to Arabic neighbors of Israel clearly refutes interpretations, such as we saw with Butler's criticism of the "facelessness" of Palestinians in *Parting Ways*. In appealing to his category of fraternity, Levinas's implication here is that the fraternal ethical relation, which we must remember is necessarily a universal characteristic that goes beyond biological relationality, is capable of overcoming the political rationality that

[86] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Nine Talmudic Readings, Trans. Annette Aronowicz. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990. Hereafter NTR. Note, this quote is taken from an introduction which originally appeared as the introduction to an earlier volume (*Quatre lectures talmudiques*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1968)

maintains the constant State of conflict. This leads him to an extensive reflection on the significance of sitting Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's 1977 diplomatic visit to Jerusalem, which Levinas casts in glowing terms of Sadat's heroism:

> His trip has probably been the exceptional transhistorical event that one neither makes nor is contemporaneous with twice in a lifetime. For a moment, political standards and cliches were forgotten, along with all the deceitful motives that a certain wisdom attributes even to the gesture of a man who transcends himself and raises himself above his cautiousness and precautions. (PA, 193)

Levinas's unbridled optimism here for Sadat's "grandeur and importance" might be seen as historically naïve through the lens of today's vantagepoint. But what is crucial for Levinas is the way that Sadat's recognition of Israel came at an extraordinary personal and political cost, first with the expulsion of Egypt from the Arab league and the Fatwah against Sadat personally which eventually resulted in his own assassination in 1981. Levinas viewed this pursuit of peace by Sadat in terms of ethical transcendence, which he clearly describes as a transcendence of political rationality which would cast Sadat's pursuit of peace as weakness. The conclusion of the article makes this clear, noting: "For what is 'politically' weak about it is probably the expression both of its audacity and, ultimately, of its strength. It is also, perhaps, what it brings, for everyone everywhere, to the very idea of peace: the suggestion that peace is a concept which goes beyond purely political thought." (PA, p. 195)

Beyond this admiration for Sadat's peace gesture, the article contains Levinas's most thorough explanation of Zionism as he understands the concept. This is crucial to understanding the tension between Zionism as referring to a territorial State and Zionism as referring to a universal fraternity. He is clear to establish this tension and question the ethnonationalism of Israel:

> Zionism in search of a Jewish State, developing out of the colonies in Palestine, was for a long time interpreted in terms of nationalism, despite the new forms of collective life which were springing up in the kibbutzim. A nationalism for poor people, perhaps, regarded by some as an almost philanthropic humanitarian work, and by others as a secular survival of an outdated religious particularism, parading folklore like a petty-bourgeois, self-interested ideology. (PA, p. 192)

It is interesting that here Levinas refers to the kibbutzim as the perceived paradigm of Zionistic nationalism, which would indeed frame the Israeli nation-State in terms of the religious particularism that defines kibbutzim. Indeed, the model of "collective life" within the kibbutzim would seem to oppose the very spirit of pluralism that Levinas champions in TI. Here we might

be tempted to accuse Levinas of harboring a blind spot for the religious particularism within Jewish communities as opposing the pluralism he declared so emphatically in TI. This would suggest that Levinas's position on pluralism is simply synonymous with a rejection of antisemitism, and other forms of pluralism are not his concern. It is in this sense that Levinas has been accused of only viewing Jews as the victims of religious particularism and never the persecutors of religious minorities, such as with Butler's criticism in *Parting Ways*. But this is why it is important to see this passage in its larger context which challenges the sense in which the Jewish State "was for a long time interpreted in terms of nationalism". What is crucial in the above passage is that Levinas subtly notes that he views Zionism as a "search" for a State rather than the "establishment" of a State. By emphasizing this, Levinas is drawing attention to the way that the search for a homeland is itself a disruption of political totality as it is a disembodiment or disarticulation rather than a formal structuring. Drawing on his familiar philosophical framework, the search for a homeland is understood as a disruption of political totality in exactly the same sense that the call of ethical responsibility disrupts the totality of the solipsistic ego. It is this sense of unsettledness that Levinas takes as the central theme of Judaism, which is essential in his rejection of the idea that Judaism can become a Machiavellian State religion. Despite some clear admiration for the kibbutzim, and skepticism regarding the criticism of their legitimacy, Levinas clearly demonstrates awareness that any kind of religious particularism can solidify into the totalizing forces of nationalism. In this sense, he concludes this remarkable passage noting that "the true essence" of Zionism is properly understood to be spiritual in nature, as opposed to political or religious. (PA, p. 192)

Levinas then turns back to our central preoccupation, which is the degree to which Zionism can be understood in purely political terms. For Levinas, this necessarily means examining the inevitable conflict of the practical and the ideal as it relates to the creation of the Israeli State. As we saw with Levinas's comments on the unarmed Palestinian minority in Politics After!, Levinas uses the language of "interiority" to describe the political pressure on the Israeli nation-State, which should not be understated as a vital context for his understanding of Zionism. This political rendering of interiority goes to the heart of the current project and shows the fundamental political problem that pluralism seeks to overcome. But he also addresses the question of "a certain universality" which lies at the heart of his understanding of the universal fraternity of monotheism. Here he clearly demonstrates a keen awareness of the way the "steadfastness of an interiority" can emerge as intolerance which becomes forgetful of the universality of the ideal in pursuit of the necessities of

the hour. Levinas's reflections on the "armed and dominating State' of Israel indicates that he is clearly skeptical about the false impression that Israel has no choice other than militarization and retreat into interiority. But, as we have seen, he clearly understands no State can exist without addressing the immediate necessities of the hour. For Israel, that necessarily means self-defense against its neighbors, which is a theme he returns to again and again throughout the article. Levinas offers no political rationality to contend with this impasse, other than his effusive praise for Sadat's pursuit of peace regardless of political consequences. This is the sense of Zionism that Levinas returns to again and again, of something that "is both politics and already non-politics… After the realism of its political formulation at the beginning, Zionism is finally revealing itself, on the scale of substantial Judaism, as a great ambition of the Spirit." (PA, p. 191)

It is in this sense of a politics beyond politics that Levinas presents Zionism as a site of "political invention" which is only possible through the embrace of the ideal while remaining attentive to the necessities of the hour. He notes: "Beyond the State of Israel's concern to provide a refuge for men without a homeland and its sometimes surprising, sometimes uncertain achievements, has it not, above all, been a question of creating on its land the concrete conditions for political invention? That is the ultimate culmination of Zionism, and thereby probably one of the great events in human history." (PA, p. 194) Political invention here signifies something different than the embrace of a western liberal nation-State rooted in ethic or religious nationalism. This would not require "invention" in the sense that Levinas evokes here. Rather, it is invention specifically because it introduces something new to the political scene which is beyond the scope of politics. That is to say, something which maintains the spirit of the ideal without collapsing into the necessities of the hour. He continues this passage noting "For two thousand years the Jewish people was only the object of history, in a state of political innocence which it owed to its role as victim. That role is not enough for its vocation. But since 1948 this people has been surrounded by enemies and is still being called into question, yet engaged too in real events, in order to think - and to make and remake - a State which will have to incarnate the prophetic moral code and the idea of its peace." (PA, p. 194) This making and remaking of Israel, the constant openness to the critique of exteriority, might easily be seen as analogous to Mao's call for a permanent revolution, but Levinas is clear to link this making and remaking to "the prophetic moral code and the idea of peace." This making and remaking, the constant flux which resists stagnation into totality, is the central

characteristic of Levinas's formulation of Zionism. Not only as the refuge for the Jewish people, although that is a clear necessity, but as a political innovation which resists political totality.

It is in this sense that Levinas's endorsement of Zionism presents a unique challenge which is the tendency of all politics to inevitably collapse into totality. He calls attention to this early in his 1965 Talmudic Reading entitled "Promised Land or Permitted Land"[87]. In this commentary on the tractate Sotah (34b-35a) of the Babylonian Talmud, Levinas offers his reflections on the itinerant nature of early Judaism as having been "promised" the land of Israel and yet forced to wander the desert. He notes:

> Numbers, chapter 13, tells the following story: The Eternal One advises Moses to send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which was promised to the children of Israel. These explorers are chosen. The Bible tells us their names; among the twelve are Joshua and Caleb; the explorers, upon returning, declare that the land promised to Israel is one that Israel will not be able to enter or to live in. **It is fertile, to be sure, but it is also a land that kills or devours its inhabitants, a land that wears them down; moreover, it is a land settled and guarded by men too powerful for such as the Israelites.** The community of Israel despairs. (PLPL, p. 54, emphasis added)

This view of Israel as a promised land which "kills or devours its inhabitants" is crucial to understanding the way Levinas understands the relation of Zionism to the habitation of the specific geographical area called Israel. For Levinas, the impracticality of the promised land is its defining characteristic. Levinas repeatedly reveals a clear admiration for the way Judaism avoided the formalization as a State religion that he denounced in Christianity exactly in this impractical sense of a promise which cannot be fulfilled. Like the phenomenological structure of responsibility he seeks to elaborate in his formal philosophical work, here he focuses on the way that the promise of the promised land can no more delivered than the infinite call of ethical responsibility can receive a satisfactory response. Rather, as Levinas constantly reminds us, the striving for the unreachable goal that defines the human condition. This is the sense of a landless itinerant Judaism gains access to a kind of political innovation which remains out of reach to State religion, which inevitably collapses into political formality.

In the same article, he returns to the question of the kibbutzim as the origin of Zionism, as an attempt "to sacralize the earth". Reflecting on a comment from renowned psychologist Henri

[87] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Promised Land or Permitted Land" in Nine Talmudic Readings, Trans. Annette Aronowicz. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990. Pp 51-69. Hereafter PLPL.

Baruk, Levinas addresses a fundamental connection to a universal conception of justice against the moral relativism of the political sphere:

> I very much liked Professor Baruk's comment yesterday: 'To sacralize the earth is to found a just community on it.' You will say that everyone can imagine that he is founding a just society and that he is sacralizing the earth, and will that encourage conquerors and colonialists? But here one must answer: to accept the Torah is to accept the norms of a universal justice. The first teaching of Judaism is the following: a moral teaching exists and certain things are more just than others. A society in which man is not exploited, a society in which men are equal, a society such as the first founders of kibbutzim wanted it-because they too built ladders to ascend to heaven despite the repugnance most of them felt for heaven-is the very contestation of moral relativism. What we call the Torah provides norms for human justice. And it is in the name of this universal justice and not in the name of some national justice or other that the Israelites lay claim to the land of Israel. (PLPL, p. 65-66, translation modified)

Here we see in greater detail Levinas's connection of Zionism to the rejection of moral relativism in favor of the ideal of a universal conception of justice. While political rationality orients itself towards the practical necessities of the hour, Zionism as a politics beyond politics is oriented around this sacralization of the earth. By seeking a politics beyond politics, an unfulfillable promise of the promised land, Levinas makes clear that Zionism cannot be collapsed into the nationalism of Israel. The "national justice", which exhausts all conceivable justice for nationalists like Treitschke, cannot be confused with this idealized conception of universal justice. Levinas's claim here that the founders of the kibbutzim "built ladders to ascend to heaven" is the very anthesis of Treitschke's subordination of all justice to the aims of the State. This fundamental disconnect between this aspiration towards a universal ideal and any kind of nationalism is the key to understanding how his politics cannot be regarded as endorsing any kind of liberal or Zionistic nation-State.

Conclusion

What stands out in Levinas's endorsements of both liberalism and Zionism is his admiration of their unfinished quality and potential to resist the State's collapse into political totality. That collapse is avoided exactly because liberalism and Zionism appeal to an ideal of justice which lies beyond the practical achievable reach of the apparatus of the State. It is in this context that in his later work, Levinas's conceptions of human rights, peace and responsibility become virtually synonymous as they all refer to exactly this refusal of synthesis. But the worldly incarnation of

this justice, the practical existing State which emerges from the attempt to "build ladders that ascend to heaven" harbors a fundamental flaw. Once established into a formal set of rules or customs, all States will become deaf to the call of exteriority. Nationalism and religious particularism emerge against the inconvenience of pluralism and unrestrained toleration. Because Levinas cannot follow Mendelssohnian liberalism's insistence on the interiority of religious life, no conception of the nation-State can truly be the site of his "pluralist society". Rather, what appeals to Levinas about both liberalism and Zionism is the ideal of an openness towards a critique which emanates from exteriority. In my view, the politics which best embraces this ideal is not found in liberalism or Zionism, but rather in the tradition of political anarchism. We will explore this possibility in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Between Utopian Socialism and Political Anarchism

In the previous chapters, we have seen how Levinas's ethical phenomenology culminates in a call for pluralism as the antithesis of totality. In both its metaphysical and social dimensions, this pluralism must necessarily be understood as anarchic in that it refuses synthesis or elevating itself as a pure principle of a new order. To be clear, in developing the political dimension of Levinas's thought, it would be woefully inadequate to view his work as an attempt to elevate pluralism or ethics as the arche which can once and for all resolve problems within the political sphere. As we have seen, the liberal tradition of pluralism, even the radical embrace of pluralism found in Mendelssohn, is inadequate to describe the degree to which pluralism itself resists the collapse into totality which Levinas associates with the State of Caesar and a kind of obsession with the demands of immediate necessity. And while avoiding this collapse, aspiring towards the ideal of the State of David, does not simply mean the elevation of pluralism as the arche of civil life, the social dimension of pluralism is clearly something that provokes and unsettles the forces of political totality. What interests Levinas, in both his political and ethical writings, is the underlying structure to this disarticulation of totality and how the resulting incongruity is itself constitutive of the human condition. In my view, as I will develop in this chapter, this disarticulation is best understood in its political context as mirroring many central themes of the tradition of political anarchism.

In first part of this chapter, we will attempt to describe these basic themes which might be understood under a flexible and amorphous concept of political anarchism. This task, of course, is necessarily problematic as anarchism resists any attempt to be thematized or defined under any single definitive principle or according to specific essential characteristics. Once we come to a preliminary understanding of what themes and trends might be understood as political anarchy, we can return to the challenging footnote from OTB in which Levinas presents what seems to be an unambiguous dismissal of political anarchism. But while Levinas clearly regards political anarchism with a fair degree with skepticism, it is necessary to read this particular passage within the specific historical and theoretical framework in which it was written. Thus, we will examine the conception of political anarchism both as a semi-formal philosophical tradition as well as in terms of the specific sense of the term as it was popularly used during the era of the May '68

uprising in France. We will also attempt to offer further contextualization of Levinas's views of political anarchism through an examination of specific references to classical theorists of the anarchistic tradition within his work. By closely examining these specific references in which he expresses admiration or draws philosophical inspiration from thinkers who are generally regarded as political anarchists, we can draw out Levinas's proximity to this tradition in greater detail. One crucial theme that will be developed here is the way Levinas seems to view the philosophical tradition of political anarchism in terms which he problematically renders as "utopian socialism" rather than "anarchism". In closely examining these specific passages, it becomes clear that Levinas harbors a deep sympathy towards themes and approaches of traditional anarchist thinkers despite the fact that he fails to identify them as such. Finally, we will explore some practical attempts to appropriate Levinas's ethical phenomenology in terms of anarchical political action, specifically drawing on the recent work of Simon Critchley and Miguel Abensour.

I. A Preliminary Definition of Political Anarchism

In order to ascertain the degree to Levinas's work aligns with political anarchism we must come to a preliminary understanding of what that term means as a movement within political theory as an attempt to locate a moment of disarticulation of the standing political order. But in attempting to characterize or thematize anarchistic politics in this way, we must admit to beginning with a necessary contradiction as anarchism itself must constantly resist the tendency to thematization under any archic principle of definition. The risk, which Levinas takes quite seriously, is that anarchy itself might be elevated as an archic principle of ordering. This is why Levinas's references to anarchy are always careful to draw out the distinction between anarchy and disorder. Even the act of coming to a preliminary functional "definition" of anarchism is already a betrayal of the most basic aspirations anarchism can have, although clearly for our investigation here some preliminary thematization of the term must necessarily be reached in order to develop the argument of the present chapter. In this sense, one important perspective can be found in a widely-circulated interview[88] of Noam Chomsky, wherein the famed linguistic philosopher offered his own formulation of anarchism that can help us begin to understand the term in its political context. He notes:

[88] CHOMSKY, Noam. "On Anarchism: Noam Chomsky interviewed by Tom Lane" Znet, December 23, 1996. https://chomsky.info/19961223/

> I tend to agree that anarchism is formless and utopian, though hardly more so than the inane doctrines of neoliberalism, Marxism-Leninism, and other ideologies… Anarchism, in my view, is an expression of the idea that the burden of proof is always on those who argue that authority and domination are necessary. They have to demonstrate, with powerful argument, that that conclusion is correct. If they cannot, then the institutions they defend should be considered illegitimate. How one should react to illegitimate authority depends on circumstances and conditions: there are no formulas. (CHOMSKY, 1996)

Chomsky's definition, while useful for orienting our understanding of the basic trends of political anarchism, seems to be overly broad in its scope. Indeed, if anyone who questioned the legitimacy of any authority could be considered an anarchist, anarchism would include virtually every political theorist from the liberal tradition after Hobbes. Chomsky even affirms, later in the same interview, that he views political anarchism as a recovery of "classical liberal ideals" which were lost in the industrial revolution:

> The currents of anarchist thought that interest me (there are many) have their roots, I think, in the Enlightenment and classical liberalism, and even trace back in interesting ways to the scientific revolution of the 17th century, including aspects that are often considered reactionary, like Cartesian rationalism… I tend to agree with the important anarchosyndicalist writer and activist Rudolf Rocker that classical liberal ideas were wrecked on the shoals of industrial capitalism, never to recover (I'm referring to Rocker in the 1930s; decades later, he thought differently). The ideas have been reinvented continually; in my opinion, because they reflect real human needs and perceptions. (CHOMSKY, 1996)

Chomsky's sympathetic rendering of classical liberalism here can help us orient our own investigation into Levinas's complicated relationship to liberal politics that we saw in the previous chapter. What Chomsky seems to have in mind is that this tendency to question authority is a driving force behind classical liberalism, but that force was quickly lost in the practical world of actual existing liberal nation state. At its most fundamental level, classical liberalism aspires towards an ideal in which authority is kept in check by the constant questioning and approval of claims to legitimate authority, which provides a political mechanism by which the State can resist collapse into political totality. Rendering Chomsky's point in Levinas's terminology, then, we might say that despite aspiring towards this ideal State of David, contemporary liberal nation-states have consistently elevated the practical necessities of the State of Caesar to take absolute precedence over the ideal. Political authority within liberal states, then, invariably comes to be seen self-justifying by the practical achievements of immediate necessities rather than adherence or proximity to an ideal.

Chomsky's central point is that anarchism signifies a vague but identifiable tendency towards a specific question regarding the legitimacy of political authority. What makes Chomsky's extremely broad definition useful for our purposes here is that he is careful to avoid a conception of anarchism which might be confused with a simple rejection of all forms of authority, or more crudely as an elevation of disorder as itself a new kind of order. By focusing his definition on the question of legitimacy, Chomsky's conception of anarchism allows for the necessity of authority while still directly opposing the tendency to collapse into totality. For this reason, Chomsky emphasizes the need for critical perspectives among citizens, and focuses on the role of education in line with the contemporary liberalism of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* or even classical accounts such as Rousseau's *Emile*. Chomsky's broad rendering anarchism as a tendency to question claims of legitimacy can help us outline a preliminary orientation of political anarchism in a broad context for our discussion here since it aligns with Levinas's argument for the necessity of the state in "Yes to the State" within the SCSD article we examined earlier. What is crucial to keep in mind as we discuss political anarchism in this chapter is the way that Chomsky emphasizes that anarchism is not a formulaic structure or any single cohesive doctrine, but rather should be understood as this specific tendency to question the legitimacy of political authority.

Chomsky's political focus, following this tendency, is shift the burden of proof from the powerless to the empowered within this questioning of the legitimacy of claims to authority. This, in my view, aligns well with Levinas's emphasis on the role of critique as the force which can resist political totality since they each express the same fundamental idea: that while political authority necessarily tends towards totalization, it can be kept in check via the disruptive introduction of critique. In this way, we can clearly see how Levinas's own resistance to political totality will coincide with the way Chomsky renders political anarchy, not as an opposition to any particular existing order but rather as a resistance to any kind of thematization or institutionalization under the banner of political rationality.

To be clear, neither Chomsky or Levinas are proposing anarchy as mere opposition or negation to any given existing order, but rather as a constant vigilance against any kind of order's tendency to collapse into totality. But carrying out our investigation into the political dimension Levinas's thought as anarchic is directly challenged by Levinas in a passage we have already addressed in

the pivotal chapter on "Substitution" in OTB. There, Levinas makes what appears to be an unambiguous dismissal of political anarchy that we must address at some length here.

II. Anarchy and Utopian Socialism

Levinas's dismissive passage regarding political anarchism in his footnote on Bergson presents, perhaps, the most serious challenge to the current task of aligning Levinas's ethical phenomenology with political anarchism. In dismissing political anarchism, as he does in rather cavalier fashion, one might easily come to the conclusion that Levinas himself would not agree with the reading of his work that I am proposing here. However, one way we can orient Levinas's understanding of political anarchy is by examining subtle changes made to the text between its original publication in 1968[89] and the final, better-known version published in OTB[90]. Two substantial changes are made to the footnote, which are highlighted below in a side-by-side comparison:

[89] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "La substitution" in Revue Philosophique De Louvain 66 (91) p. 487-508, 1968. Hereafter Sf.
[90] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1978. Hereafter AqE.

1968	1974
La notion d'anarchie telle que nous l'introduisons ici, précède le sens politique (ou anti-politique) qu'on lui prête populairement. Elle ne peut pas - sous peine de se démentir - être posée comme principe (au sens où l'entendent les anarchistes **quand ils affirment, par exemple, que l'anarchie est mère de l'ordre**). L'anarchie ne peut pas être souveraine comme l'*arché*. Elle ne peut que troubler - mais d'une façon radicale - et qui rend possibles des instants de négation *sans aucune* affirmation - l'Etat. L'Etat ainsi ne peut pas s'ériger en Tout. Mais en revanche, l'anarchie peut se dire. (Sf, p. 489, emphasis added)	La notion d'anarchie telle que nous l'introduisons ici, précède le sens politique (ou anti-politique) qu'on lui prête populairement. Elle ne peut pas - sous peine de se démentir - être posée comme principe (au sens où l'entendent les anarchistes). L'anarchie ne peut pas être souveraine comme l'*arché*. Elle ne peut que troubler - mais d'une façon radicale - et qui rend possibles des instants de négation *sans aucune* affirmation - l'Etat. L'Etat ainsi ne peut pas s'ériger en Tout. Mais en revanche, l'anarchie peut se dire. **Le désordre a pourtant un sens irréductible en tant que refus de synthèse.** (AqE, p. 160, emphasis added)
1996 Translation (Critchley)	1981 Translation (Lingis)
The notion of anarchy introduced here precedes the political (or antipolitical) meaning popularly ascribed to it. It cannot, under pain of contradiction, be set up as a principle (in the sense the anarchists intend **when, for example, they maintain that anarchy is the mother of order**). Anarchy, unlike *arche*, cannot be sovereign. It can only disturb, albeit in a radical way, the State, prompting isolated moments of negation *without any* affirmation. The State, then, cannot set itself up as a Whole. But, in return, anarchy is allowed a say. (S, p. 180, emphasis added)	The notion of anarchy we are introducing here has a meaning prior to the political (or antipolitical) meaning currently attributed to it. It would be self-contradictory to set it up as a principle (in the sense that anarchists understand it). Anarchy cannot be sovereign. like an *arche*. It can only disturb the State - but in a radical way, making possible moments of negation *without any* affirmation. The State then cannot set itself up as a Whole. But, on the other hand, anarchy can be stated. **Yet disorder has an irreducible meaning, as refusal of synthesis. (**OTB, p. 194, emphasis added)

The first substantial change, and the phrase which most centrally impacts our analysis here, is that Levinas choose to remove the claim that the anarchists in question maintain that "anarchy is the mother of order." The second change is the inclusion of the concluding line of the footnote, noting that "Disorder has an irreducible meaning, as a refusal of synthesis."

Before investigating these changes in detail, one thing that is worth noting within this passage as a whole, and something which is unfortunately lost in Alphonso Lingis's highly influential 1981 English translation, is that Levinas's attack is aimed not at theoretical anarchism, but rather at the "popular attribution" of this sense of anarchism. This is corrected in Critchley's 1996 translation of the 1968 article and gets to the heart of how we can understand Levinas's attitude towards political anarchism. Lingis, in choosing to translate "*populairement*" as "currently", creates an unnecessary ambiguity as to what aspect of anarchism Levinas is criticizing. In my view, when read in the original context of the 1968 article, Levinas's attack is clearly aimed at dismissing those who view "anarchy as the mother of order." Levinas seems to have in mind an explicitly self-contradictory position, which he claims is the "popular" use of the term in 1968, but which we should not mistake as a major theme within the philosophical anarchist tradition. While Levinas might be considering elements from Proudhon or Bellegarrigue[91] in this analysis, his dismissal of the beliefs of anarchists does not address their work at the level of philosophical discourse, but rather is aimed at the prevailing sense of the term as commonly used in public discourse within the particular historical context of France in the 1960s.

In my view, the figures of the political anarchist tradition are not proponents of the self-contradictory position he dismisses in this footnote. Levinas's removal of the "mother of order" phrase might be explained by the way he addresses figures commonly understood to be "anarchists" as "utopian socialists" in the introduction to Buber's *Paths in Utopia* that we discussed earlier. In this introduction, Levinas describes the theoretical framework for Buber's utopian socialism in terms of an association with the traditional works of Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourrier. Levinas clearly holds this tradition in high regard, despite his frequent

[91] Bellegarrigue's claim that "anarchy is order" is perhaps the closest to what Levinas is claiming here, although he might have in mind Proudhon's argument that liberty is not the daughter of order but is the mother of order in *Solution du Problème Social*. Indeed, removing the reference to anarchy as the mother of order in the final version of the passage as it appears in OTB might well indicate that Levinas believed this wording struck too close to these authors.

dismissal of political theory in general. Singling out Fourrier in particular, he notes that the "transformation of civilization" envisioned by this tradition of utopian socialism is marked by a desire for justice that aligns with his own philosophical enterprise. He notes:

> … is not possible with ideas that come to you from who knows where, that it cannot do without the science that, in the structures buried within the real, present social order, can read the intentions of the future already sketched out; but a socialist mode of thought that, by its very utopianism, is capable, in its 'nostalgia for justice,' of a certain audacity of Hope, and that supplies realist action with the norms necessary for critique. (UaS, p. 112)

The overlap of the ideal and the practical, the potential for achieving a harmonious union between the State of Caesar and the State of David, is palpable in Levinas's description of utopian socialism here. As we have seen, Levinas's primary political concern is the tendency of the demands of necessity generating a kind of forgetfulness of the ideal, which is the inevitable fate of purely political rationality which becomes synonymous with the politics of war. In Buber's rendering of utopian socialism, however, Levinas sees a potential for "the only way to wish for a 'completely other' society" that avoids this collapse into practical necessity. Juxtaposing this kind of utopian socialism with the soviet-style scientific socialism, Levinas notes:

> It would be fitting to point out the similarity between this recourse to utopia and the one (differing in that it comes from the very heart of Marxism, however) perceived or postulated by Ernst Bloch: the referral of all attempts to generate man to a radical renewal, to what *is* not yet at all, to an unreality more unreal, so to speak, than the social future discernable in the factual present, to the 'principle of hope' that, if we are to believe Ernst Bloch, is civilization itself, through the prophets, philosophers and artists. (UaS, p. 113)

Levinas clearly demonstrates a nuanced understanding of socialism here and it is worth highlighting the vital role that Bloch played in Levinas's later thought as he turned towards more practical political themes in the 1970s. In this period, Levinas seems especially drawn to Bloch's themes of death and anticipation, which are central to his 1975-1976 lectures at the Sorbonne published as *God, Death and Time*[92]. While he frequently expresses admiration for Bloch, Levinas makes clear that while Bloch's politics are guided by a desire for the ideal, he is ultimately too concerned with practical necessities of the hour in his proximity to Marx. When asked during the 1975 Leyden interview about the possibility of a philosophy of the future, specifically prompted about Bloch, Levinas responds:

[92] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. God, Death and Time. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. Hereafter GDT.

> Of course there is a hope, and consequently, a utopian anticipation in Bloch. But Bloch is searching for a perceptible future. His hope is immanent and the utopia, provisional. My concern is not that of Bloch. I am looking to think about a transcendence that might not be in the mode of immanence, and which does not return to immanence: in the less is the more, which is not containable. (QA, p. 97)

This extensive engagement with utopian socialism is, perhaps, the defining feature of Levinas's political writings of the 1970s and 1980s. His proximity to the politics of utopian socialism seems far more apparent and unambiguous than his hesitant and limited endorsement of liberalism that we saw championed by Cohen and Morgan. But what makes this relevant for our current examination of political anarchism is the degree to which Levinas seems to consider thinkers who are traditionally viewed within the necessarily ambiguous framework of political anarchism in terms he himself renders more sympathetically as utopian socialism.

Drawing a hard and definite distinction between utopian socialists and political anarchists is obviously an impossible task, especially since anarchistic thinkers tend to defy any such rigid categorization to the point that many (perhaps including Levinas himself) reject the label of anarchist as already too thematized. Nevertheless, if we are to understand what we mean when we refer to a kind of traditional political anarchy, we must admit some select few authors to stand out as canonical. On this point, Peter Marshall declares in his book *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*[93], that despite the absence of any singular definitive characteristic which unites all anarchists, a clear and identifiable theme can be described historically:

> Where one begins and who one includes in such a study is of course debatable. It could be argued that a study of anarchism should begin with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first self-styled anarchist, and be confined only to those subsequent thinkers who called themselves anarchists. Such a study would presumably exclude Godwin, who is usually considered the first great anarchist thinker, as well as Tolstoy, who was reluctant to call himself an anarchist because of the word's violent associations in his day. It would also restrict itself to certain periods of the lives of key individual thinkers: Proudhon, for instance, lapsed from anarchism towards the end of his life, and Bakunin and Kropotkin only took up the anarchist banner in their maturity… In general, I define an anarchist as one who rejects all forms of external government and the State and believes that society and individuals would function well without them. (MARSHALL, 1992, p. xiii)

This is a more precise and definitive thematization than that offered by Chomsky, and under this more rigid definition it would be difficult to view such a strong overlap with Levinas's ethical anarchy. But since Marshall provides a list of five canonical figures of classical anarchism, this

[93] MARSHALL, Peter. Demanding the Impossible: A history of anarchism. London: Harper Perennial, 1992.

provides a useful point of reflection for examining how Levinas relates to these figures specifically. While Levinas never mentions Bakunin or Godwin anywhere in his published writings[94], he does address both Proudhon and Kropotkin directly in his introduction of Buber's utopian socialism. Unlike his earlier dismissal of "popular" anarchism, in the context of Buber's utopian socialism Levinas shows a distinct appreciation for Proudhon and Kropotkin, as well as Buber's friend and renowned anarchist Gustav Landauer. Far from the "popular" sentiment of anarchism in his own time, Levinas approaches these influences on Buber from a purely theoretical perspective and gives them far more credit than he does to anarchists more generally in his dismissive footnote. He declares:

> If we consider Buber's work as an essay on the history of ideas, his account of utopian socialism, from Saint-Simon to Kropotkin and Landauer, might require some supplement in the area of influence undergone and exerted, and as to the completeness of the systems themselves. But Buber warns us already in the preface that he is leaving many developments aside. He is following an idea: it is within the opposition between the political and the social that he situates the doctrine he studies. To him, the issue seems to be to challenge the subordination of civil society to the State, in which, for Hegel, humanity would attain universality of thought and will, i.e., freedom. (UaS, p. 113)

Clearly Levinas is hesitant to follow Buber's political conclusions in this passage, but what is crucial is that way that Levinas renders Buber's inquiry as "an essay on the history of ideas" rather than a defense of a particular political structure. In this way, Levinas collapses the distinction between utopian socialism and political anarchism when it comes to the shared "history of ideas" that inform these approaches. This helps explain how Levinas can express admiration and sympathy for the thought of anarchist theorists like Kropotkin, Landauer and Proudhon while still harboring severe reservations about the "popular" attribution of anarchism in its more practical context beyond this "history of ideas".

But while these passing references might be attributed to the necessities of Levinas's task at hand, which is to sympathetically introduce Buber's investigation to a French audience in his introduction to the translation of the work, Levinas more frequently expresses unbridled enthusiasm for another member of Marshall's canon of classical anarchism: Leo Tolstoy. While often overshadowed by his more frequent references to Dostoyevsky, Levinas's admiration for Tolstoy takes on a special prominence in his later writings, with repeated references to Tolstoy's novels as illustrative of the kind of relationality that his ethical phenomenology attempts to lay

[94] See Concordance.

bare. One way we might interpret this enthusiasm for Tolstoy is that as Levinas turned towards more directly political concerns in his later writings and Talmudic commentaries, the influence of Tolstoy becomes much more apparent. Again, these references to Tolstoy often appear directly related to Levinas's engagement with Bloch in his later works. In one passage in *God, Death and Time*, Levinas reflects on Bloch's reading of Tolstoy and finds a parallel to his own dramatic conception of the asymmetric structure of the experience of alterity he names "height", noting:

> In *War and Peace*, we find such a moment when Prince Andre, wounded on the battlefield of Austerlitz, contemplates the high sky that is neither blue nor gray, but only high. And Tolstoy, who insists on the *height* of this sky, writes, "Looking Napoleon in the eyes, Prince Andre dreamed of the vanity of grandeur, of the vanity of life whose meaning no one could understand, a*nd of the still greater vanity of death, whose meaning no living being could penetrate and explain*." (GDT, p. 102)

But this attribution of a central characteristic of his ethical phenomenology to Tolstoy is not a coincidental passing gesture or derivative of his admiration for Bloch. Rather, even in his formal definition of height in "Meaning and Sense", which Levinas wrote 12 years prior to these reflections on Bloch, Levinas makes clear that his conception of height is directly influenced or drawn from his engagement with exactly this passage from *War and Peace*. He notes:

> … before culture and aesthetics, meaning is situated in the ethical, presupposed by all culture and all meaning. Morality does not belong to culture: it enables one to judge it; it discovers the dimension of height. Height ordains being.
>
> Height introduces a sense into being. It is already lived across the experience of the human body. It leads human societies to raise up altars. It is not because men, through their bodies, have an experience of the vertical that the human is placed under the sign of height; because being is ordained to height the human body is placed in a space in which the high and the low are distinguished and the sky is discovered - that sky which for Prince Andre, in Tolstoi, without any word of the text evoking colors, is all height. (MS, p. 100)

As height is one of the key terms in Levinas's later phenomenology, denoting an attempt to describe the asymmetrical structure of the ethical relation, Tolstoy is clearly a strikingly influential figure in Levinas's late turn to political concerns. Beyond this clear influence on the way Levinas renders Tolstoy's account of height in philosophical terms within his ethical phenomenology, it is important to note the way that he finds common cause with the political dimension of Tolstoy's thought. For Levinas, the deeply religious morality which serves as the foundation for all of Tolstoy's work echoes the fundamental themes of Judaism that his own philosophical work

attempts to render into phenomenological description. Levinas explores this parallel in a long commentary on Tractate Sandedrin 36b-37a in *Beyond the Verse*[95], noting:

> Think of Tolstoi's Resurrection, in which it is highly important to know what the judges and the members of the jury have done and thought in the private sphere to be able to decide according to their conscience in court. Like our text, Tolstoi wanted there to be a harmony between the order of love-susceptible to every vice and the order of absolute spirit. And it is really the order of absolute and universal spirit-but where people show their faces to each other-and the absolute hierarchy within this order that the Sanhedrin represents. (BtV, p. 76)

This deep affinity for Tolstoy gets to the heart of what it means to say that Levinas's ethical phenomenology culminates in a kind of anarchic politics. Like Tolstoy, Levinas does not find the correction to the imbalanced "harmony between the order of love" within the political order, but rather they each make their case for the impossibility of harmony when the pursuits of political rationality pass into totality. Which is to say, that they both associate a kind of pure politics with the inevitably of the politics of war. In terms that closely echo Levinas's introduction to TI, Marshall summarizes Tolstoy's politics:

> Tolstoy's principal criticism of government is that it is inextricably linked with war. All governments are based on violence in the form of police, army, courts, and prisons. As military organizations, their chief purpose is to wage war. They constantly increase their armies not only against external enemies but also against their oppressed subjects. It follows that a government entrusted with military power is the most dangerous organization possible. (MARSHALL, 1992, p. 373)

This aligns Tolstoy not only with Levinas's insistence that politics is always the politics of war, but also with the critique of exaggerated sovereignty and unrestrained violence on the part of the state that we saw in Levinas's reflections on Hitlerism as well as Durkheim's critique of Treistchke's nationalism. While Durkheim based his critique on his positivistic sociological analysis, Levinas and Trotsky are motivated by more distinctly spiritual commitments. Indeed, as we saw in an earlier chapter, Levinas's conception of secular religion following Comte parallels elements of Tolstoy's rejection of the divinity of Christ and markedly Spinozan understanding of God as synonymous with nature. This impersonal or absent divinity is defined clearly by Tolstoy in terms that echo Levinas's own conception of monotheism: "God is that whole of which we acknowledge ourselves to be a part: to a materialist — matter; to an individualist — a magnified,

[95] LEVINAS, EMMANUEL. Beyond the Verse : Talmudic Readings and Lectures. Trans. Gary D. Mole. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Hereafter BtV.

non-natural man; to an idealist — his ideal, Love.' There is no Romantic separation or contradiction between love and reason, for 'reason should be loving' and 'love should be reasonable'." (MARSHALL, 1992, p. 369) Levinas might break with this rationalistic conception of the divine, but there is a clear fundamental agreement in the view of the religious dimension of life as the concrete experience of the divine within the very relationality of social life in the tradition of Comte. This is the commitment to a kind of secular divinity that allows Tolstoy to access a fundamental critique of the pathology in which politics puts in jeopardy this divine sociality.[96]

These parallels with Tolstoy, taken together with Levinas's expressed admiration for figures such as Proudhon, Kropotkin, Landauer and Saint-Simon, allows us to see a particular strain of anarchic political thought that coincides with his own political views. While Levinas clearly does not elaborate a nuanced political position, within these affinities a clear trend emerges in which Levinas sympathizes with the way these figures oppose the same political totality that his ethical work attempts to overcome. Levinas's critique against politics is always a critique against traditional political rationality, and this leaves open the possibility that this critique mirrors skepticism towards traditional political rationality embodied by the tradition of political anarchism. While the OTB footnote clearly demonstrates the way that Levinas seeks a conception of anarchy which is "prior to" any purely political sense of anarchism, it is important to keep in mind the way that he finds common ground with the attempts of political anarchists to disturb the state "without being set up as a whole". Anarchy, both in the political and ethical sense in which the term might be used, specifically denotes the resistance to this exact tendency to move in the direction of totalization.

III. Levinas Against "Popular" Anarchism

[96] One further parallel between Tolstoy and Levinas, which deserves more attention than can be adequately addressed here, is a lamentable a shared view regarding women's role in society in terms that are limited to childbearing and motherhood. As Marshall points out in his brief biography of Tolstoy: "Tolstoy continued to have casual relations with prostitutes and a married serf on his estate bore him a son. He also had affairs with women of his own class, but in 1862 after a brief courtship he married Sophie Andreyevna Behrs. She bore him thirteen children, four of whom died. Although she became her husband's diligent and jealous amanuensis, she confirmed Tolstoy's view of woman (shared lamentably by Proudhon), namely that their principal role in life is motherhood. 'Every woman,' Tolstoy wrote, 'however she may dress herself and however she may call herself and however refined she may be, who refrains from childbirth without refraining from sexual relations is a whore. And however fallen a woman maybe, if she intentionally devotes herself to bearing children, she performs the best and highest service in life — fulfils the will of God — and no one ranks above her.' He later saw women as dangerous temptresses, diverting man from his spiritual life." (MARSHALL, 1992, p. 366-7)

But while Levinas does clearly find common cause with these classical figures of political anarchy without identifying them as such, his casual dismissal of political anarchy cannot be ignored entirely. We might ask, with this discussion about the tradition of political anarchy in mind, who specifically is the target of Levinas's denouncement of the "popular" sentiment of anarchism as viewing anarchy as "the mother of order". In my view, Levinas's account of anarchy in various texts written during and immediately after the May '68 uprising make clear that he had come to understand political anarchism "in the sense that anarchists understand it" in terms of the subversive anarchism propounded by the more violent groups involved in the events of May '68, such as the situationists. Saying that the situationists represent the "popular" sense of the term anarchy in late 1960s France might not be a radical claim considering that they had become a significant political force through their visibility in the protests. While the Situationist International never sought an organizational role in spurring a revolution, which would violate the basic principles of the anarchist movement, their slogans and message of relentless critique was unquestionably a major force behind the protests. As a group described as "more anarchist than the anarchists, who they find too bureaucratic" (VIENET, 1992, p. 16n), the situationists embodied and enacted the kind relentless critique put into practice that might be unsympathetically interpreted as elevating anarchy as the mother of order. In a sense, the May '68 uprising might be understood as an attempt to render the situationist critique into concrete political terms, with situationist slogans appearing as graffiti against the De Gaulle government throughout France. From the very beginnings of the uprising, situationists were associated with the movement while more traditional communist groups and labor unions only joined the protests after the anarchist student movements had already gained traction throughout France.

Thus, in order to understand who Levinas might have in mind in his rejection of this "popular" sense of anarchism, we might first turn to the work of Guy Debord. Debord, perhaps the philosophical figure most clearly identified with the Situationist movement, published his highly influential *The Society of the Spectacle*[97] in 1967. This text would go on to serve as one of the central motivating texts of the uprising the following year. In true anarchist fashion, Debord's book is difficult to summarize because he avoids the formal approach of traditional philosophy. Rather, in a style drawn from Nietzsche's later writings, Debord offers 221 aphoristic declarations which

[97] DEBORD, Guy. Society of the Spectacle. Trans. Ken Knabb. London: Rebel Press, 1992.

seem designed to provoke reflection rather than establish and defend a thesis. But Debord's overriding thematic focus is the spectacle of contemporary capitalistic life and the expression of a skeptical critique against this false reality which papers over the "real world". As he notes in thesis 6:

> It is not a mere decoration added to the real world. It is the very heart of this real society's unreality. In all of its particular manifestations news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment - the spectacle represents the dominant *model* of life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choices that have *already been made* in the sphere of production and in the consumption implied by that production. (DEBORD, 1992, p. 8)

But while this critique of commodification within capitalism is rooted in a kind of Marxist critique, Debord distances his own analysis from the scientific-determinism and "ideologization" of Marxism. He notes in thesis 85:

> The weakness of Marx's theory is naturally linked to the weakness of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of his time. The German working class failed to inaugurate a permanent revolution in 1848; the Paris Commune was defeated in isolation. As a result, revolutionary theory could not yet be fully realised. The fact that Marx was reduced to defending and refining it by cloistered scholarly work in the British Museum had a debilitating effect on the theory itself. His scientific conclusions about the future development of the working class, and the organisational practice apparently implied by those conclusions, became obstacles to proletarian consciousness at a later stage. (DEBORD, 1992, p. 43)

For Debord and the members of the Situationist International, this scholarly detached critique which had come to define Marxism left it vulnerable to becoming a science of the spectacle, depriving Marxism of its revolutionary potential. The situationists critiqued commodification not at the level of economic determinism, but rather at the level of culture, with their initial focus on how this commodification functioned within the realms of art and architecture. By rejecting the false reality embodied in the spectacle, situationists provided the basis for the protestors' most famous slogan "Sous les pavés, la plage!" (Beneath the pavement, a beach!) While there certainly was a preponderance of forces involved in spurring the revolutionary mentality of May '68, there is an unmistakable and pervasive influence which is rooted in this situationist critique of the spectacle of society and an endeavor to seek (or create) a preferable reality in its place.

These events clearly weighed heavily on Levinas's work during the composition of OTB, which would be published in 1974[98]. Although, as we have seen in a previous chapter, Levinas had already explored the fundamental connection between the anarchy and spectacle in TI, which was published 6 years prior to the appearance of Debord's book. In order to better understand the context of Levinas's account of anarchy in OTB, we will focus here on three interlocking texts that Levinas composed each reflecting on the meaning of anarchy within the context of the May 68 uprising: the 1968 essay "Humanism and Anarchy"[99] and the 1970 essay "No Identity"[100] as well as the 1969 Talmudic reading "Judaism and Revolution"[101].

IV. "Humanism and Anarchy"

While "Humanism and Anarchy" largely focuses on a refutation of Sartre, who was himself another major source of inspiration for the May '68 protestors, Levinas also addresses a number of themes that seem provoked by the emerging enthusiasm for political anarchism in France following the publication of Debord's book. The threat of this particular version of anarchism is that it necessarily implies, for Levinas, a kind of nihilism. That is, in rejecting the "spectacle" of apparent reality, one would necessarily reject the basis of Levinas's phenomenological accounting of responsibility, which is the face of the other. If Levinas's entire philosophical project attempts to stake out the philosophical importance of ethical relation described phenomenologically in the face of the other, Debord's conception of the spectacle gives a kind of justification to discounting that apparent reality. Thus, for Levinas, this kind of anarchism necessarily represents an anti-humanism of solipsistic passivity. In embracing passivity, in the sense of rejecting responsibility

[98] One curious biographical note to keep in mind in our attempt to understand Levinas's orientation towards the events of May 68 is the role of his close friend Paul Ricoeur as dean of faculty at the University of Paris at Nanterre where the uprising began. Ricoeur, while largely sympathetic to the students, was himself physically assaulted by protesters and would eventually go on to scandalously request that the Paris police initiate patrols within the university's campus to maintain order. This episode has taken on renewed historical interest in contemporary debates on French protest policing given Ricoeur's mentorship of the future President of France, Emmanuel Macron, whose own response to the right-wing *gilets jaunes* protests has been criticized as unnecessarily violent. Levinas's hesitant and skeptical view of the protesters, and perhaps political anarchy in general, might well be attributed to his sympathy for those who share Ricoeur's predicament of balancing practical security concerns and the rigorous demands of the ideal.

[99] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Humanism and Anarchy" in Collected Philosophical Papers, Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. Hereafter HA.

[100] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "No Identity" in Collected Philosophical Papers, Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. Hereafter NI.

[101] LEVINAS, Emmanuel. "Judaism and Revolution" in Nine Talmudic Readings. Trans. Annette Aronowicz, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Hereafter JR.

rather than a more mundane sense of an absence of action, anti-humanism manifests as the solipsistic counterpart to the receptivity of ethical subjectivity that he struggles to account for phenomenologically throughout his philosophical work. He attributes the post-war crisis of humanism to exactly this spirit of passivity which he earlier denounced in his article on Hitlerism. He notes, in the opening passages of the article:

> The unburied dead in wars and extermination camps make one believe the idea of a death without a morning after and render tragic-comic the concern for oneself and illusory the pretension of the rational animal to have a privileged place in the cosmos and the power to dominate and integrate the totality of being in a self-consciousness. (HA, p. 127)

This frames his response to the crisis of anti-humanism in post-war France in familiar terms of his opposition to the rational self-interest of the "anarchic spectacle" of Gygean liberty. He makes clear that he views the events of May '68 as arising in direct opposition to this particular view of man, which reached is crescendo in fascism but remains present in post-war liberalism. He continues to develop this link between radical autonomy and separation throughout the article evoking the same complex dynamic of archic principle/origin as we saw in TI:

> But when we see man being born again out of the inanity of man-as-principle, the inanity of principles, out of the putting into question of freedom understood as an origin and the present, when we seek subjectivity in radical passivity, do we not deliver ourselves over to fatality or to determination, which are the very abolition of a subject? That would be the case, if the alternative free/non-free were ultimate, and if subjectivity consisted in stopping at the ultimate or at the original. But it is on just this that our inquiry bears. No doubt in its isolation, in the apparently absolute separation which is the psyche, and in the sovereign freedom of representation, the ego knows nothing prior to its freedom or outside of the necessity which runs up against this freedom, but presents itself to it. It is obliged, as Fichte said, to be its own source. (HA, p. 132)

It is interesting that Levinas locates the core of the crisis of anti-humanism within this Kantian/Fichtean conception of freedom as absolute separation in what he calls "radical passivity". Here, perhaps more emphatically than he did in TI, Levinas is presenting a thorough dismissal of modern philosophy's rendering of a specific kind of detachment as the defining principle/origin of self. Indeed, returning to the themes we followed in the Hitlerism article, Levinas clearly associates this kind of egoistic passivity with a certain reading of Nietzsche's self-sufficient and self-forgetting Ubermensch, even beginning the article with a citation from the Prologue to Thus Spoke Zarathustra. This recalls Levinas's forceful assertion that this collapse into radical passivity is rooted in a rediscovery of Nietzsche and the primordial elementary feelings aroused by the rise of Hitlerism. This anti-Nietzschean context must be kept in mind in order to understand the way

in which Levinas poses his challenge to this archic view of the human ego as the self-sufficient origin/principle by which all else can be thematized in these later essays on anarchy.

Read in isolation from its social context within the May '68 uprising, this passage largely coincides with his other, more extensive work on solipsism in Heidegger in which the inwardness of Heideggerian phenomenology collapses into exactly this radical passivity. But what makes this article stand out, and this passage in particular, is that Levinas seems to associate this inwardness with a particular kind of anarchy that gives birth to a conception of man "born out of the inanity of man-as-principle." This is anarchy in the negative sense we saw in TI as the "spectacle" of the world detached from responsibility. But, in a style remarkably similar to his high appraisal of Marxism as the first attempt to escape modernity, Levinas finds common ground with the way anarchistic movements reject the man-as-principle paradigm that defines the modern condition. As with his expression of admiration for Marxism, Levinas sees a potential within the revolutionary anarchist movement to escape the collapsing of the entirety of the human condition into the single archic principle of liberty that he identifies with the entire philosophical tradition of Kant, Fichte, Nietzsche and Heidegger.

Again, it is worth noting that Levinas's condemnation of this "modern" conception of man almost always focuses on the way this conception is rendered within German philosophy and is inseparable from what he called, in his "Reflections on Hitlerism", the degenerate Germanic ideal. The threat of political anarchism, despite its revolutionary potential, is that if political anarchism fails to overcome this conception of man it would necessarily lose its revolutionary impetus and result in nothing more but an elevation of disorder. What Levinas opposes, then, is what we might think of as a kind of solipsistic Fichtean political anarchism, which would be self-contradictory in that it would denote an "anarchism" which remains archic by retaining freedom as its singular principle of origin and order. While in the footnote on Bergson in OTB he attacks those "popular" anarchists who would view anarchy as the elevation of disorder as a new kind of order, here we see the underlying roots of this critique brought to bear against the crisis of humanism in the wake of the May '68 uprising.

Humanism and Anarchy is uniquely compelling because Levinas elaborates a clear critique of the modern archic view of humanity, but he is cautious to avoid the temptation to introduce a new arche by which we might thematize the human condition. In terms we tried to show earlier in our

analysis of TI, we saw how responsibility in that earlier work was understood in archic terms of introducing order to the chaotic spectacle of unrestrained liberty. But here, Levinas seems to be more attentive to this complex dynamic and calls into question the entire modern philosophical enterprise to elevate this liberty or rationality as wholly constitutive of "self". What is at stake in this reduction is a fundamentally metaphysical question since Levinas is critiquing the attempt to reduce all of consciousness to an attempt to interpret or define the principle/origin of things, which is to say, their arche.

> Consciousness is the very impossibility of a past that would never have been present, that would be closed to memory and to history. Action, freedom, beginning, present, representation - memory and history - articulate in diverse ways the ontological modality consciousness is. Nothing can enter fraudulently, somehow smuggled into a conscious ego without being exposed to avow itself, being equaled in the avowal, becoming truth. All rationality then amounts to the discovery of the origin, the principle. Reason is an archeology, and the composite word archeology is a redundance. The intelligibility of the subject itself can consist only in this return to the origin, a movement which, as the *Wissenschaftslehre* taught, is the very being of the ego, the "self-positing" of the oneself. The reflexivity of the ego is nothing else than the fact of being the origin of the origin. (HA, p. 131)

Again, we see Levinas associating this particular modern conception of man with German rather than French roots, placing blame for this degenerate ideal squarely on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. And Levinas is clear to associate the German modern tradition with a particular kind of thinking that culminates, nearly simultaneously, in Heidegger's solipsistic project of fundamental ontology and the rise of Hitlerism. This gets at the way Levinas views the overlapping conception of principle and origin as part of a deeper pathology that corrupts German philosophy at a fundamental level. This is crucial for understanding that Levinas is not simply attempting to question autonomy as the *content* of the modern conception of man but rather the structural formation of interpreting the human condition as archic in terms which can be understood as thematizable to any single principle or origin whatsoever.

This reveals what it means to take Levinas's project politically in a sense that aligns with the tradition of political anarchism, not as an elevation of disorder or a rejection of any particular existing order, but as a kind of critique or resistance to a particular style of thinking. That thinking, as we might expect, culminates in Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology and Levinas's opposition to this degenerate Germanic ideal never strays far from this fundamental insight. As we saw with Chomsky, political anarchism can be understood in a broad, informal sense as a tendency

to engage in critique and regard claims to legitimate authority with some degree of skepticism. For Levinas, overcoming this Germanic ideal is not primarily a political task, or at least not one which can be achieved through political rationality alone. Rather, what Levinas's entire philosophical enterprise proposes might well be regarded as a kind of skepticism or critique, but rather than being directed towards political authority itself, Levinas aims this critique at a more fundamental level accessible to philosophical analysis, which is the archic structure of this ontological style of thinking. This is what is at stake in the "ontological modality" of consciousness in the passage above, which necessarily drives the reduction of all rationality to the discovery of origins or principles. This link between the "ontological modality" of consciousness and politics must be understood in terms of the political institutions and structures which are derived from this modern presumption of the self-positing subject. By critiquing this foundation, Levinas is implicitly critiquing the political superstructures which rest upon it. By calling into question the way politics can conceive of the human subject as an atomic individual, Levinas's work accesses the political sphere at its most fundamental level and bypasses the structural critiques that fail to address the underlying foundations of political rationality.

V. "No Identity"

Levinas continues these themes in another article, produced around the same time for the journal L'Ephémère, entitled "No Identity". Here, Levinas announces not only a crisis of humanism but seeks to address "[t]he end of humanism, of metaphysics, the death of man, the death of God (or death to God!)" (NI, p. 141). This continued preoccupation with the political dimension of the crisis facing humanism extends his reflection on the historical context in the midst of the 1968 uprising. Levinas makes clear that this opposition to humanism is rooted in exactly the alienation within capitalist society that Marx sought to overcome, but argues that this alienation cannot adequately be addressed within a Marxist framework. Further, he notes that the specific nature of the crisis surrounding the 1968 uprising was itself a rejection of both western liberalism and the "bureaucracy and repression" of Stalinism. He notes, in the closing of the first section of the article:

> Men have, to be sure, long felt this alienation. But since the nineteenth century, with Hegel, a meaning was found in this alienation; it was recognized to be provisional and destined to contribute a surplus of consciousness and clarity to the completion of things. With Marx especially these deviations of the will were explained by social alienation; by exalting socialist hopes, one paradoxically rendered transcendental idealism plausible! Today's anxiety is more profound. It

> comes from the experience of revolutions that sink into bureaucracy and repression, and totalitarian violences that pass as revolutions. (NI, p. 143)

As we have seen repeatedly in other passages from various works, Levinas clearly harbors a strong admiration and affinity for Marx's attempt at overcoming the modern conception of man, here rendered within the traditional Marxist language of alienation. But what is most compelling about this passage is the way that Levinas finds an affinity with those who agree with the aims of Marxism but would critique the overly bureaucratic implementation of Marxism in Bolshevism. This further aligns Levinas with the classical anarchist tradition, as this conflict lies at the core of the debates between Marx and Bakunin's collectivists which defined the First International. Levinas's point here, however, is that the crisis of humanism facing France in 1968 is spurred by not only the failures of liberalism but of the totalitarian violence which seems the inevitable endpoint of all politics. He continues:

> *For in them the disalienation itself is alienated*. In the revolutionary enterprise which, conducted with an extreme consciousness, nonetheless ends up disappointing the vigilant intention that wills it, in the action tearing itself away from the firm hand, the iron hand, that guides it, *recurrence to oneself*, the idea of an ego that identifies itself in finding itself again, fails, or at least is betrayed. The rediscoveries of self with self are missing. Inwardness seems to be not strictly inward. *I is an other*. Has not identity itself been held in check? Meaning would have to be sought in a world that does not bear human traces and does not falsify the identity of significations - a world purged of all ideology. (NI, p. 143)

Here we see the crux of Levinas's critique of archic political rationality as being fundamentally incapable of maintaining fidelity to any revolutionary intent. His skepticism towards the ongoing uprising in 1968 is clear in this passage, as he directly states that the "revolutionary enterprise" is incapable of overcoming the alienation derived from inwardness itself. Levinas's insistence on the pathological nature of the degenerate Germanic ideal of Fichte is here rendered in more directly political terms and closely follows the logic of his essay on Hitlerism. But unlike the Hitlerism article, in which Heidegger is never mentioned by name, Levinas makes clear this obsessive inwardness or interiority finds its philosophical culmination in Being and Time. As we have seen, opposing the inwardness of philosophical thought, especially in Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology, is the driving force of Levinas's entire philosophical project. In this article, this takes on its a directly political form in terms which are far more direct and focused than the wide-ranging condemnation of politics in general that we saw in the preface to TI and the essay on Hitlerism. In the closing section of the article entitled "Youth", Levinas draws out the subtext

of the previous sections and makes clear that the work seeks to lay bare the philosophical challenges of the ongoing student uprising. He notes:

> Do these considerations belong to "thoughts out of season" despite their starting point in the intellectual situation of our time'? Will they not shock by their outdated, idealist and humanist vocabulary'? This occasion can serve to ask, in terminating, whether the aspirations of youth in the world today, despite the violences and irresponsibility into which they degenerate, do without a thought devoted to subjectivity defined on the basis of responsibility and against the notion of being. (NI, p. 150-1)

By linking the student movements to Heidegger, Levinas seeks to establish that the crisis of humanism is not a defiance of traditional ontological philosophy but rather its unavoidable consequence. For Levinas, the conception of subjectivity which is spawned in modernity and wholeheartedly adopted by Heidegger cannot but degenerate into these "violences and irresponsibility" since it is fundamentally neglectful of ethical responsibility. Those youthful protestors, while seeking to overcome a legitimate challenge, do not fall into the "bureaucratic" trappings of Bolshevism but nevertheless risk collapse into the violent tendencies of all other revolutionary enterprises. He concludes the article by folding this conception of youth into his philosophical categorization of the saying/said distinction from OTB:

> The subject we have surprised in the saying that precedes the said was called young. This adjective indicates the surplus of meaning over the being that bears it and claims to measure and restrict it. In the fulguration of some privileged moments of 1968, quickly extinguished by a language as conformist and garrulous as that it was to replace, youth consisted in contesting a world long since denounced. But the denunciation had long since become a literature and a way of speaking. Certain voices of certain outcries gave back to it its own unexceptionable signification. The vague notion of authenticity, which is much abused, here acquired precise meaning. Youth is authenticity. But youth defined by sincerity, which is not the brutality of avowal and the violence of action, but approach of the other, taking on the burden of a neighbor, which comes from human vulnerability. Able to find responsibilities again under the thick stratum of literature that undo them (one can no longer say "if youth only knew"), youth ceased to be the age of transition and passage ("youth must pass"), and is shown to be man's humanity. (NI, p. 151)

Levinas vacillates here as to his estimation of the character of the revolutionary actions of 1968. On the one hand, he clearly admires the idealistic aspirations of the youthful protestors who are expressing a kind of unadulterated authenticity and giving that authenticity a very specific revolutionary meaning. It is this idealistic, almost utopian striving that Levinas exalts as the very humanity of man in its recognition and approval of responsibility for the other. On the other hand, this unique and dramatic moment was "quickly extinguished" in its inevitable collapse into the conformity and triviality of pedantic political concerns. Interestingly, in alignment with his

phenomenological investigation in TI and his ethical analysis of the saying and said from OTB, Levinas immediately associates this collapse in terms of language. In this case, he notes that the language of the protestors becomes as "garrulous as that which it was to replace" (NI, p. 151). As we have seen repeatedly throughout our investigation, the political dynamic in this inevitable collapse is exactly what Levinas describes as the conflicting drives of the State of Caesar and the State of David. The necessity of formulating a political movement, of manifesting in terms of the said, enters into conflict with the idealistic aspirations which precede it in the saying.

The question that Levinas leaves us asking, after his indirect and subtext-laden commentary on the events of May 1968, is whether there is any way to avoid this collapse into the State of Caesar and nurture the State of David within the actual existing political world. While it is clear that Levinas expresses rare admiration for the aspirations of the protestors, he is not naively suggesting that simply remaining attuned to some degree of ethical responsibility will cure the social ills of political totality. But in a Talmudic commentary entitled Judaism and Revolution, given shortly after the publication of Humanism and Anarchy, Levinas provides more detail as to what we might understand as the kind of practical political content which promises to preserve the idealistic aspirations of the State of David in an enduring and meaningful way.

VI. "Judaism and Revolution"

This brings us to our final text in which Levinas directly responds to the May '68 protests as a failed attempt to make manifest the ideal of the State of David. This article combines elements from various other texts we have previously examined and offers rare insight into the political content of Levinas's vague references to "political monotheism" or the "pluralist society" as forces which are capable of fending the tendencies of political totality. Levinas's reading, presented in the context of a colloquium on "Youth and Revolution in Jewish Consciousness" in March of 1969, responds to Tractate Baba Metsia p. 83a-83b. Levinas's reflections are especially noteworthy since they propose to offer defense of revolutionary action, and even express an openness to the necessity of violent revolution in pursuit of a greater justice. This is crucial for our investigation into a possible Levinasian politics in that we see his serious and extensive consideration of the complex nature of political revolutions in more concrete and direct terms than in found in his more formal philosophical writings. He begins his extensive analysis of the basic conception of revolution by taking issue with some of the other speakers at the colloquium, noting:

> In contrast to many of today's speakers, I do not think that revolution should be defined in a purely formal manner, as violence or as the overthrow of a given order. I do not even think it is enough to define it as the spirit of sacrifice. There was much spirit of sacrifice in the ranks of those who followed Hitler. Revolution must be defined by its content, by values: revolution takes place when one frees man; that is, revolution takes place when one tears man away from economic determinism. To affirm that the working man is not negotiable, that he cannot be bargained about, is to affirm that which begins a revolution. (JR, p. 102)

This is an unusual passage for Levinas who rarely engages with this kind of directly political rationality, although he clearly is attempting to distance his own analysis from any kind of mechanical or deterministic politics. Defining revolution, of course, is a difficult task and his analysis of the May ’68 uprising gives us a rare glimpse into how Levinas reacted to the defining political moment of post-war France. That this occurs in his confessional rather than philosophical writings is unsurprising and follows a well-established pattern of avoiding specific concrete examples of political events in his most formal writings (with the obvious exception of Hitlerism and the Holocaust).

The text that Levinas analyzes begins with an account of the relation between an employer and his employees in the context of the obligations of custom, then transitions to a discussion of the origin of evil within society and the legitimacy of violence undertaken by the State to ensure order. The direct narrative of these passages follows the situation of Rabbi Eleazar who chooses to assist a secular government official to identify and catch Jewish thieves, who are subsequently put to death. The moral context of the passage revolves around a challenge put to Rabbi Eleazar by Rabbi Joshua bar Karhah, who denounces this act of acquiescence to political authority asking “… how much longer will you deliver unto death the People of our God?”. Rabbi Eleazar dismisses this criticism noting that his pursuit of justice alongside the government official is nothing other than removing “thorns from the vineyard”. (JR, p. 95) The major focus of the passages that Levinas analyzes here, echoing themes we examined in Levinas’s reading of Mendelssohn, is the separate roles of religious and civil authority, or more specifically, of the simultaneous and conflicting demands which emanate from immediate necessity and the eternal ideal.

Levinas’s commentary on these passages offers insight into both the practical functioning of the political state and the possibility of legitimate violence within political revolutions. In the text of his commentary, it becomes clear that Levinas is grappling with these themes in concrete terms within context of the May ’68 uprising, drawing special attention to the protester’s chant of “Nous

sommes tous des juifs allemands" (We are all German Jews) after the exile of Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Cohn-Bendit, a student leader of the demonstrations, was the son of German Jewish parents who had fled Germany in 1933 and his non-French origins were used by critics of the demonstrations as evidence that the movement was motivated and controlled by "foreign" agitators. Levinas, in a section specifically addressing "Politics and Violence", draws out the meaning of the May '68 protestors evoking the persecuted status of the German-Jew:

> But those who shouted, a few months ago, "We are all German Jews" in the streets of Paris were after all not making themselves guilty of petit-bourgeois meanness. German Jews in 1933, foreigners to the course of history and to the world, Jews, in other words, point to that which is most fragile and most persecuted in the world. More persecuted than the proletariat itself, which is exploited but not persecuted. A race cursed, not through its genes, but through its destiny of misfortune, and probably through its books, which call misfortune upon those who are faithful to them and who transmit them outside of any chromosomes. (JR, p. 113) [102]

This passage is remarkable for a number of reasons, but perhaps most importantly for our purposes here is Levinas's appraisal of the status of the student protestors as a persecuted group. He takes issue with a deterministic Marxist view which would view their status as exploited workers suffering from economic alienation as members of the proletariat. Levinas shows his keen perception of the character of the protests which should not be interpreted in purely Marxist terms. By insisting on the status of the students motivated by persecution rather than exploitation, Levinas describes the middle-class students as expressing "petit-bourgeois" frustration rather than impoverished workers coalescing into a single class-consciousness motivated by the mutual suffering of exploitation. In fact, Levinas's insight into the political motivations of the uprising seems to be historically supported by the fact that Marxist groups and labor unions were slow in joining or supporting the students' protests. But Levinas's interest here is not in the Marxist or Anarchist motivations of the protestors, rather focusing on the way the protestors identified with

[102] Alphonso Lingis, in a footnote to his translation of this passage, describes the importance of this slogan to Levinas's perception of the May '68 uprising: "This colloquium was held not quite a year after the events of May 1968. "We are all German Jews" (*Nous sommes taus des juifs allemands*) was the cry taken up by demonstrators on May 22, 1968, when Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the leaders of the student movement, was refused permission to reenter France after having made a brief visit to West Germany. Cohn-Bendit is the son of German Jewish parents who emigrated to France in 1933. His background was used by people who opposed the May events to suggest that he was an outside agitator. The chanting of "We are all German Jews" was the student demonstrators' cry of solidarity with him." (JR, p. 119 n5)

the German Jews after the exile of Cohn-Bendit, not through a shared genetic ancestry or collective alienation, but rather through a shared "destiny of misfortune".

Levinas continues exploring this parallel between the persecuted German Jews and the plight of the May '68 protestors asking:

> Doesn't political action, be it revolutionary, turn against the people of God, against the persecuted, against the non-violence which it wishes for and for which a revolution is attempted? Doesn't political action turn against the non-violence which alone can end all persecution? Rabbi Eleazar answers:
>
> I remove the thorns from the vineyard.
>
> Rabbi Joshua bar Karhah retorts:
>
> Let the owner of the vineyard come and remove the thorns himself. (JR, p. 113)

Levinas's struggle here is obvious in light of the earlier account of the necessity of the State we saw on the State of Caesar and the State of David. Some action, indeed violent action, must be undertaken by the State in pursuit of the necessities of the hour. Levinas views Rabbi Eleazar's comments in light of this necessity, although he would constantly guard against this necessity overriding the aspirations of the ideal. Rabbi Karhah's position embodies the demands of the absolute, which is to say, the asymmetrical demand of unconditional ethical responsibility. Rabbi Eleazar, on Levinas's reading, embodies the demands of practical necessity and presents a challenge to the reader of the Talmud in which the desire for the absolute is overcome by mundane concerns. Rabbi Karhah, on the other hand, while advocating a kind of radical pacifism neglects the role of human action within the world as constitutive of justice. For Levinas, despite his own commitments to pacifism, Rabbi Karhah's position is one of retreat from his ethical obligation into a kind of passivity which only awaits the arrival of a Messiah who will "remove the thorns himself." For Levinas, we immediately perceive the profound appeal for this reading because it presents two sides of a fundamental conflict between one's responsibility to act and the inability to act in absolute accordance with the impossible demands of the ideal. Levinas, of course, does not fully endorse either Rabbi Karhah nor Rabbi Eleazar in his reading, but presents both positive and negative critiques which demonstrate his own struggle with exactly these issues.

What seems to motivate Levinas in his reading of these passages is the fundamentally political structure of the Talmud as an examination of how a citizen must act within a society in pursuit of justice which can never be fully achieved. Levinas draws out these political undercurrents to the

jarring transition between the passages, which shift dramatically from the treatment of employees to the nature of evil within society. As Levinas presents his reading, it becomes clear he views these two dimensions of the passages as complementary in that action within a society is predicated upon a knowledge of the distinction between Good and Evil. He asks:

> How can you act politically while ignorant of the nature of Evil, while ignorant of its metaphysical and spiritual reason? Beyond your analysis of the immediate situation, what is the source of Evil and of justice? Therein lies the difference between a police action at the service of the established State and revolutionary action. It is not enough to be against a cause, one must be in the service of one. I do not think that revolutionary action is to be recognized by the massiveness of victorious street demonstrations. The fascists knew more successful ones. Revolutionary action is first of all the action of the isolated man who plans revolution not only in danger but also in the agony of his conscience-in the double clandestinity of the catacombs and of conscience. In the agony of conscience that risks making revolution impossible: for it is not only a question of seizing the evil-doer but also of not making the innocent suffer. In this also is to be found the difference in Jewish thought between the police and revolutionary politics. (JR, p. 110)

This is, perhaps, Levinas's most clearly stated endorsement of revolutionary politics and shows the way that revolutionary action differs fundamentally from policing action within the State. Levinas remains highly skeptical towards the popularity of movements as definitive of their value, noting the wild popularity of fascist demonstrations the likes of which have become increasingly and frighteningly more common in our present age. Levinas is clearly hesitant towards endorsing revolutionary action in general, warning against action which would cause innocents to suffer, which is a preoccupation that does not hinder Rabbi Eleazar in the passage.

In drawing out these themes, Levinas notes how the police official, when confronted with the reality of executing possibly innocent citizens, asks in response "What can I do? It is the order of the king." To this, Levinas elaborates:

> The police official does not have time to ask himself where the Good is and where the Evil; he belongs to the established power. He belongs to the State, which has entrusted him with duties. He does not engage in metaphysics; he engages in police work. He cannot see how one can simultaneously serve the State and the Absolute. Is there in the Talmud an incompatibility between the desire for the Absolute and revolutionary politics? Can they be reconciled if one stays within the category of non-Jewish political thought? Is Judaism compatible with a revolutionary action thought in terms of politics, as it emerged from the Greco-Roman State? (JR, p. 110)

This apparent incompatibility between the demands of necessity and the demands of the ideal is the same theme that Levinas drew out extensively in his attempt to describe a monotheistic politics in SCSD. And, again, we see that Levinas understands the path to the ideal as resting upon the

foundation of meeting immediate necessities. This provides further context to the concluding remarks we saw from that article, which was produced only a few years after this text. There, Levinas notes: “The epoch of the Messiah can and must result from the political order that is allegedly indifferent to eschatology and preoccupied solely with the problems of the hour.” (JR, p. 181) That Levinas views this “epoch of the Messiah” as only being achievable through the existing political order can help us understand Levinas’s view of political revolution as a kind of anti-political politics. In the case of the 1969 Judaism and Revolution essay, this necessarily takes its context from the events of the previous year and the general climate of French politics at the time. The question for Levinas, and for us, is whether the uprising might be understood as embracing the ideal to a greater degree than the political forms it proposed to overthrow. We have already seen, in No Identity, that Levinas viewed the discourse of the protestors as immediately collapsing into a language as “garrulous as that which it was to replace”, (JR, p. 151) but here Levinas seems more sympathetic to the young protestors, at least in terms of their ideals and objectives if not their methods.

In “Judaism and Revolution”, perhaps to a greater degree than almost anywhere else in his published writings, Levinas evokes the possibility of a messianic politics as embodied in a single movement. While he makes gestures towards this in terms of Israeli nationalism and territorial Zionism, as we saw in Morgan’s analysis, there is something unique about the universality of persecution embodied in the May ’68 protests that Levinas exposes here. In asking whether the Talmud can be reconciled with revolutionary political action and non-Jewish political thought, Levinas leaves open the possibility that the messianic political monotheism which he describes can best be understood in the spirit of revolution that students brought to the streets of France.

Levinas, of course, does not offer an answer to the question he rhetorically poses as to whether Judaism is compatible with what he calls the Greco-Roman State. Rather, he continues his analysis of the situation facing Rabbi Eleazar and focuses on the way he identifies thieves for the police officer by accusing the “idle and useless” non-workers who frequent the tavern at night. Such individuals are immediately suspect in his worldview and identifying thieves is a simple task for the police official once such easy targets are identified. Levinas draws out the contemporary relevance of such casual identification of undesirable individuals in society, asking: “Is it already an anticipation of police inquiries that take place in bars in our modern capitals? In itself, this

would not be much. Well, I think all this means that Rabbi Eleazar accepts the struggle with Evil on the State's grounds, in the Roman sense of the term 'state,' and that he accepts revolutionary action as political action." (JR, p. 111)

Levinas goes on to draw out the parable's contemporary relevance in which the attention of police has shifted from taverns to cafés, where the "undesirables" of his own time tended to congregate. Rabbi Eleazar's easy condemnation of the idleness of tavern patrons is rendered into terms that Levinas explored in the conclusion of TI as the exaltation of the family and domestic life. He notes "In the café, there are no common theme. Here you are, each at your own little table with your cup or your glass. You relax completely to the point of not being obligated to anyone or anything; and it is because it is possible to go and relax in a café that one tolerates the horrors and injustices of a world without a soul." (JR, p. 112) While careful not to "wage war" on the corner cafés, Levinas denounces cafés which he views as "the realization of a form of life" that "proceeds from an ontological category" of isolation and self-serving interiority. Further, he exalts Rabbi Eleazar's perceptiveness in identifying this interiority of the tavern which is "a category essential to Western being, perhaps to Eastern being as well, but rejected by Jewish being." (JR, p. 112)

While Levinas might only be raising this point rhetorically in an attempt to defend Rabbi Eleazar, there is something distinctly troubling about Levinas's attitude towards sociality within communal spaces such as cafés and taverns. It is exactly in these communal spaces where we would encounter individuals whose background and experience differ wildly from our own and present to us a kind of alterity that is only possible within these vibrant hubs of communal life. Levinas's claim that "Jewish being" opposes these kinds of public spaces is problematic and raises questions about the degree to which Levinas's view of sociality might be simply a defense of tribalism. Indeed, Levinas seems to disregard the potential that there exists a kind of interiority within the "marvel of the family" itself (which Levinas only understands as intimacy) that remains closed off from the sociality of spaces such as taverns and cafés in favor of the sameness and familiarity of close family relations. While a full critique of Levinas's problematic exaltation of the family is beyond the scope of the present investigation, it is worth noting here how his attitude towards public spaces highlights the limitations of his conceptions of universality and interiority. In my view, Levinas's eagerness to venerate familial intimacy creates a kind of myopia within his phenomenology

towards communal spaces and risks losing sight of the myriad of diverse forms of social exteriority towards which his "pluralist society" should aspire.

This objection aside, Levinas's more fundamental theme is the proper role of citizen within a State and the necessity of the conflict between the practical and the ideal. He returns to this discussion taking up Rabbi Karhah's response to Rabbi Eleazar's insistence that he merely removes "thorns from the vineyard." To this, Rabbi Karhah responds "Let the owner of the vineyard come and remove the thorns himself." Levinas offers his own insight into this exchange:

> It is not up to you, in the name of universal politics, in the name of the king, to weaken moral laws. The concordance between Jewish destiny and the destiny of the world does not depend on human plans. The man who is integrally human is not to concern himself with politics. He must concern himself with morality. Vineyard-Israel. In the prophets, there is always a comparison between Israel and the vineyard. The vineyard of Israel belongs to its true and unique master-the Eternal One. Let the Eternal One resolve the conflict between morality and politics. A non-revolutionary interpretation, the interpretation of religious resignation. It is not up to us to punish our neighbors anyhow. God will take care of it. Taken to its ultimate conclusion, this would also mean: it is not up to us to build Israel. Let us wait for the Messiah. (JR, p. 113-4)

The primacy of the moral over the political is, of course, paramount in Levinas's analysis. Political necessity cannot be allowed to substitute or suspend the demands of the absolute, as the State inevitably attempts to do in its collapse into totality. But Rabbi Karhah's angelic passivity, his "non-revolutionary interpretation" of the situation and expression of "religious resignation" is not universally exalted by Levinas here. One might expect Rabbi Karhah's position of radical pacifism to be regarded with more sympathy than Levinas presents here, but Levinas has in mind here a certain kind of revolutionary action in line with the events of May '68. But he makes clear that this revolutionary action he aspires towards (rather than awaits as one might await the Messiah) does not signify revolution in the Marxist sense:

> While we recognize in Judaism, as in certain aspirations of the left, a defender of the human person-whose sacred rights are affirmed from the very first lines of our text, while we can admit that in extraordinary circumstances, violent action or a revolution imposes itself-we cannot identify the destiny of Judaism with the destiny of the proletariat. The Jewish cause is not exclusively a social cause… In Rabbi Eleazar's acceptance of the political action in which revolution takes place, Rabbi Joshua bar Karhah saw a danger: the death of Judaism in revolutionary man. To what degree will revolution be fatal to Judaism, not because Judaism is a survival but because it is at the service of older, more delicate values than those at the disposal of socialism, because its endurance and its very patience are also at the breaking point? (JR, p. 114-5)

Here Levinas aligns himself (and Judaism) with a kind of revolutionary action which rejects the exclusively social cause of Marxism which fails to achieve the universality aspired to by the ideal which is embodied in the "older, more delicate values" of Judaism and monotheism. The revolutionary action which neglects this universality and these ideal values is doomed to limit itself to purely political goals. Levinas continues:

> Outside of all political goals, my text affirms an obscurely perceived ideal, which prevents total assimilation and which exposes to persecution. In this persecution perhaps we see the dim recognition by everyone else of this irreducibility. People of God, in this sense. As if, beyond social and economic alienation, another alienation stalks man. As if only the owner of this secret garden could do that one thing that disalienates definitively, beyond any political disalienation. (JR, p. 115)

Levinas goes on to illustrate this delicate balance of immediate political goals and the idealized absolute in terms of the May '68 uprising through the introduction of a letter he received from an unnamed colleague who "holds a prominent place in today's French literary world". This colleague, Levinas explains, had initially participated in the uprising but retreated due to what he perceived as an anti-Israel sentiment among the young protestors. The anonymous author notes that his experience in the protests caused him to ask: "…why these young people who are acting violently but also with generosity, felt they had to make such a choice, why they operated on thoughtlessness, on the usage of empty concepts (imperialism, colonization) and also on the feeling that it is the Palestinians who are the weakest, and one must be on the side of the weak (as if Israel were not extremely, dreadfully vulnerable)." (JR, p. 116) Levinas does not offer his own reflections on the letter, but rather uses it to illustrate the conflicted nature within the revolutionary actions of the protestors in which they aspired towards generosity while acting violently. The letter goes on to explain that the anti-Israeli bias was not derived from antisemitism, but rather out of a sense of solidarity with the persecuted Palestinians, which the author of the letter (and seemingly Levinas himself) did not share.

This returns us to the thoughts with which Levinas opened the article, noting that revolution could not be "defined in a purely formal manner, as violence or as the overthrow of a given order". Levinas's mix of enthusiasm and disappointment towards the events of May '68 function in exactly this sense of respect for the aspiration towards an ideal which is ultimately tempered by the inevitability of collapse into totalizing political rationality. Levinas is caught between an admiration for those who act in pursuit of the ideal and the "purely formal manner" of revolution

in the sense of the practical events that occur. But what is most striking about Levinas's article, taken as a whole, is his approximation of the specific events of the May '68 uprising and a particular kind of political revolution which remains true to the universalist spirit of Judaism. The case of Rabbi Eleazar provokes us to question the apparent "acute tension between political action and Jewish existence" (JR, p. 116) and achieve what Levinas describes as "political monotheism" in the State of Caesar and the State of David article. That article, as well as this particular reflection from Judaism and Revolution, come tantalizing close to offering a path to offering a description of political rationality which, despite being incapable of achieving the moral ideal itself, resists the collapse into totality by keeping sight of that elusive ideal. This is the complex dynamic we have attempted to trace out starting from Levinas's most basic reflections on the concept of anarchy, which is fundamentally a resistance or refusal of thematization. Once thematized into action, such as in the case of the events of May '68, aspirations for anarchy to overcome arché cannot survive the necessity for order that arises in political action. This paradoxical situation is, of course not a phenomenon unique to May '68, as this was the same dynamic at the heart of the critique of Bakunin's anarchists against the Marxists of the First International.

VII. Anarchistic Appropriations of Levinas

One way of seeing what we might mean in saying that Levinas's work calls for a politics approximating kind of political anarchy, is by examining how readers of Levinas have used his work to arrive at their own versions of political anarchy. Two authors stand out as philosophers inspired by Levinas that appropriate his work in precisely this way: Miguel Abensour and Simon Critchley. Abensour's work, *Democracy Against the State*, never mentions Levinas within the body of the work but addresses his underlying influence at length in an appendix to the text. Abensour's central argument is that Democracy itself is not a mechanism of the political apparatus but rather an interruption and resistance to the authority of the State. Abensour's work revolves around a particular reading of Marx's early text *A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Abensour, in what was widely considered a radical claim at the time, argued that Marx's early position is fundamentally anarchic in that it wholly rejects Hegel's account of the legitimate state. For Abensour, Marx endorses a kind of democratic anarchy in which the State always tends towards absolutism and that tendency can only be kept in check by the democratic consensus of the citizens. Marx, of course, would ultimately break with anarchists in dramatic fashion at the

First International, but Abensour finds this core anarchic belief to be the driving force of Marx's early work and an identifiable trend which persists even in his later writings.

Levinas's role in Abensour's work is subtle and only becomes explicit in the book's appendix. There, Abensour describes the way his reading of Marx was deeply motivated by the distinctly Levinasian idea that ethical responsibility serves to disrupt and limit political totality. Abensour's book, which was originally published in 1997, brought about a revival of work addressing the political dimension of Levinas's thought as formulating a critique of political totality. For Abensour, the central insight of Levinas's ethical phenomenology is that he finds a mechanism by which political totality can be resisted in a truly practical sense. Abensour appropriates this phenomenological structure into his reading of Marx and renders ethical anarchy into political terms as democracy.

For Abensour, Levinas's critique occurs at the level of "meta-politics". On this reading, Levinas's account of ethical responsibility serves only as an oblique and distant force without any direct access to the functioning of institutions within the political sphere. After touching on this briefly in the appendix to *Democracy Against the State*, Abensour develops this dynamic at greater length in his 2002 article "An-archy between Metapolitics and Politics". This article, which has been immeasurably influential on political readings of Levinas over the last 20 years, including the present study, offers direct insight into the political potential held by Levinas's work and presents the basic challenge that the present investigation seeks to overcome. Abensour asks:

> … where can we situate an-archy in Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy? Can we consider it to be somewhere between metapolitics and politics? This question seems to be legitimate because we know that the Levinasian sense of an-archy must be distinguished from anarchism. An-archy cannot be reduced to its political sense inasmuch as it has to do with the unique intrigue that Levinas calls 'proximity'. However, and this is where the question becomes quite complex, even if one cannot confine an-archy to its political sense, it still somewhat concerns and affects politics. It is as if Levinas's deliberate recourse to such an undoubtedly charged term is linked to one of the most profound aspects of his philosophy. (ABENSOUR, 2002, p. 5)

Since the present investigation largely consists of formulating my own response to this provocation offered by Abensour, his vocabulary deserves special attention here. This is especially necessary with his somewhat challenging vocabulary of "metapolitics", which he defines independently from Badiou's influential definition[103] of the term. When considered specifically in reference to

[103] See Abrégé de Métapolitique. Paris : Ed. Du Seuil, 1998.

Levinas's work, metapolitics obtains a very specific meaning for Abensour's article, which he explains in the opening passages:

> Metapolitics would however obtain meaning with respect to its content; it would signify the turn that consists of leaving something in order to go towards something else. In this case, metapolitics is a departure from politics, a move away from the particular being that is politics in order to go towards an Other that would be metapolitics. Thus metapolitics attempt to embody such a reversal. When closely examined, this term designates a complex journey. If the meta of metapolitics means a turn or a departure – a leave of politics in order to proceed elsewhere or a passageway beyond politics – it nevertheless means a *source*, that is to say an underneath. It is as if the effect of metapolitics is to call to our attention an underneath *(en-deça)* that permits a leave of politics and that opens a passageway beyond politics. In defining our responsibility for the Other, Levinas insists on this complex structure, on the trajectory that goes from the underneath *(en-deça)* to the beyond. (ABENSOUR, 2002, p. 6)

The question which we might pose after Abensour's definition of metapolitics here is whether Levinas's ethical phenomenology represents a turn against or abandonment of politics. We have seen that Levinas begins TI with an emphatic rejection of politics associated with the Hobbesean or Machiavellian tradition of the term. But if we are to take Levinas at his word when he insists that TI offers a "return to Platonism", we might question whether this rejection of politics is more specifically a rejection of politics in the modern tradition. Levinas's unrelenting critique of Hobbes and Machiavelli coincides with his virulent attacks on the degenerate Germanic ideal, for which he draws a direct line of philosophical influence from Fichte to Nietzsche to Heidegger to Hitler. Positioning himself against this tradition, in my view, should properly be seen as a positive political affirmation rather than a metapolitical critique of all politics.

What Abensour underestimates, in my opinion, is the degree to which Levinas already incorporates a specific political dimension within his work, which appears at various instances as a call for a "pluralist society" or "political monotheism". Due to their anarchic nature, these terms are necessarily vague and resist attempts at thematization into the kind of manageable political frameworks that are familiar to the modern political tradition. Nevertheless, Levinas deploys these terms at crucial points in his work to emphasize the practical dimension that functions within his ethical phenomenology. The threat of locating Levinas's work more closely with a metapolitical departure from politics is that it risks undermining exactly this concrete and active dimension of Levinasian critique. In other words, in rendering Levinas's ethics in terms which are unnecessarily detached from practical concerns, Abensour underestimates the practical dimension of critique as a kind of active political engagement. As we have explored at length, Levinas's consistent political

theme is the interlocking symbiotic relationship between practical necessity and aspiring towards an ideal. While Levinas clearly addresses this aspiration towards an ideal at greater length throughout his philosophical project, it would be a mistake, in my view, to interpret this as a rejection of the importance of practical necessity. Although Abensour is clearly correct to emphasize that Levinasian ethics performs a critique of political rationality, he fails to fully recognize this undercurrent of practical necessity that Levinas incorporates into his work.

One way to understand the way this practical necessity functions within Levinasian ethics is to explore his conception of utopianism. The "active" utopianism that Levinas pursues is not merely an idle aspiration to an impossibly idyllic society, as he announces emphatically in the Warwick interview we examined earlier. There, when challenged as to the perceived "impractical" and "idealistic" nature of his ethics, Levinas responds:

> … I believe that it is absolutely obvious that the liberal state is more moral than the fascist state, and closer to the morally ideal state… There is a Utopian moment in what I say; it is the recognition of something which cannot be realized but which, ultimately, guides all moral action. This utopianism does not prohibit you from condemning certain factual states, nor from recognizing the relative progress that can be made. Utopianism is not a condemnation of everything else. There is no moral life without utopianism— utopianism in this exact sense that saintliness is goodness. (PM, p. 177)

This act of "condemning certain factual states" goes beyond the metapolitical position that Abensour draws out within Levinas's work. While Abensour is clearly correct in asserting that within Levinas's work there is a metapolitical element at play, there is also a clearly identifiable rejection of specific forms of totalized politics, specifically in the case of fascism that Levinas declares in this interview. Further, as Abensour is keenly aware, Levinas's critique of politics takes on an even more concrete form in his reflections on Hitlerism that we have explored at length here. In a lengthy article[104] analyzing and interpreting that essay on Hitlerism, Abensour demonstrates a keen awareness of the practical force of Levinas's thought. He begins the article addressing the unique nature of this early article within Levinas's oeuvre as well as the rarity for such profound philosophical reflections in the early days of Hitler's rise to power:

> Within the abundant work of Emmanuel Levinas, it should be emphasized, Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism is the only text which endeavors, by the recourse to phenomenological technique and to its critical potential, to interpret a socio-historical phenomenon. The endeavor was all the greater as this critical interpretation was proposed

[104] ABENSOUR, Miguel. "Le Mal élémental" in Levinas, Emmanuel. Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l'hitlerisme : Suivi d'un essai de Miguel Abensour. Paris : Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1997.

> "in the heat of the moment" and deviated from the prevailing modes of thought. Further, few philosophical texts attempted to measure themselves against this event to demonstrate that it was without precedent. (ABENSOUR, 1997, p. 28-9, translation mine)

Abensour goes on to draw out the philosophical connection between these socio-historical reflections and Levinas's more formal rejection of ontology that would begin a year later with his publication of "On Escape". Abensour elaborates on the full meaning of Levinas's repetition of "being riveted" (*l'être rivé*) as a counterpart to Heidegger's facticity of being-in-the-world. He notes:

> Indeed, it is best to surmise that a real theoretical constellation is comprised of two main parts, the 1934 text and that of 1935, as if these two essays, beyond a reciprocal illumination, were complementary, or more exactly, as if On Escape brought to fruition the Reflections on Hitlerism. Because of the obvious relationship between chaining (*l'enchaînment*) and being riveted (*l'être rivé*), On Escape, by deploying the description of a specific mode of existence of Dasein, would constitute, so to speak, the second part of the analysis of Hitlerism and would therefore require the interpreter to transpose these new analyzes to the common being of the German people, under the influence of National Socialism. (ABENSOUR, 1997, p. 66, translation mine)

For Abensour, Levinas's rejection of ontology and the construction of the project of ethics as first philosophy is informed by this initial rejection of Hitlerism as a socio-historical phenomenon. Clearly Abensour is correct that the task of overcoming this socio-historical phenomenon (and more importantly avoiding its recurrence in the future) is a task that Levinas approaches as a philosopher rather than as a politician or political theorist. But this, in my view, risks overstating the degree to which Levinas necessarily viewed incorporation of what he called "the social question" into any "pure philosophy", as he declares emphatically in the 1975 interview at Leyden that we examined earlier. This is, perhaps, lost in Abensour's reading of Levinas which seems to regard with skepticism the detached and intellectual nature of his phenomenological approach to the question of political totality.

Further, while Abensour's analysis of the structure of political disruption embedded within Levinas's ethical work is remarkable, in my view he underestimates the degree to which this disruption is achieved *through* the existing state. As we saw in the concluding passages of SCSD, Levinas's call for political monotheism evokes the traditions of Rabbi Hillel in insisting that the messianic state culminates through existing political order. What seems to motivate Levinas in this Talmudic commentary is the way that this utopian culmination "of the State of David in the Messianic State, and the going beyond of the State implied in the notion of the 'world to come'"

(SCSD, p. 186) is still rendered in directly political terms of the order which is to be overcome, specifically the political structure of the Kingdom as a political State. This is why Levinas insists that, unlike Christianity, Judaism has never conceived of a radical separation of "the political order and the spiritual order (between the earthly City and the City of God)" (SCSD, p. 177) What this means, as we have attempted to draw out through Levinas's writings on the May '68 uprising, is that Levinas views political disruption in cautious terms, going to great lengths to avoid the elevation of disorder as a new kind of order. This is precisely because any concrete political revolution or disruption falls into the same trappings of political rationality despite its grand aspiration of overcoming the old corrupted regime. In this, perhaps, Abensour underestimates the degree to which the disruption Levinas seeks to describe is not itself a singular disruptive revolutionary event which ends the reign of the State of Caesar, but rather, in the sense of Chomsky's definition with which we began the present chapter, denotes a kind of constant critical vigilance. In Levinas's context, it must be remembered that this vigilance does not merely critique the State of Caesar, but is an active and vital dimension within the State of David.

Critchley, who cites Abensour as a singular inspiration for his own thinking along these lines, finds a decidedly more practical political foundation within Levinas's work and thus attempts to formulate an anarchic politics resting on a foundation of Levinasian ethical subjectivity. We have seen with Critchley's focus on a Levinasian subject in terms of a "dividual" rather than a classical liberal "individual" which might be seen as inseparable from the modern understanding of citizenship in a nation-state. In *Infinitely Demanding*, Critchley utilizes his own conception of political subjectivity derived from Levinas's work in order to construct a specific politics of resistance to any given political order. But, in agreement with Abensour, Critchley views Levinas's conception of subjectivity as itself impracticable in the political realm and finds it necessary to combine this account of ethical subjectivity with Badiou's conception of commitment to a political event and Knud Løgstrup's account of the infinite ethical demand. Using these three pillars, Critchley formulates an account of anarchic political subjectivity in which the citizen is made manifest not through an ethical demand to the approximate other, but through a fidelity to the demand of an ethical event, namely the experience of injustice.

While Badiou and Levinas make a strange theoretical pairing, considering the virulent attacks Badiou levels against Levinas as the starting point of his own Ethics, aligning Løgstrup with

Levinas is somewhat easier to envision. Løgstrup, who studied at Strasbourg around the same time period as Levinas, "presents a similar philosophical position to Levinas but from within the Christian tradition." (CRITCHLEY, 2007, p. 51) Rebelling against the same modernist traditions that we have seen Levinas struggle against, Critchley identifies the core insight from Løgstrup that informs his own work:

> For Løgstrup… what the ethical demand requires is that I act for the sake of this living particular human being in front of me: my neighbour, whether stranger or familiar, friend or foe. Løgstrup's understanding of Christianity is that the individual's relation to God is determined wholly at the point of his relation to the neighbour. Therefore, one's existence is completely at stake in the relation to the other person and to fail the other is to fail that existence irreparably. However, this emphasis on the lived, existential dimension of ethical experience does not entail that Løgstrup's position is existentialist or Kierkegaardian. Against the existentialist emphasis on radical choice as the basis for one's moral projects, Løgstrup insists that the ethical demand that faces the individual subject in a situation is independent of and prior to subjective choice. (CRITCHLEY, 2007, p. 51)

Critchley adapts the logic of this ethical demand that preoccupies Løgstrup, and the formal along with the phenomenological structure of the experience of responsibility developed in Levinas's philosophical work, to formulate what he calls a "politics of resistance" (CRITCHLEY, 2007, p. 89) This conception of resistance made Critchley the target of voracious attacks from Slavoj Zizek, whose unequivocal review of Critchley's book was published under the unambiguous title "Resistance is Surrender"[105]. Breaking from the large-scale revolutionary mentality of Zizek and the Marxist tradition, Critchley calls for a kind of intimate politics of resistance. He notes in the concluding chapter of the book: "… resistance begins by occupying and controlling the terrain upon which one stands, where one lives, works, acts and thinks. This needn't involve millions of people. It needn't even involve thousands. It could involve just a few at first. Resistance can be intimate and can begin in small affinity groups." (CRITCHLEY, 2007, p. 114) In my view, this represents the clearest attempt to formulate a politics which is loyal to the spirit of Levinasian ethics in that it preserves the character of a disruptive critique of the given order without aspiring towards a new archic totality. Echoing the terms we saw in Levinas's critique of the May '68 protestors turn towards violence, Critchley affirms: "Anarchical political resistance should not seek to mimic and mirror the archic violent sovereignty it opposes. It is rather a question of the cultivation of pacifist activism that deploys techniques of non-violent warfare or what we might

[105] ZIZEK, SLAVOJ. "Resistance is Surrender" in London Review of Books, Vol. 29 No. 22 · 15 November 2007.

even call ‘tactical frivolity’. But – to adopt a phrase of Levinas this is a difficult pacifism that constantly has to negotiate the limits of violence.” (CRITCHLEY, 2007, p. 125)

Taken together, Critchley and Abensour demonstrate the potential for Levinas’s ethical phenomenology to be applied politically within the field of political anarchism. But our project here is not strictly concerned with the range of potential political applications of Levinasian thought, rather we have tried to develop a case that Levinasian ethics should be understood as a call for a specific kind of politics, which, my view is necessarily an anarchic politics. While Critchley and Abensour each develop anarchic political frameworks drawing inspiration from Levinas’s phenomenology, they make clear that they do not consider these themes to be present within Levinas’s own work. Critchley states this bluntly in *The Problem with Levinas*[106] where he describes his own attempt to link Levinasian ethical anarchism to a specific “political programme” which “is not based on state and capital but on a different and cooperative understanding of the social bond.” (CRITCHLEY, 2015, p.72-3) But Critchley is clear to establish that he believes this link is not originally present within Levinas’s work since Levinas relies on a “statist and androcentric vision of justice, politics, and everything that gets subsumed under the heading of ‘the third party’ (le tiers).” (CRITCHLEY, 2015, p. 73)

In my view, Critchley’s reading of Levinas’s politics is unnecessarily restrained by his exclusion of Levinas’s confessional writings and Talmudic commentaries, which we have examined here in great detail. Critchley, in agreement with Badiou’s critique of Levinas’s religiosity, regards these writings with a high degree of skepticism due to their presumed theological rather than philosophical nature. Indeed, in his article “Five Problems in Levinas’s View of Politics and the Sketch of a Solution to Them”[107], Critchley lists “Monotheism” as one of his 5 central problems to overcome in attempting to develop a Levinasian politics noting:

> … the universality of fraternity is ensured through the passage to God, which incidentally recalls the classical Christian, essentially Augustinian, conception of friendship. That is, the Christian has friends only insofar as that friendship is mediated through the presence of God, which means that all humanity is my friend and no one is my enemy—such is, for Carl Schmitt, the essentially depoliticizing logic of Christianity. This is one way of hearing Levinas’s phrase from Otherwise than Being, that it is ‘Thanks to God’ I am in an other for the others… (CRITCHLEY, 2010, p. 42)

[106] CRITCHLEY, Simon. The Problem with Levinas. Ed. Alexis Dianda. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
[107] CRITCHLEY, Simon. “Five Problems in Levinas’s View of Politics and the Sketch of a Solution to Them” in Radicalizing Levinas, Eds. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco, Albany: SUNY Press, 2010.

As I have tried to show in a previous chapter, this reading misses the fundamentally social nature of Levinas's conception of religion, which we saw that Levinas himself approximated with the social tradition of Comte. Critchley mistakes the directionality of Levinas's monotheism, which is not the source of universal fraternity but is rather produced via a more primordial event of fraternity, which is the necessary condition for the existence of monotheism. This particular understanding of monotheism, which we might regard as anarchic monotheism, is radically different than the monotheism of the Christian tradition. While Critchley seems certainly correct to draw out some degree of similarity between Augustinian friendship and Levinasian ethical responsibility, it is important to understand the inversion of directionality at play when making this approximation. What I mean is that in Levinas's anarchic monotheism, the relationship to the other is not mediated through a relationship to God in the Augustinian sense, but rather the relationship to God is itself mediated and made possible only through the relationship to the other person. By failing to identify this inversion, Critchley misses an opportunity to draw out the distinctly social and anarchic nature of Levinas's conception of monotheism and therefore identifies it as a problem to overcome rather than an asset to understand Levinasian politics. In this, perhaps, Critchley underestimates Levinas's proximity to Løgstrup in terms of the divinity of the social relation. Due to his resistance to this "religious" terminology, Critchley attempts to build a Levinasian politics while setting aside the distinctly political texts we have examined from his confessional writings. This is understandable since Levinas's call for a monotheistic politics, when taken at face value, appears to be little more than an attempt to theocratize the political sphere. But when read in this context of anarchic monotheism which gives priority to the sociality of religious life, as we have attempted to show in connection to Comte and Durkheim, Critchley's reticence towards Levinas's religious vocabulary seems unnecessary.

Understanding Levinas's concept of subjectivity as anarchic, specifically in reference to its political incarnation, is an important theme in the recent work of Ozanan Carrara. While in the present work, I have attempted to draw out the fundamentally political context of Levinas's call for a "pluralist society" in TI, Carrara pursues a similar line of thought via an analysis of the deeply social nature of Levinas's concept of subjectivity and its necessarily political implications. In his 2008 work *Levinas: from the Ethical Subject to the Political Subject*[108]

[108] Carrara, Ozanan Vicente. Levinas: do Sujeito ético ao Sujeito político. Tese (Doutorado em Filosofia) – Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, 2008.

Carrara develops a persuasive account of a Levinasian political subject as an underappreciated dimension of his ethical thought. This relies, to a great extent, on Levinas's account of the third party (*le tiers*) as a disruptive force to the relation to the proximal other, resisting the tendency of manifesting as a renewed totality. It is the presence of this third party which disrupts the possibility of an ethical totality in the sense of Buber's I-Thou, which necessarily excludes the sociality beyond the immediate relation. This reinforces the conception of sociality at the heart of Levinas's project, which cannot be collapsed into merely an account of ethical responsibility owed by the human subject to the proximal other which exists beyond any societal or communal context.

Because Carrara's work focuses on Levinas's concept of subjectivity, his reflections are particularly valuable for the present analysis in the context of opposing the pure autonomy of the classical liberal political subject. As we have seen, Cohen and Morgan offer powerful political readings of Levinas which align his ethical work with classical liberal politics. But unlike his North American counterparts, Carrara insists on the incompatibility of Levinasian ethical subjectivity and liberal conceptions of autonomy as subjectivity. Carrara demonstrates the profound connection Levinas draws between liberal conceptions of the subject and the philosophical conception of idealism, which we have explored in relation to the "degenerate Germanic ideal" that Levinas associates with Hitlerism, Nietzsche and Fichte. Carrara notes:

> Levinas rebukes idealism in two main respects: first for underestimating the weight of being and, second, for not questioning the subject. Thinking that it has surpassed being, idealism does not make it possible to leave itself. Already Levinas sees this desire for evasion as a need that the subject discovers in himself to get out of himself. Idealism, in his view, merely acknowledges this need, although it is incapable of making such a way out of itself. (Carrara, 2008, p. 145, my translation)

With liberalism seen as the political corollary this philosophical idealism, Levinas's dual opposition to these modes of thinking becomes clear. This overlap is central to Carrara's analysis of Levinasian subjectivity in that he claims, rightly in my view, that Levinas seeks to overcome both liberalism and idealism "by proposing another understanding of subjectivity" which avoids the "overly centered focus on the totalized both the Self and the Other. Levinas wants to think of a plural subjectivity capable of keeping both apart without forming a totality." (Carrara, 2008, p. 21, translation mine) Carrara's analysis of this dual opposition to idealism and liberalism coincides with what we have discussed earlier as the fundamental connection between Levinas's

metaphysical and social pluralism, which must be understood in concert in order to grasp the full extent of the political implications of Levinas's ethical subjectivity. This analysis reinforces one of the central points of the present analysis in Levinas's political implications in that it demonstrates the way in which his work engages with the political realm of human life without addressing at the superficial level of political rationality.

Carrara draws out the anarchic nature this human subjectivity in OTB as a central characteristic of extending Levinas's ethical work into its political context but stops short of considering the anarchic dimension of that resulting political context. Accepting Levinas's explicit resistance to "anarchists" in OtB, Carrara notes:

> … we conclude that politics, having been born of a preceding ethics, cannot remain in a restful state undisturbed by the Other. This is not about placing anarchy in power as the anarchists intended, for anarchy cannot become a principle and must reign in its own way. Rather, it is about preoccupying politics, it is about the other derailing the politics which excludes or simply erases her in the universalization as a concept or in the work of totalization that levels everyone. Politics as belonging to the order of *arché* and reason cannot simply cut off all ties to this ethical intrigue of anarchy that precedes and founds it, but rather must continue to draw inspiration through it and for it. Politics, then, is situated in constant tension with the ethical. (Carrara, 2008, p. 211, translation mine)

We have attempted to problematize this conception of "anarchists" as referring solely to the self-contradictory attempt to frame anarchy as a principle, but it is important that Carrara establishes here that Levinas's opposition to politics is properly understood as an opposition to **archic** politics. In my view, any attempt to describe the politics which might result from Levinas's ethical phenomenology must necessarily be oriented around exactly this opposition to the archic dimension of politics that is brought to the forefront in Carrara's analysis. Thus, this opposition to archic politics must be rightly regarded as anarchic politics exactly because it refuses to engage in the corrupted maneuvering of traditional political rationality. By categorizing this opposition as a disruption or disturbance, utilizing Abensour's terminology, Carrara offers a remarkable perspective on the possible content of a Levinasian politics in terms of its opposition to the traditional political order of the State.

My position here might easily be criticized as privileging the horizontal social relation over the vertical relation to the divine, which Levinas attempts to lay out in phenomenological terms as the experience of ethical responsibility. To cast Levinas as primarily a "social" thinker in the sense I am proposing here does, to some degree, pose a threat the primacy of this verticality that he strives

so ardently to establish from his earliest works. But to this I would say that Levinas's goal is not simply to idealize the vertical relation to the divine, as we might understand in Critchley's approximation of Levinas and Augustine. Rather, in my view, what Levinas attempts to establish through his ethical phenomenology is that the social relation to the proximal other is not derivative of the relation to the divine Other. In this sense, Levinas's phenomenology attempts to lay bare what we might think of as a kind of vertical sociality which does not depend on divine intervention or mediation. This helps explain why Levinas's most directly political texts are found not in his philosophical work but rather in the confessional writings that Critchley avoids. And it is in these texts that Levinas's struggle with the demands of the ideal and the necessities of the hour make most clear his fundamentally anarchic view of politics in which the disruption of political totality is of the utmost importance.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show the broader context of Levinas's proximity to political anarchism. While previous chapters showed a cautious endorsement of the liberal state, here we have shown a distinct appreciation that Levinas harbored for political anarchism which he rendered as utopian socialism. The influence of figures like Proudhon, Tolstoy and Kropotkin cannot be discounted when attempting to orient the political implications of Levinas's work. His attitude towards the specific terminology of political anarchism must be tempered by the historical context of the May '68 uprising and his own conflicted appraisal of the character of the protestors. While himself sympathetic to the "persecuted" nature of the student protestors, he was nonetheless extremely cautious in his evaluation given the nature of any political revolution, regardless of its ideals, to descend into a repetition of the violent abuses of the regime it seeks to unseat.

The core theme of all of Levinas's political reflections, which I have returned repeatedly throughout this chapter, is the delicate equilibrium between aspiration towards an ideal and the concrete reality of practical necessity. We might be tempted to attempt to resolve this conflict, by reading Levinas more strongly one way or the other. What I mean is that we might, as we saw in Michael Morgan's book, read Levinas as aligning himself more fully with practical necessity in his commitment to Zionism as necessary for the preservation of the Jewish people. On the other hand, we might, be tempted to view Levinas's politics as a kind of impractical utopian aspiration,

as we saw with critiques from Badiou and Abensour. But I believe that pushing Levinas too far in either direction fails to fully appreciate the degree to which the State of Caesar and the State of David function symbiotically as two necessary halves of a perpetual dialectic politics. Levinas's messianic politics is not simply a politics (or metapolitics) of critique, but of an active utopian engagement in which the violent tendencies of practical necessity are constantly held in check by the aspiration towards an unreachable ideal. Returning to the broad thematization of anarchism as described by Chomsky, this involves the questioning of the legitimacy of claims to authority rather than a presumption that authority itself is always illegitimate. What Levinas develops through his ethical work is a way of understanding the dynamic nature of the way this critique against the State is deployed. And because this critique is elaborated in terms of an aspiration towards an unreachable absolute ideal, the critique does not function purely within political rationality which prioritizes immediate necessity over any such ideal. However, as a critique of the political totality which inevitably arises from this deafness to the ideal, the concrete political content of Levinas's terminology of monotheistic politics or pluralist society is best understood as a call to vigilant action and relentless critique. In my view, as I have attempted to lay out here, because this vigilance functions beyond political rationality and refuses the rules of the political game, when taken politically Levinas's political fate finds common ground with the aims and themes which coincide with the tradition of political anarchism.

Concluding Remarks:

Reading Levinas in the way proposed by the present work comes with some advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, reading Levinas with an emphasis on the political implications of his work opens up a wide range of provocative possibilities for deploying his ethical phenomenology in a practical context with real consequences within the actual existing political world. On the other hand, this approach runs the risk of losing sight of the central aim of the project of recasting ethics as first philosophy by giving the impression that the political supersedes the ethical. This would, of course, run counter to the most fundamental task that Levinas sets out to achieve in his work and effectively subordinate the ethical to the political, which is exactly the pathology he seeks to overcome. As such, the current project has attempted to find an equilibrium between analyzing Levinas's ethical phenomenology and the ultimate political endpoint that can and must be derived from that formal philosophical position.

While we have examined a number of passages from Levinas's work at considerable length in the preceding chapters, two stand out in this context of the connection between Levinas's philosophical investigations and its corresponding practical implications. The first is the passage from the closing section of TI where Levinas calls for a "pluralist society" and argues that the ethical goodness he has laid out in extraordinary detail throughout the work culminates in this pluralism. A second passage that we take as a central justification of this overlap between practical and theoretical is found in his published interviews with Philippe Nemo, where Levinas notes that in order for a philosophy to be "pure" it must take into consideration "the social question". In my view, reading Levinas's work outside of this practical social and political context would gravely mistake his philosophical intentions and the way he approaches philosophical questions. While his philosophical investigations into the structure of ethical responsibility are compelling and revolutionary in their own right, taken apart from these practical considerations leaves him vulnerable to the kinds of critique we have seen from Badiou and Zizek.

Against this critique, as we have seen in Bernstein's analysis, Levinas's entire philosophical project might well be understood as an attempt to formulate an ethical response to the problem of evil specifically as it arises within the political sphere. I take this insight from Bernstein as a central motivation for the present work and the pursuits of the previous chapters have attempted to follow

this logic to its inevitable conclusion. If Levinas's ethics should be understood as a call to action in response to the very specific problem of political totality, we must keep in mind that this action cannot be understood in a sense restricted to the actions of isolated individuals. In my view, a great deal of confusion arises from Levinas's deployment of the term "ethics" since it necessarily evokes the way the term has traditionally been used in philosophy, especially modern philosophy, as referring to the evaluative deliberation of the moral choices of individual autonomous agents. But it is exactly this tradition that Levinas is rebelling against in his "return to Platonism" and one of the unique challenges of reading his work is the constant need to disentangle the term "ethics" from the familiar meaning that philosophers have historically attached to the term.

In approaching Levinas's work from this perspective, beginning with his unique appropriation of phenomenological methodology, I have attempted to show a fundamental preoccupation with totality permeates every facet of his philosophical investigations. However, understanding this critique of totality in only its ethical manifestation would gravely misunderstand Levinas's deeply political motivation for exploring totality at its most fundamental philosophical level, which might be understood as in the sense of pure autonomy which becomes reified by modern philosophy. Totality, for Levinas, is never simply ethical totality, but always implies the political manifestations of this modern view of man as autonomy in the early 20th century. The fundamental connection between viewing the self as an isolated totality and its corresponding incarnation as political totality in Hitlerism is subtle theme within Levinas's work that I have tried to draw out over the course of the previous chapters.

But stating that Levinas has a political objective in mind as the ultimate goal of the project of recasting ethics as first philosophy is only be the starting point for our investigation since we must also consider what qualities or characteristics might be attributed to a truly Levinasian politics. Or, to put this another way, what kind of politics can avoid the trappings of totality that ensnared even Heidegger himself under the banner of what Levinas calls a degenerate Germanic ideal? Addressing this question involves pursuing Levinas's thought outside his formal philosophical writings, as his most extensive and consistent political reflections appear in his Talmudic commentaries or as responses to interlocutor's provocations in various interviews. Still, within his more formal writings, occasional glimpses of a non-totalized politics appear, such as the indication of a "pluralist society" at the conclusion of TI, which tantalizingly offers the possibility that what

Levinas calls simply ethical "goodness" might be understood politically as "pluralism". A great deal of attention has been paid, in our preceding chapters, in an attempt to offer context for this claim, drawing specifically on the importance of figures such as Durkheim, Mendelssohn and Buber within Levinas's thought.

Understanding what Levinas means by pluralism, or more formally as the "pluralist society", presents a significant challenge for the present work. The double sense of pluralism, which we examined in chapter 3, signifies both a metaphysical and social sense of the term, which might be rendered respectively as ethical alterity and social diversity. The overlap between these two senses of pluralism, which might not be readily apparent as a major theme within Levinas's work, takes center stage in the closing passages of TI and seems to deserve greater attention than it has received in recent Levinas scholarship. Within the project of recasting ethics as first philosophy, the metaphysical or ethical sense of pluralism must take precedence and serves as the foundation of his phenomenological analysis of the event of the face of the Other and the encounter with exteriority that drives his research. And yet, by insisting on a social sense of the term as the way that ethical goodness manifests against totality, Levinas presents us an interesting challenge to identify the philosophical framework of this conceptual overlap. I have attempted to describe this overlap in terms of the disarticulation of totality, which is achieved at different levels by this dual conception of pluralism. While the metaphysical sense of pluralism disarticulates on the structure of ethical pluralism in the face of Heideggerian solipsism, social pluralism disrupts its corresponding social totality which manifests as Hitlerism. To see Levinas's conception of pluralism as restricted to only one of these two distinct senses would only provide half of the picture of what his philosophical investigations are meant to expose, which is the way that these distinct forms of totality can be disrupted, resisted and opposed.

If we were to attempt to piece together a sketch of a formal Levinasian politics from these themes in his formal philosophical writings and Talmudic commentaries, we would immediately recognize the inherent error of any such attempt. If we take the possibility of a Levinasian politics seriously, the first (and perhaps only) characteristic that such a politics would have is that it would necessarily oppose and resist its own collapse into totality. This means that any truly Levinasian politics would necessarily lack a definitive formal character or arche that could be seen as thematizing that politics into a single coherent form. To put this another way, if our litmus test for

any Levinasian politics is its ability to ward off a collapse into totality, any attempt to formalize that politics would immediately become self-contradictory. At this point, the potential for a connection to anarchic politics as a possible solution to the problem of political totality becomes tantalizingly clear. Political anarchy, which itself necessarily resists formal definition, functions precisely as abhorrence of any manifestation of totality which would inevitably culminate in the unrestrained violence of the State. To be clear, the central claim that I have attempted to justify in the preceding chapters is that if one were to attempt to describe a Levinasian politics the single most applicable term that we could use to would be anarchy.

Because Levinas himself extensively uses the term anarchy as a central theme in his later work, especially OTB, this connection might be somewhat superficially apparent were it not for Levinas's insistence that the sense of anarchy he deploys "precedes the political (or antipolitical) meaning popularly [*populairement*] ascribed to it." (S, p. 180) In attempting to offer context to what Levinas means by this "popular" understanding of anarchy, I have argued that while Levinas opposes this particular "popular" sense of political anarchy, there are deeper dimensions of political anarchism which he views with unmistakable admiration and reverence which becomes clear in passages addressing figures such as Proudhon, Fourier and Tolstoy. But perhaps more importantly than simple admiration and reverence, I have attempted to show that Levinas's approach to philosophical questions has a fundamental proximity to political anarchism that go beyond an elevation of disorder as a preferable alternative to order.

With these points of convergence with anarchistic political and social thinkers in mind, a sketch of Levinas's political philosophy begins to take shape. We know from our readings of his Talmudic commentaries, especially the SCSD article, that the crucial question of the political sphere is how to achieve a balance between the demands of immediate necessity and the demands of the absolute ideal. For Levinas, the satisfaction of the immediate "demands of the hour", such as security and safety, are the necessary condition for the possibility of pursuing the demands of the ideal. The danger, of course, is that achieving these immediate necessities might be allowed to take absolute precedence over the ideal, which is synonymous with the political incarnation of totality. Because of the radical nature of the demands of the ideal, no politics can achieve it and yet the legitimacy of any politics can only be determined by the degree to which it remains open to its critique. It is this dynamic which we have explored in Levinas's complex and often-conflicting views on

liberalism that give us the best insight into what he means when he calls the union of the State of Caesar and the State of David a kind of "political monotheism."

One of the primary motivations of this investigation has been to offer a response to popular and influential readings of Levinas that align him clearly with the liberal tradition of political theory. Morgan and Cohen each made compelling and insightful points regarding the proximity of Levinas and this tradition, but ultimately their arguments underestimate the degree to which Levinas's work is first and foremost an opposition to totality, which would necessarily include the liberal conception of the State. Morgan's reading in particular offers a serious challenge to the view presented in the current analysis in that he takes territorial Zionism to be the ultimate fate of Levinas's ethical phenomenology. This, despite being supported by statements offered by Levinas in various interviews defending the State of Israel, ultimately fails to recognize the severe potential for a collapse into totality that coincides with the exclusionary nationalism of territorial Zionism.

Offering a response to this particular reading of Levinas has served as a principal motivation of the current work, along with opposing the tendency to read Levinas as purely anti-political in the sense of Badiou and Zizek. In my view, it would be a mistake to read Levinas's work as functioning wholly independently of its political implications, and I have attempted to make the case that his philosophical project functions as a response to the political pathology that he witnessed firsthand in the rise of Hitlerism. And since Levinas offers us insight into a specific political pathology that persists in our own time, this work has taken on an unfortunate pertinence in the contemporary world as that the same degenerate pathological ideal has come to define the contemporary political landscape. This makes the study of Levinas a crucially important task for political philosophy as his work provides a uniquely useful framework for recognizing and overcoming exactly these manifestations of political totality. And yet, despite his relevance to the questions that dominate contemporary politics, Levinas's unquestionable philosophical commitment is that political evil cannot be addressed at the level of political rationality. This commitment complicates any attempt to deploy his philosophical framework in a practical, political context that functions within the confines of political rationality itself. But, to be clear, I do not see Levinas's project of recasting ethics as first philosophy to be simply a lamentation of the horrors of Hitlerism and the unprecedented genocide of the 20th century, but rather as an attempt to describe a framework by

which we can gain the philosophical access to this particular pathology and develop a critique against it.

At various points throughout the text, I have indicated the overlap of the political rationality that Levinas opposed in his time and the current challenges we face today. But here, by way of drawing a close to the present investigation, it seems necessary to spell these challenges out in more explicit form in order to show how a political reading of Levinas remains exceptionally relevant for contemporary political theory. The return of this particular pathological politics, which has come to be known in its various incarnations by terms such as authoritarian populism, neofascism or right-wing nationalism, has found its champions in powerful figures that have assumed positions of incredible authority that would have been unthinkable only a decade ago.

In my view, one of the defining features of these newly empowered movements is what Levinas defined as the ability to awaken "elementary feelings" among citizens by arousing nationalistic fervor. Perhaps this vulnerability is nowhere more apparent than in the world's largest democracy, India, which has seen enthusiastic support for the programs of exclusionary Hindu nationalism enacted by Narendra Modi at the expense of the country's Muslim minorities. At the same time, politicians such as Marine Le Pen in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy have moved from being seen as radical extremists to legitimate political forces by evoking familiar refrains of the necessity to maintain cultural cohesion of their respective nations against the "invasion" by African or Middle-Eastern migrants seeking refuge in Europe. Such an "invasion" is nearly constantly decried by Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines in order to leverage anti-Chinese sentiment for his own political gains. Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil have embraced familiar old political slogans in "America First" or "Brazil Above Everything, God Above Everyone" that directly parallel early 20th century politics from Oswald Mosely's "Britain First" or the refrain of "Germany Above All" we saw with our analysis of Treitschke. Naming these individuals and responding to the particular instantiations of their shared ideal is a task that must necessarily take place within the realm of political rationality. This is, of course, a crucially important task for politics in our time, but a Levinasian politics will insist that these instantiations of exclusionary nationalism must be addressed at the level of their philosophical foundations rather than at the level of political or juridical institutions.

This recent history has offered a definitive answer to the question Levinas posed in his 1990 prefatory note to his Reflections on Hitlerism: clearly liberalism is not all we need to ward off this pathological mentality. As democratic institutions around the globe collapse under the weight of authoritarian rule, we see the relevance of Levinas's aversion to responding to this ideology at the level of political rationality. Despite centuries of legal precedents and political institutions enshrined in constitutional law, the noble tradition that classical liberalism insists will preserve the commonwealth against potential tyrants, western liberal democracies have once again proven incapable or unwilling to offer even the slightest resistance to the pathology of exclusionary nationalism and the "elementary feelings" which it inspires. And while there are a variety of converging themes that could be used to define or thematize this pathology, one trend which unites them all is a shared rejection of forms of authority which lie beyond the State, particularly as related to international institutions such as the United Nations or international law in more general terms. The theme of unrestrained nationalistic sovereignty, which we explored in detail through Durkheim's critique of Treitschke and Levinas's conception of political totality within the State of Caesar, is utterly incapable of yielding to a demand which emanates from exteriority that lies beyond the State. This is especially clear in the case of Bolsonaro's deployment of "Brazil Above Everything, God Above Everyone", where even the divine absolute of monotheism is appropriated for the political expediency of the regime. Any form of authority, be it religious, political or moral, which lies beyond the sovereignty of the State is a threat to this conception of political order. The authoritarian State, as a self-enclosed and self-sufficient totality, must necessarily reject any authority which it cannot collapse into its own pursuit of power. It is exactly here that Levinas's political reflections, including his critique of the way Christianity is appropriated as a State religion in Machiavelli, can help us begin to formulate a response to the underlying pathological structure of exaggerated national sovereignty.

This brings us back to our reading of Heidegger's Rectorial address, which showed exactly this same attempt to collapse the authority of the university, the knowledge service [*Wissensdienst*], and science itself into the singular task of the State's pursuit of power. Levinas's break with the project of fundamental ontology, which we saw he had embraced with fawning enthusiasm at Freiburg and Davos, cannot be understood apart from this vulnerability to political totalization. Heidegger, in subordinating the task of philosophy to the needs of the Reich, committed a betrayal that Levinas was never able to forgive, despite his ongoing admiration for the originality and force

"stemming from genius" that had enthralled him along with throngs of German students in the 1920s-1930s. Heidegger's proximity to Ernst Jünger and the project of "total mobilization" helps orient the way he approached the rectorial address and his general commitment to the Nazi political program, not as the passing participation of a politically naïve intellectual but rather as an invested believer in the very degenerate Germanic ideal that Levinas laid bare in his analysis of Hitlerism shortly after Heidegger's installation as Rector of the University of Freiburg. This also helps us understand, in our own time, why the forces of political totality under the banner of this new breed of contemporary authoritarianism have universally opposed the independence of universities in their respective countries as inevitable sources of resistance to their attempts to consolidate all authority into servicing the ultimate objectives of the State.

Liberalism, which Levinas frequently describes with mitigated and conditional approval, has repeatedly proven incapable of offering resistance to appeals to the "elementary feelings" stoked by nationalist or nativist rhetoric that has become synonymous with contemporary forms of authoritarianism. Levinas's admiration of liberalism, which he claims is unequivocally preferable to the regimes of fascism or Stalinism, stems from its commitment to remaining open (at least theoretically) to the critique of exteriority in the form of natural or human rights which lie beyond the State. The SCSD article in particular pursues this line of thought and it is there that Levinas most clearly develops his views on the precarious equilibrium faced by the liberal State in balancing between the demands of practical necessity and openness towards this critique of the absolute. In my view, it is clear that the tradition of political anarchism is open to this critique to a greater degree than the traditions of classical or contemporary liberalism. Thus, the question regarding the potential legitimacy of anarchistic politics lies not in its openness to the critique of the absolute, but rather in its ability to sufficiently address the practical demands of immediate necessity. We have tried to show Levinas's proximity to this way of thinking in his high appraisal of "utopian socialism" which he clearly ascribes to thinkers that are frequently considered part of the anarchist tradition. But whether Levinas himself viewed anarchic politics capable of adequately meeting practical demands is ultimately not the primary focus of the present investigation. Rather, our concern is more fundamentally with the question of whether anarchic politics is capable of granting what Levinas calls a "provisional abdication" of authority to the practical sphere without losing sight of the universal ideal.

At this point, the penetrating nature of Butler's critique of Levinas becomes clear for our context here. Despite overstating some elements of her critique, Butler seems right to criticize Levinas's inability to admit that the massacre at Sabra and Chatila overstepped this "provisional abdication". This reluctance to criticize the State of Israel cuts to the core of trying to align Levinas with political anarchism in the way I have attempted to do in the preceding chapters. That is to say, if Levinas's position is that an act of genocide such as that which occurred at Sabra and Chatila can be justified within the scope of this "provisional abdication", then perhaps his own understanding of this abdication is not so provisional after all. Butler's claim, to put it perhaps even more controversially than she herself posed it, is that if Levinas himself cannot condemn genocide due to his commitment to Israeli nationalism, we must ask whether he himself falls victim to the same kind of degenerate nationalistic ideal that he exposed in his reflections on Hitlerism. But this objection raised against Levinas by Butler, while concerning for anyone who takes Levinas's work seriously, is largely concerned with a biographical question that we have not attempted to resolve in the current project. However, in my view, Levinas's ethical phenomenology is utterly incompatible with any commitment to nationalism, regardless of the nation involved, because this would go beyond any sense of the "provisional abdication" of authority that limits the State of Caesar's legitimacy. Nationalism, at its core, is a rejection of the idea that the state can be critiqued by any source of authority which emanates from exteriority or alterity. It is exactly this dynamic of closing oneself off to the critique of exteriority that Levinas seeks to overcome at the ethical level and it is exactly this framework by which we can understand the implications of his thought as an opposition to all forms of political totalization.

I have attempted to connect this tendency towards totality in the political sphere, what we might think of as the tendency for this abdication of authority to exceed its provisional limitations, with Levinas's more formal investigation into the ethical totality of solipsism in the context of Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. The key moment of Levinas's insight is, in my view, the connection he draws in TI to Plato's rendition of the myth of the Ring of Gyges. What is crucial in this analysis is the way that Levinas insists that the absolute liberty experienced by Gyges is "the very condition of man" and serves as the epitome of the view of man-as-autonomy that he will associate with Fichte and a distinctly Germanic conception of humanity. This is crucial to understanding how we might understand his work politically if we are to see political totality in the terms laid out by nationalists such as Treitschke who conceive of the State as simply a

manifestation of the same exaggerated autonomy rendered in terms of an unrestrained national sovereignty. For Gyges, there is no external limitation of law or social exaltation/condemnation on his ability to pursue his own ambition, and so it is with States that admit no external authority that resides beyond the grasp if the State's own sovereignty.

At this point, we must return to the original ambiguity and conflicting senses of anarchy that Levinas deployed in TI. There, we saw that Levinas viewed discourse as that which introduces order to the anarchy of the closed totality of solipsism. References to anarchy at this early point in his work reflects the aims of his phenomenological account of the face as meant to show the way this event of responsibility resists the totality of a solipsistic conception of the self. But this sense of anarchy conflicts, at least superficially, with the more positive sense of anarchy seen in OTB wherein ethics itself is anarchic in that it refuses to be thematized and collapsed into totality. Levinas's conception of anarchy remains useful despite its ambiguity exactly because it demonstrates that ethical responsibility introduces order to chaos and yet cannot itself be thematized into a moral system. To be clear, Levinas is not developing a phenomenological account of responsibility in order to describe an upstanding moral lifestyle which we might follow in order to achieve the ethical life. Rather, he is attempting to describe the underlying foundation on which morality rests prior to any question of liberty or action in thematized moral systems such as sentimentality in Hume or deontological duties in Kant or utilitarian consequences in Bentham. The ambiguity in Levinas's approach, which might seem unsatisfying to some degree due to its comparative resistance to systematization, is a familiar problem for the anarchist political tradition which constantly confronts this tendency towards over-systematization that would necessarily undermine any truly anarchistic aspirations. As we have seen, even coming to a preliminary definition of anarchism is fraught with contradictions if we take the concept of anarchy seriously as a philosophical theme. But I take this inherent ambiguity in Levinas's approach to ethics not as a weakness, but rather as a source of flexibility and strength in that it forces any possible Levinasian politics to remain ever-vigilant against the tendency to collapse into totality, even the seemingly appealing totality of elevating ethical responsibility as a new kind of archic principle by which a just politics might be ordered. In my view, political anarchy functions as a disarticulation of totality in the political sphere in exactly the same way that Levinas viewed discourse as disarticulating the totality of solipsism within the ethical sphere in TI.

The danger rendering Levinas's conception of anarchy into its political manifestation runs the risk of over-formalizing the implications of his work and attempting to render ethical anarchy in terms which are reducible to political rationality. And while this would be a valid objection to liberal readings of Levinas, such as we saw with Cohen or Morgan, I believe that aligning Levinas with political anarchism avoids the force of this objection because political anarchism does not function **within** political rationality. In other words, political anarchy, while taken to be a "school" of political theory, is fundamentally a rejection of political rationality as it has become understood within the context of the western liberal nation-state. It is in this sense of anarchism that we saw with Chomsky's extraordinarily broad thematization of anarchism as a tendency to question the legitimacy of claims to authority. As definitions of political anarchy become overly formalized and thematized, such as we saw with Marshall's conception, the connection to Levinas's phenomenological description of the structure of disarticulation breaks down. This is because as anarchy becomes formalized into a systematic structure, it must be rendered in terms **within** political rationality rather than a critique exterior to any form of political rationality.

For this reason, Levinas's articles reflecting on the May '68 student uprising take on a special relevance for our investigation. We saw that despite severe misgivings about the physical violence and the "conformist and garrulous" discourse of the protestors, the expression of a commitment to an ideal beyond the logic of political rationality is something that Levinas found captivating in the movement. This captivation is evident in passages where Levinas agrees that the students shared a persecuted status with the German Jews as "a shared destiny of misfortune", in the wake of Cohn-Bendit's scandalous exile from France. Clearly Levinas was skeptical as to the movement's potential to avoid an inevitable collapse into conformity with traditional political rationality, which would ultimately undermine its revolutionary potential. But the admiration that he expresses for the utopian ideal which motivated the protestors gets to the heart of how we can understand his work politically because his skepticism emanates from the concern that the protestors would collapse into totality, which is the fate of all formal politics. In resorting to the violent tactics and garrulous language of that same political rationality which they sought to overcome, the protestors came to see their own critique against the State in archic rather than anarchic terms. It is exactly in this sense that the protestors might be said to have elevated disorder as a new kind of order.

Ultimately, this is the most fundamental insight of Levinas's political reflections in that he understands that all politics tends towards a collapse into totality. But it is exactly this tendency which Levinas has armed us against with his account of exteriority and his phenomenological account of the way totality can be ruptured and disarticulated from that which lies beyond the totality. It has been my contention here that when this dynamic plays out in the political realm, the only applicable term available to us is anarchy.

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