

Chapter 1 : Other Voices (January), Michael R. Michau, "On Escape"

THE DRAMA OF BEING: LEVINAS AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY "not simply as deed but as religious event, occurrence, or enactment or rit-ual performance (Ereignis)." 6 This is certainly true.

Levinas articulates his ethics in dialogue with the Western philosophical tradition principally in his two major works: Although the phenomenological undertakings of Husserl and Heidegger remain a key point of reference for him, Levinas aims to create a space of transcendence from within the realm of light and appearance crucial to phenomenology *ibid.*: Apparently turning his back in his ethics on the conditions for seeing and being in the visible world, he questions two of the key senses fundamental to the production and reception of film. His main concepts in outlining the possibility of an ethical encounter in *Totality and Infinity* are the visage face and the caresse caress , both of which are theorized as giving rise to a relation to alterity never fully to be encompassed by any of the senses, least of all sight and touch. These sensory connections are totalizing gestures, for Levinas, which reduce alterity to our experience of it alone and thus shrink otherness to self-sameness, rather than creating a possibility for its emergence in and on its own terms. It is language, for Levinas, that allows such gestures to be transcended. It is for this reason that the visage is first and foremost a speaking face. This ethical injunction that the face speaks, and that cuts through the phenomenological world, has long prompted scholars to ask how his ethics comes into being. More recently, literary and film scholars have joined this debate and taken his work into the aesthetic dimension, moving from the being of life to that of art. Such a Levinasian move within film scholarship is not without its problems. Not only does his thinking bear a persistently interrogative relation to images, but his early work on aesthetics distances all art forms from his conception of ethics. Furthermore, his brief occasional references to film are made to support a philosophical argument rather than constituting a reflection on film *per se*. In two books, for example, Levinas draws on the films of Charlie Chaplin: Yet recent scholarship has begun nonetheless to explore more enabling and complex points of contact between central concepts in his work and film, as well as film theory. Film-makers have also engaged with his work, either by featuring references to his books in their films, or in their writings on their filmmaking. And Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne indicate their debt to Levinas in their writings, suggesting how their films work through his ethical themes, in terms of both how the films are made and the subjects they treat. Levinas marks a clear debt to Bergson throughout his career and refers to his work frequently. In the preface to the German edition of his text *Totality and Infinity* written in , he signals the importance of Bergsons work to his own. The difference between photography and cinema is set out on the basis of their contrasting relations to movement and time. Through his interest in the immobility of the artwork in the *entre temps* and his work on time elsewhere, Levinas allows us to rethink the relation between the photographic and the cinematic differently, without returning to a Bazinian conception of the emergence of the latter from the former, or a Deleuzian conception of the ontology of cinema in which the image is always already moving. Levinass observations on time, both with regard to the artwork and mortal life, provide another way of conceiving the ontology of cinema, and it is the relationship between death and time that is at stake. As with *Time and the Other*, Levinass later work on death and time is also a series of lectures, given at the Sorbonne in , and published in *Contrary to Heidegger*, though, it is not a being-towards-death that concerns him, and it is not the experience of death through which he will address the subject, but the way in which the death of the other concerns me more than my own death. Rather than use this death to think about our relation to time, Levinas reverses the philosophical logic of priority and uses time to think about death. In this, he locates himself closer to Ernst Bloch than any of the other philosophers he discusses Levinas Yet he also brings out a further relation to Bergson here. Although, as in the earlier work, he distances himself from Bergsons understanding of the *elan vital*, arguing that the equation of duration with this life-force excludes death, he refers to Bergsons later work and glimpses a relation to the other that is closer to his own sense of the bond between time and the other: But the vital impulse is not the ultimate signification of the time of Bergsonian duration. In *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, the duration that Creative Evolution considered as vital impulse becomes interhuman life. Duration becomes the fact that a man can appeal to the

interiority of the other man. Building on his previous works, Levinas conceives time as a relation to infinity rather than the limitation of being. The relation to death comes to us through our relation to the other, differently from in *Time and the Other*, even though the terminology and thinking are similar. Instead of my encounter with death-the-unknowable being traced in the face-to-face encounters with other people, death enters life through the loss of others and constitutes the self as a responsible survivor. A connection can be made to both the photographic and the cinematic dimensions through this focus on mortality. In contrasting ways, Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag also make the association between photography and mortal fragility. Barthes a; Sontag By enabling us to look beyond the Bergsonian equation of the *elan vital* with duration and its connection to cinema, this reading of Levinas suggests a connection between death and cinematic time. The *entre temps*, as we have seen, lies between death and life, and, as also observed, the space between these two extremes in theoretical discourse to date has tended predominantly to be mapped on to the distance between photography and film. In contrast, the levelling gesture of the Levinasian *entre temps* suggests that we might contest the life and mobility of the latter, as well as the fully fledged death of the former, thus bringing the two closer to one another than the varied theoretical distinctions of Bazin, Barthes and Deleuze have hitherto made possible. A Levinasian-inspired intervention in this debate is thus aligned, rather, with more recent discussions in photographic theory, which have sought to question any strict mapping of the binary of cinema-photography onto that of life-death. Bellon, *Remembrance of Things to Come*;] , but also in the presence of photographs in almost all of his other films – the life and death of the photographic and the filmic image are intimately interwoven and do not allow the photograph always to signify death, or the film image life. Yet there is still a difference between the two, as other theoretical positions also make clear. Mulvey speaks of death, rather than truth, at twenty-four frames per second Mulvey In keeping with this, work to date on Levinas and cinema has asked implicitly how the *entre temps* is brought back to the questions that Levinas asks with reference to being, or his challenge to ontology, as certain films have been explored in terms of the Levinasian themes that they feature. *Celeste* is closest to preserving film as an exemplification of the interval. Levinas's philosophy gives us pause if we are thinking film as a mobile life-force of duration, not only through his work on aesthetics, but also through his broader work on time. As we have seen, in Levinas's work on death and time, death enters life through contact with others: This contact gives rise to a new subjectivity – a rebirth of the subject – in a time instituted and propelled by the relation to alterity: As he writes in *Totality and Infinity*, there are ruptures in the continuity of time, but there is also continuation through these breaks. Death is rethought on the basis of time, not as an end, but as an encounter with uncertainty, with a future. To bring such Levinasian thinking to film is to bring life to the interval, and to bring the interval to life. What is born through this encounter is another way of thinking about time. This is not to deny the properties of the *entre temps*, since these are precisely what have allowed me here to mark out a difference between life and death in their conventional association with the filmic and the photographic dimensions, respectively, along with the possibility of seeing more than relentless mobility and duration in film, even when it is at rest. For Levinas, in the artwork, death is never really ever dead enough and it is the inability to connect with the time of life that prevents film, among other arts, from entering the ethical dimension. But the interval, while located outside time in one respect, also contains the time of life in and through its images. Jefferies's relations to the others he watches and has more direct contact with in his flat may never change, however many times we view *Rear Window*, but these encounters in the aesthetic dimension are not entirely separated from similar ones that might take place beyond this realm. Levinas's philosophy opens discussions of the filmic and the photographic to a different future, in which temporality is born of an encounter with alterity, the model for which is the Levinasian conception of death. Death brings uncertainty, rather than immobility or temporal stasis, and makes duration thinkable. This duration does not head towards death or override it, but encounters it as uncertainty within life. Thought through in these Levinasian terms, death lies at the heart of cinematic duration, and time is not solely a function of movement or its absence. Time enters cinematic images from the outside: By introducing his broader thinking on time to cinema it is possible to reintroduce the temporality of life and death to film, and to stage an encounter between the Levinasian *entre temps* and ethics. This philosophical encounter with film realizes the paradox of locating

the time of alterity within the instant that can stop. To think about cinema with Levinas is to be alive to temporal duration while marking time, and thus to participate in one of the many bloodstreams that circulate between art and life.

Chapter 2 : Emmanuel Levinas - Wikipedia

Levinas's philosophy has been called ethics. If ethics means rationalist self-legislation and freedom (deontology), the calculation of happiness (utilitarianism), or the cultivation of virtues (virtue ethics), then Levinas's philosophy is not an ethics.

NOTES I The correlation between knowledge, understood as disinterested contemplation, and being, is, according to our philosophical tradition, the very site of intelligibility, the occurrence of meaning sens. The comprehension of being " the semantics of this verb " would thus be the very possibility of or the occasion for wisdom and the wise and, as such, is first philosophy. The intellectual, and even spiritual life of the West, through the priority it gives to knowledge identified with Spirit, demonstrates its fidelity to the first philosophy of Aristotle, whether one interprets the latter according to the ontology of the Book I of the *Metaphysics* or according to the theology or onto-theology of Book V where the ultimate explanation of intelligibility in terms of the primary causality of God is a reference to a God defined by being qua being. The correlation between knowledge and being, or the thematics of contemplation, indicates both a difference and a difference that is overcome in the true. Here the known is understood and so appropriated by knowledge, and as it were freed of its otherness. In the realm of truth, being, as the other of thought becomes the characteristic property of thought as knowledge. The ideal of rationality or of sense sens begins already to appear as the immanence of the real to reason; just as, in being, a privilege is granted to the present, which is presence to thought, of which the future and the past are modalities or modifications: Knowledge as perception, concept, comprehension, refers back to an act of grasping. The metaphor should be taken literally: The immanence of the known to the act of knowing is already the embodiment of seizure. Things contain the promise of satisfaction " their concreteness puts them on a scale fit for a knowing form of thought. The rationality of beings stems from their presence and adequation. The operations of knowledge reestablish rationality behind the diachrony of becoming in which presence occurs or is foreseen. Knowledge is re-presentation, a return to presence, and nothing may remain other to it. But it is a notion that allows a second one to be sustained, the notion of the pure theoretic, of its freedom, of the equivalence between wisdom and freedom, of that partial coincidence of the human domain with the divine life of which Aristotle speaks at the end of the seventh section of Book Ten of the *Ethics*. Here already the strange and contradictory concept of a finite freedom begins to take shape. Knowing is the psyche or pneumatic force of thought, even in the act of feeling or willing. It is to be found in the concept of consciousness at the dawn of the modern age with the interpretation of the concept of cogito given by Descartes in his Second Meditation. The whole of human lived experience, in the period up to and above all including the present, has been expressed in terms of experience, that is, has been converted into accepted doctrine, teachings, sciences. Relationships with neighbours, with social groups, with God equally represent collective and religious experiences. Modernity will subsequently be distinguished by the attempt to develop from the identification and appropriation of being by knowledge toward the identification of being and knowledge. The passage from the cogito to the sum leads to that point where the free activity of knowledge, an activity alien to any external goal, will also find itself on the side of what is known. This free activity of knowledge will also come to constitute the mystery of being qua being, whatever is known by knowledge le connu du savoir. The wisdom of first philosophy is reduced to self-consciousness. Identical and non-identical are identified. The labour of thought wins out over the otherness of things and men. Since Hegel, any goal considered alien to the disinterested acquisition of knowledge has been subordinated to the freedom of knowledge as a science savoir ; and within this freedom, being itself is from that point understood as the active affirming of that same being, as the strength and strain of being. Modern man persists in his being as a sovereign who is merely concerned to maintain the powers of his sovereignty. Everything that is possible is permitted. In this way the experience of Nature and Society would gradually get the better of any exteriority. Only by death is this freedom thwarted. The obstacle of death is insurmountable, inexorable and fundamentally incomprehensible. The recognition of finitude will of course characterize a new test for ontology. But finitude and death will not have called into question the bonne conscience with which

the freedom of knowledge operates. They will simply have put a check on its powers. II In this essay we wish to ask whether thought understood as knowledge, since the ontology of the first philosophy, has exhausted the possible modes of meaning for thought, and whether, beyond knowledge and its hold on being, a more urgent form does not emerge, that of wisdom. We propose to begin with the notion of intentionality, as it figures in Husserlian phenomenology, which is one of the culminating points in Western philosophy. The equivalence of thought and knowledge in relation to being is here formulated by Husserl in the most direct manner. Now, within consciousness "which is consciousness of something knowledge is, by the same token, a relation to an other of consciousness and almost the aim or the will of that other which is an object. It is a hold on being which equals a constitution of that being. This Transcendental Reduction suspends all independence in the world other than that of consciousness itself, and causes the world to be rediscovered as noema. As Merleau-Ponty in particular has shown, the I that constitutes the world comes up against a sphere in which it is by its very flesh implicated; it is implicated in what it otherwise would have constituted and so is implicated in the world. But it is present in the world as it is present in its own body, an intimate incarnation which no longer purely and simply displays the exteriority of an object. A non-intentional consciousness operating, if one may put it like this, unknowingly as knowledge, as a non-objectivizing knowledge. Consciousness of consciousness, indirect, implicit and aimless, without any initiative that might refer back to an ego; passive like time passing and aging me without my intervening sans moi. The intentional consciousness of reflection, in taking as its object the transcendental ego, along with its mental acts and states, may also thematize and grasp supposedly implicit modes of non-intentional lived experience. It is invited to do this by philosophy in its fundamental project which consists in enlightening the inevitable transcendental naivety of a consciousness forgetful of its horizon, of its implicit content and even of the time it lives through. One may ask, however, whether, beneath the gaze of reflected consciousness taken as self-consciousness, the non-intentional, experienced as the counterpoint to the intentional, does not conserve and free its true meaning. The critique of introspection as traditionally practiced has always been suspicious of a modification that a supposedly spontaneous consciousness might undergo beneath the scrutinizing, thematizing, objectivizing and indiscreet gaze of reflection, and has seen this as a violation or distortion of some sort of secret. This is a critique which is always refuted only to be reborn. The question is what exactly happens, then, in this non-reflective consciousness considered merely to be pre-reflective and the implicit partner of an intentional consciousness which, in reflection, intentionally aims for the thinking self soi , as if the thinking ego moi appeared in the world and belonged to it? What might this supposed confusion or implication really mean? One cannot simply refer to the formal notion of potentiality. Might there not be grounds for distinguishing between the envelopment of the particular in the conceptual, the implicit understanding of the presupposition in a notion, the potentiality of what is considered possible within the horizon, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the intimacy of the non-intentional within what is known as pre-reflective consciousness and which is duration itself? As a confused, implicit consciousness preceding all intentions "or as duration freed of all intentions " it is less an act than a pure passivity. Phenomenological analysis, of course, describes such a pure duration of time within reflection, as being intentionally structured by a play of retentions and protentions which, in the very duration of time, at least remain non-explicit and suppose, in that they represent a flow, another sort of time. This duration remains free from the sway of the will, absolutely outside all activity of the ego, and exactly like the aging process which is probably the perfect model of passive synthesis, a lapse of time no act of remembrance, reconstructing the past, could possibly reverse. Does not the temporality of implicit time, like the implication of the implicit, here signify otherwise than as knowledge taken on the run, otherwise than a way of representing presence or the non-presence of the future and the past? This implication of the nonintentional is a form of mauvaise conscience: It has no name, no situation, no status. It has a presence afraid of presence, afraid of the insistence of the identical ego, stripped of all qualities. It dreads the insistence in the return to self that is a necessary part of identification. This is either mauvaise conscience or timidity; it is not guilty, but accused; and responsible for its very presence. It has not yet been invested with any attributes or justified in any way. One comes not into the world but into question. This questions the affirmation and strengthening of being found in the famous and facilely rhetorical quest for the meaning of life, which

suggests that the absolute ego, already endowed with meaning by its vital, psychic and social forces, or its transcendental sovereignty, then returned to its *mauvaise* conscience. This *mauvaise* conscience is not the finitude of existence signaled by anguish. My death, which is always going to be premature, does perhaps put a check on being which, qua being, perseveres in being, but in anguish this scandal fails to shake the *bonne* conscience of being, or the morality founded upon the inalienable right of the *conatus* which is also the right and the *bonne* conscience of freedom. However, it is in the passivity of the non-intentional, in the way it is spontaneous and precedes the formulation of any metaphysical ideas on the subject, that the very justice of the position within being is questioned, a position which asserts itself with intentional thought, knowledge and a grasp of the here and now. What one sees in this questioning is being as *mauvaise* conscience; to be open to question, but also to questioning, to have to respond. Language is born in responsibility. One has to speak, to say I, to be in the first person, precisely to be *me moi*. A fear for all the violence and murder my existing might generate, in spite of its conscious and intentional innocence. In my philosophical essays, I have spoken a lot about the face of the Other as being the original site of the sensible. May I now briefly take up again the description, as I now see it, of the irruption of the face into the phenomenal order of appearances? But always the face shows through these forms. Prior to any particular expression and beneath all particular expressions, which cover over and protect with an immediately adopted face or countenance, there is the nakedness and destitution of the expression as such, that is to say extreme exposure, defencelessness, vulnerability itself. From the beginning there is a face to face steadfast in its exposure to invisible death, to a mysterious forsakenness. Beyond the visibility of whatever is unveiled, and prior to any knowledge about death, mortality lies in the Other. Does not expression resemble more closely this extreme exposure than it does some supposed recourse to a code? True self-expression stresses the nakedness and defencelessness that encourages and directs the violence of the first crime: The first murderer probably does not realize the result of the blow he is about to deliver, but his violent design helps him to find the line with which death may give an air of unimpeachable rectitude to the face of the neighbour; the line is traced like the trajectory of the blow that is dealt and the arrow that kills. But, in its expression, in its mortality, the face before me summons me, calls for me, begs for me, as if the invisible death that must be faced by the Other, pure otherness, separated, in some way, from any whole, were my business. The Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question. Responsibility for the Other, for the naked face of the first individual to come along. A responsibility that goes beyond what I may or may not have done to the Other or whatever acts I may or may not have committed, as if I were devoted to the other man before being devoted to myself. A guiltless responsibility, whereby I am none the less open to an accusation of which no alibi, spatial or temporal, could clear me. It is as if the other established a relationship or a relationship were established whose whole intensity consists in not presupposing the idea of community. A responsibility stemming from a time before my freedom “before my *moi* beginning, before any present. A fraternity existing in extreme separation. Before, but in what past? Not in the time preceding the present, in which I might have contracted any commitments. A responsibility for my neighbour, for the other man, for the stranger or sojourner, to which nothing in the rigorously ontological order binds me “nothing in the order of the thing, of the something, of number or causality. It is the responsibility of a hostage which can be carried to the point of being substituted for the other person and demands an infinite subjection of subjectivity. Unless this anarchic responsibility, which summons me from nowhere into a present time, is perhaps the measure or the manner or the system of an immemorial freedom that is even older than being, or decisions, or deeds. V This summons to responsibility destroys the formulas of generality by which my knowledge *savoir* or acquaintance *connaissance* of the other man re-presents him to me as my fellow man. In the face of the other man I am inescapably responsible and consequently the unique and chosen one. By this freedom, humanity in me *moi* “that is, humanity as me “signifies, in spite of its ontological contingency of finitude and mortality, the anteriority and uniqueness of the non-interchangeable. Emotion therefore consists in being moved “being scared by something, overjoyed by something, saddened by something, but also in feeling joy or sadness for oneself.

Chapter 3 : Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics - Edith Wyschogrod - Google Books

Abstract. The motif of the 'drama of being' is a dominant thread that spans the entirety of Levinas's six decades of authorship. As we will see, from the start of his writing career, Levinas consciously frames the tension between ontology and ethics in a dramatic form.

Basic Philosophical Writings Outside the Subject, a collection of texts, old and new on philosophers, language, and politics. The annual colloquium at Cerisy-la-Salle publishes a volume devoted to him. He reconceived transcendence as a need for escape, and work out a new logic of lived time in that project. His transcendence is less transcendence-in-the-world than transcendence through and because of sensibility. This approach to transcendence as evasion poses the question of mortality, finite being, and so, infinity. But he would enquire: And yet modern sensibility wrestles with problems that indicate the abandonment of this concern with transcendence. As if it had the certainty that the idea of the limit could not apply to the existence of what is—and as if modern sensibility perceived in being a defect still more profound. But how do we know this, and from what perspective do we contemplate Being as finite? The decision about the ultimate meaning of the infinite is not made in the essay. It returns as a theme in the subsequent essays, however. Following the leitmotif of our irrepressible need to escape, Levinas examines a host of attempted and disappointed transcendences: In these possibilities, the corporeal self is posited, set down as a substance, in its existence. He will therefore concentrate on what it means for a human being to posit itself, in an act that is not already abstracted from its everyday life. I am my joy or my pain, if provisionally. Escape represents, for Levinas, a positive, dynamic need. But needs are not equivalent to mere suffering. Within many needs is the anticipation of their fulfillment. If need, whether for sustenance or diversion, cannot assure an enduring transcendence of everyday existence, it nevertheless beckons and enriches us, even if it can sometimes be experienced as oppressive. In this youthful work, Levinas thus rethinks need in light of fullness rather than privation, as was commonly done. In so doing, he opens a different understanding of existence itself. Whether it is experienced by pleasure or suffering, need is the ground of our existence. And it suggests that the deep motivation of need is to get out of the being that we ourselves are—our situation and our embodiment. Pleasure and pain are intensities: The priority of the present, concentrated into an extended moment is opened up through sensibility and affectivity. In pleasure as in pain, we need—not out of lack—but in desire or in hope. That presence is modalized through our manifold sensations, emotions and states of mind. In , Levinas was convinced that through sensation and states of mind, we discover both the need to escape ourselves and the futility of getting out of existence. In the physical torment of nausea, we experience Being in its simplest, most oppressive neutrality. To this, Levinas adds three provocative themes. Second, nausea is not simply a physiological event. If nausea shows us, dramatically, how existence encircles us on all sides, to the point of submerging us, then social and political actuality can also nauseate. Being is existence, but it is our existence. The mark of our existence is need, or the non-acceptance of neutral Being. How shall we conceptualize a sensuous need to transcend Being? Embodied need is not an illusion; but is transcendence one? They inflect the notion of transcendence, away from the partial transcendence of need and pleasure, toward the promise of fecundity. In late , Levinas was mobilized as a reserve officer in the French army and sent to the front, where he was captured less than a year later. While interned in the Fallingsbotel camp near Hanover, Levinas studied Hegel and began work on Existence and Existents. There is no doubt that the uncertainty about his wife and daughter, not to mention rumors about the liquidation of the Jews of Lithuania, influenced his work at this time. A more critical evaluation of the period can be seen in his conception of Being in Totality and Infinity. It is as though it were divided between the Being of the created world and the darkness out of which light was created. This shifts the phenomenological focus onto Being as light and visibility, in which we can constitute objects at a distance and Being as the dark turmoil into which we sink, in insomnia. We fall asleep, curled about ourselves. To put it succinctly, consciousness, with its moods and activity, begins and ends with itself. It awakens, acts, and falls asleep. The question of transcendence continues in these middle-period essays. The partial transcendences of pleasure and voluptuousness, sketched in , receive a fuller development and variations.

As to the son, he is myself and not-myself, Levinas will say. The open future of the family responds to two significant limits imposed on human knowledge and representation: Hence he will qualify it as a radical alterity; the same sort of alterity as that which the other human being presents me. Against these enigmas, every mode of comprehension runs aground. For this reason, Levinas insists that death is really the impossibility of all our possibilities. The other person is an event I can neither predict nor control. Two reversals should be noted relative to *The second reversal concerns moods themselves. All of these open Dasein to being and the world. In his middle period, Levinas also addresses our openness to the world, privileging it over questions of Being. However, instead of adumbrating revelatory moods, Levinas has recourse to bodily states like fatigue, indolence, and insomnia, in which the gap between self and I is clearest. Themes of joy and love of life appear in regard to the world, because the world is now understood as light. Ever in search of a primordial, sense-rooted, relation to the world, Levinas situates his discovery, offering a profoundly Husserlian insight: We see at work, here, a significant rethinking of the transcendental-anthropological distinction expressed as a priori and a posteriori. Being, as we noted, also is dark indeterminacy. Having suspended the binaries of de facto inside and outside as part of his own phenomenological bracketing,[21] Levinas will approach this indeterminacy not as objectivity, but as something revealed through mood. And it is not revealed through mere anxiety. Nevertheless, it is a beginning. Insomniac and in the throes of horror, the hypostasis falls asleep. Or again, it lights a light and reassembles its consciousness. But the il y a gives the lie to the question: Why is there Being instead of simply nothing? Nothing, as pure absence, may be thinkable, but it is unimaginable. Indeterminate Being fills in all the gaps, all the temporal intervals, while consciousness arises from it in an act of self-originating concentration. This is the first sketch of Being as totality. It hearkens to a call that comes not from neutral Being but from the Other. These themes constitute the core of Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority. For Levinas, to escape deontology and utility, ethics must find its ground in an experience that cannot be integrated into logics of control, prediction, or manipulation. That is, it cannot step outside the totalizing logics of metaphysical systems, without supposing them or restoring them. There is no formal bridge, for Levinas, between practical and pure reason. Philosophy in the twentieth century Heidegger, the Frankfurt School, deconstruction has shown, at least, that the universality of concepts and the necessity carried by transcendental arguments are simply not sufficient to prevent the triumph of ends-rationality and instrumentalization. Ethics is therefore either an affair of inserting particulars into abstract scenarios, or ethics itself speaks out of particularity about the first human particularity: For much Jewish thought after Kant, the ethical message of the biblical prophets held a dignity equal to the justice aimed at in Jewish law. Levinas carries this insight into phenomenology, starting with a relationship that is secular, yet non-finite not conceptually limitable , because it continuously opens past the immediacy of its occurring, toward a responsibility that repeats and increases as it repeats. The new framework of transcendence as human responsibility involves an extensive exploration of the face-to-face relationship, and it opens onto questions of social existence and justice. Finally, Levinas approaches to Being more polemically as exteriority. We will examine these themes in what follows. Levinas again reframes labor, less as mastery and humanization of nature, and more as the creation of a store of goods with which an other can be welcomed. Thanks to his joy in living and his creation of a home, the human being is able to give and to receive the other into his space. On the basis of these descriptions, transcendence comes to pass in several stages. Second, in accounting for itself, the subject approached by the other engages the first act of dialogue. Out of this, discourse eventually arises. The unfolding of discourse carries a trace of ethical investiture and self-accounting, and may become conversation and teaching. As the breadth of dialogical engagement expands, the trace of the encounter with the other becomes attenuated; and this, to the point where the meaning of justice poses a question. Is the essence of justice the reparation of wrongs; is it disinterested equity, or is it the interest of the stronger? Because justice is clearly all these things, it constitutes a kind of pivot between the mechanism evident in Being and the supererogatory gesture of responsibility. In the family, election by the father and service to the brothers, set forth a justice more decisively conditioned by face-to-face responsibility than the justice of the State could ever be. Because Being is accepted in its Hobbesian character as mechanistic causality and competition, human time will not be situated firstly in social*

time with the invention of clocks and calendars. History, too, seems to be a history of metaphysicians: Levinas describes history as violence, punctuated by extremes of war and annihilation.

Chapter 4 : Emmanuel Levinas: Philosophy, Photography and Film – Literary Theory and Criticism

Levinas and the History of Philosophy. Levinas has sometimes been reproached for a certain laxness toward the history of philosophy. By dint of denouncing, as the central thread of this long history, the persistence or recurrence of an ambition to totalization, he would have failed to recognize the diversity of steps articulated along its course, thus ceding to the very thing he placed in.

How to Read Sartre New York: The Art of Existing Atlantic Highlands: Race, Hybridity , and Miscegenation Bristol: Race and Anthropology Bristol: Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy Bloomington: Indiana University Press, American Theories of Polygenesis Bristol: The Cambridge Companion to Levinas Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century Bristol: Texas Tech University Press, The Idea of Race Indianapolis: With Tommy Lee Lott. The Provocation of Levinas New York: Parousia Press, ; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, [United States]. Time and Metaphysics Coventry: Routledge, , Race as a Border Concept," Research in Phenomenology 42 "The Truths of Religions," Research in Phenomenology 39 State University of New York Press, Cornell University Press, With Anika Maaza Mann. Northwestern University Press, Hermeneutics and the History of Philosophy Albany: Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger Evanston: A Critical Reader Oxford: A Critical Reader Oxford, Blackwell, Essays in Honor of William J. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Alterity and the Hermeneutic Ideal," in Lawrence K. Essays in His Earliest Thought Albany: Mandela and the Struggle against Apartheid," in Gary B. Neues Jahrbuch 18 Who is the Other? Destruktion and Deconstruction ," in Diane P. The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter Albany: Rethinking the Other The First Ten Years Dordrecht: Philosophy and Beyond," in Hugh J.

Chapter 5 : Emmanuel Levinas - Philosophy - Oxford Bibliographies

Ethics as First Philosophy' is a clear and powerful summary of Levinas's methodical and yet radical move away from Husserl's transcendental idealism and Heidegger's hermeneutics towards the ethical question of the meaning of being, as we encounter it in the face-to-face relation.

His education familiarized him with the Hebrew Bible and the Russian novelists. After having studied at the gymnasiums in Kaunas and Charkow, Ukraine, he traveled to Strasbourg, where he studied philosophy from to He spent the academic year of 1928 in Freiburg, where he attended the last seminars given by Edmund Husserl and the lectures and seminars of Martin Heidegger. In he was appointed professor of philosophy at the University of Poitiers and in at the University of Nanterre. In he moved to the Sorbonne, where he became an honorary professor in Levinas died on December 25, 1973, a few days before his 90th birthday. Levinas describes it as a formless and obscure night and a silent murmur, an anonymous and chaotic atmosphere or field of forces from which no being can escape. It threatens the existing entities by engulfing and suffocating them. As such, being is horrible, not because it would kill—death is not an evasion from it—but because of its depersonalizing character. All beings are caught in the anonymity of this primordial materiality—much different from the giving essence of *es gibt* as described by Heidegger. The "totality" of the title stands for the absolutization of a panoramic perspective from which reality is understood as an all-encompassing universe. All kinds of relation, separation, exteriority, and alterity are then reduced to internal moments of one totality. The resulting tautology is an egology because the totalization is operated by the consciousness of an ego that does not recognize any irreducible heteronomy. The relation between the ego and the infinite is one of transcendence: The infinite remains exterior to consciousness, although this is essentially related to its "height. As soon as I am confronted, I discover myself to be under an absolute obligation. On this level is and ought are inseparable. The other appears primarily not as equal to me but rather as "higher" and commanding me. The relationship is described as nonchosen responsibility, substitution, obsession, being hostage, persecution. Subjectivity the "me" of *me voici* is determined as a nonchosen being-for-the-other and, thus, as basically nonidentical with itself, a passivity more or otherwise passive than the passivity that is opposed to activity. Subjectivity is primarily sensibility, being touched and affected by the other, vulnerability. In the course of his analyses Levinas discovered that the other, me, and the transcendence that relates and separates them do not fit into the framework of phenomenology: Neither the other nor I me is phenomenon; transcendence does not have the structure of intentionality. Through phenomenology Levinas thus arrived at another level of thinking. If ontology is the study of this being, it is not able to express the other, transcendence, and subjectivity. The other, subjectivity, and transcendence—but then also morality, affectivity, death, suffering, freedom, love, history, and many other quasi-phenomena—resist, not only phenomenology and ontology, but all kinds of objectification and thematization. As soon as they are treated in a reflective discourse, they are converted into a *said dit*. The saying *dire*, in which the "otherwise than being" that which is not a phenomenon, a being, or a theme addresses itself to an addressee, is lost in the text of the *said*. However, thematization and objectification are inevitable, especially in philosophy and science, but also in the practical dimensions of law, economy, and politics. The organization of justice cannot do without generalization and grouping of individuals into totalities. The transition from the asymmetrical relation between the other and me to the generalities of justice is founded in the fact that the other human who, here and now, obligates me infinitely somehow represents all other humans. How does the intersubjective and asymmetric transcendence differ from the relationship to God? God is neither an object nor a you; no human being can meet with God directly, but God has left a trace. The infinite responsibility of the one for the other refers to an election that precedes freedom. In coming from an immemorial, anachronical "past," responsibility indicates the "preoriginary" "illeity" of God. The *il* or *ille* of "the most high" is sharply distinguished from the chaotic anonymity of *il y a*; the dimensions of economy, morality, and justice separate the indeterminacy of being from the beyond-all-determinacy of God. However, as the practical and theoretical recognition of the relationship between God and humans, religion cannot be separated from ethics: The only way to venerate God is through

devotion to human others. Besides the two books summarized here, Levinas wrote many articles. Like all other philosophers, Levinas has convictions that cannot be reduced to universally shared experiences, common sense, or purely rational principles. In addition to his philosophical work he wrote extensively on Jewish questions from an orthodox Jewish, and especially Talmudic, point of view. Phenomenological rigor and emphasis are typical of his method, even where he points beyond the dimensions of phenomena and conceptuality. The most important philosophical books of Levinas are: *Alcan*, ; 2nd ed. Northwestern University Press, Paris, ; 2nd ed. *Lingis as Existence and Existents*. Montpellier, 2nd ed. *Cohen as Time and the Other*. Duquesne University Press, Partially translated by A. Lingis in *Collected Philosophical Papers v. Lingis as Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Lingis as *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Contains the English translation of twelve thematic essays from several volumes and journals. Indiana University Press, *The Provocation of Levinas: Face to Face with Levinas*. State University of New York Press, *Ethics as First Philosophy: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Purdue University Press, *The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics*. Adriaan Peperzak Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography.

Chapter 6 : Face-to-face (philosophy) - Wikipedia

French academy.2 It is an unusual book in the history of philosophy in that its pages are full of vivid images alongside complicated philo- sophical formulations.

Published in more than twenty-five books spanning over eighty years, his oeuvre can be divided into three categories: Although references will be made to the second and third categories, the first remains the central focus of this article. Of Heidegger, he wrote an uncompromising philosophical critique that addressed the secondary role played by ethics in his phenomenology—a critique he then expanded to the Western philosophical tradition as a whole. Not unlike Plato centuries before, although in a different manner and with very different implications, Levinas contended that the question of the Good has priority over that of Being, since interhuman relationality precedes any discourse or logos about beings—human or otherwise. It is this ability for responding to the other, this command that I cannot efface even when I ignore it that allows for other discourses—such as ontology, epistemology, or political philosophy—to make sense at all. The consequences of this original interpretation of the nature and meaning of ethics are deep and manifold. Rather, its aim is to provide the reader with a selection of texts that represent the wide array of philosophical questions addressed by Levinas and his commentators. Given the immense number of publications by Levinas, this entry proposes a commented list of selected major works and articles by the author instead of referencing complete collections, for instance. The secondary literature is then organized by themes that correspond to areas of research—both well established and new—within Levinas studies. General Overviews Bergo is a good online introduction available for free. Davis and Hand serve the similar purpose of introducing Levinas to readers unfamiliar with his thought. Edited by Edward N. Chronology and bibliography updated by Gabriel Malenfant. The biographical information and extensive bibliography uncommented, however can be useful for researchers. Edited by Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, 1— Cambridge Companions to Philosophy. Cambridge University Press, University of Notre Dame Press, London and New York: A useful commented bibliography can also be found therein. The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas. Cambridge University Press, , The Cambridge Introduction is a very engaging guide on how to read the primary sources, even though it may be somewhat difficult for undergraduates. The book will however be helpful to readers who already have a background in philosophy without having encountered Levinas. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Purdue University Series in the History of Philosophy. Purdue University Press, Users without a subscription are not able to see the full content on this page. Please subscribe or login. How to Subscribe Oxford Bibliographies Online is available by subscription and perpetual access to institutions. For more information or to contact an Oxford Sales Representative click here.

Chapter 7 : Project MUSE - Levinas's Philosophy of Time

philosophy after Plato is the history of reducing the other to the same. For the sake of a genuinely ethical relation, the other must be maintained against reduction to the same.

Because of the disruptions of World War I, the family moved to Charkow in Ukraine in 1914, where they stayed during the Russian revolutions of February and October. In 1918, his family returned to Lithuania. Levinas began his philosophical studies at the University of Strasbourg in 1921, [8] and his lifelong friendship with the French philosopher Maurice Blanchot. In 1928, he went to the University of Freiburg for two semesters to study phenomenology under Edmund Husserl. At Freiburg he also met Martin Heidegger, whose philosophy greatly impressed him. Levinas became a naturalized French citizen in 1938. Levinas was assigned to a special barrack for Jewish prisoners, who were forbidden any form of religious worship. Blanchot, at considerable personal risk, also saw to it that Levinas was able to keep in contact with his immediate family through letters and other messages. He was also a Professor at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. In 1945, he was awarded the Balzan Prize for Philosophy. According to his obituary in *The New York Times*, [14] Levinas came to regret his early enthusiasm for Heidegger, after the latter joined the Nazis. Among his most famous students is Rabbi Baruch Garzon from Tetouan Morocco, who learnt Philosophy with Levinas at the Sorbonne, and later went on to become one of the most important Rabbis of the Spanish-speaking world. Philosophy[edit] In the 1950s, Levinas emerged from the circle of intellectuals surrounding Jean Wahl as a leading French thinker. For Levinas, the Other is not knowable and cannot be made into an object of the self, as is done by traditional metaphysics which Levinas called "ontology". In his view, responsibility toward the Other precedes any "objective searching after truth". Levinas derives the primacy of his ethics from the experience of the encounter with the Other. Even murder fails as an attempt to take hold of this otherness. While critical of traditional theology, Levinas does require that a "trace" of the Divine be acknowledged within an ethics of Otherness. This is especially evident in his thematization of debt and guilt. It is as though I were responsible for his mortality, and guilty for surviving. I owe the Other everything, the Other owes me nothing. The trace of the Other is the heavy shadow of God, the God who commands, "Thou shalt not kill! Nevertheless, the divinity of the trace is also undeniable: Following *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas later argued that responsibility for the other is rooted within our subjective constitution. It should be noted that the first line of the preface of this book is "everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality. Subjectivity, Levinas argued, is primordially ethical, not theoretical: To meet the Other is to have the idea of Infinity. He had a major influence on the younger, but more well-known Jacques Derrida, whose seminal *Writing and Difference* contains an essay, "Violence and Metaphysics", that was instrumental in expanding interest in Levinas in France and abroad. In a memorial essay for Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion claimed that "If one defines a great philosopher as someone without whom philosophy would not have been what it is, then in France there are two great philosophers of the 20th Century: Ettinger [27] [28] have defended him against this charge, increasing interest in his work in the 1990s brought a reevaluation of the possible misogyny of his account of the feminine, as well as a critical engagement with his French nationalism in the context of colonialism. Among the most prominent of these are critiques by Simon Critchley and Stella Sandford. This tradition strongly influenced many generations of students. In his book *Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption: Time, Ethics, and the Feminine*, author Sam B. Girgus argues that Levinas has dramatically affected films involving redemption. A list of works, translated into English but not appearing in any collections, may be found in Critchley, S. Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. *La notion du temps* with N. *Fraterniser sans se convertir* *An Essay on Exteriority* *Essays on Judaism* *Quatre lectures talmudiques* *Sur Maurice Blanchot* *Of God Who Comes to Mind* *Ethique et infini* *Ethics and Infinity: Dialogues of Emmanuel Levinas and Philippe Nemo* *Discussing Sacha Sosno*, trans. Art and Text winter, 2005.

Chapter 8 : Levinas: Ethics as First Philosophy () | Philosophical Explorations

Emmanuel Lévinas: Emmanuel Lévinas, Lithuanian-born French philosopher renowned for his powerful critique of the preeminence of ontology (the philosophical study of being) in the history of Western philosophy, particularly in the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger ().

Introduced and annotated by Jacques Rolland. Translated by Bettina Bergo. Stanford University Press, , pp. Michau Other Voices, v. Michau, all rights reserved. Originally published in , this English translation and publication of *On Escape* brings the reader closer to the early thoughts and writings of Emmanuel Levinas than previous publications. His first major original manuscript after his dissertation on Husserl's theory of intuition, *Existence and Existents*, would not appear until , and the lectures collected and published as *Time and the Other* not until , so the publication of this text should prove to be indispensable to English-reading audiences who have interests in Levinas' early work, as well as that of twentieth century Continental European philosophy. Here traditionally accepted phenomenological and existential concepts are introduced, studied, and discussed, such as the following: Rolland rightly observes that the task of *On Escape* is to investigate the "signification of the word being" 5. By doing this, we are "renewing the ancient problem" What does one wish to escape from? Where does one escape to? Levinas "shows us precisely that to be a need to get out, but which does not desire to go anywhere in particular It is thus vital that we begin to think beyond being, beyond traditional conceptions of metaphysics and ontology. For being itself is this escape. Being, as Heidegger discovered, is not to be seen as a noun, a thing-in-itself, complete and total, but rather as "pure verblativity" 11 , an infinite "saying" that is not reducible to certain instances of "said". His allusions and indebtedness to other philosophies and philosophers are not always fully explicated; thus the complicated nature of this text. Self-sufficiency and the individual autonomy of the "I" are shown by Levinas to be the goals of the "bourgeois" philosophical read: We are obsessed with "things," material goods, which we can manipulate and control. We defer the enjoyment of today for the sake of the tomorrow "to come. Levinas intends to dis-cover the precondition for such a position, and thus reverse its thrust and pervasiveness. He notes that escape, or ex-cendence, is what traditional philosophers abhor, because we have not adequately described all of existence properly just yet. The escape that philosophy desires is twopronged: Levinas writes, "Escape is the quest for the marvelous," the need to "transcend the limits of our finite being" Human being is "chained" to its finitude, its destructability, such that, in the desire for escape, "the I flees itself" Levinas ends this section by noting the observation that "the need for escape This is an original and fundamentally different discovery than those of previous philosophers. The desire to escape rekindles the "ancient problem of being qua being" *ibid.* Ex-cendence, or the "getting out of being," is the reach for the infinite. Being is then not seen as a desire to escape, but Being is escape itself. The outward movement of the I challenges the original notion of the self-identical, self-sufficient ego presumed by previous philosophies. Being itself is seen as an incomplete notion, where need and lack are "intimately tied to being" The lack of a complete and total Being leave us with the notion of need. It appears that, in most cases, the object of need ought to satisfy, or "round out" the desire for it. To show the need to escape, Levinas here investigates the situation of malaise. Malaise is here shown to be an active situation of discomfort, and we could perhaps see it in two ways: Either way, the situation of malaise reveals the subject her finitude, her non-completeness. Usual characterizations of the "real" define it as full or complete. The individual suffering from a malaise would then be seen as less than real in some sense, then. Once a need is satisfied, we are temporarily pacified. This need, as all needs are wont to do, inevitably come back. Levinas remarks that "not only are needs reborn, but disappointment also follows their satisfaction" Levinas notes that, in the phenomenology of malaise, the human condition is, in a sense, revealed to us. Malaise, among other conditions, "brings us closer to the situation that is the fundamental event of our being: In the pleasurable, we see the satisfaction of our need, want, or desire. We have hunger, we feel lonely, we need to use the washroom. In such a situation, we temporarily abandon the usual plane of existence, in that oneself is lost in the moment of pleasure. Quite often, we take great pleasure in re-connecting with an old friend or family member. As many males know, some of us make special room in our days for a restroom

break. One thus escapes, if for only a moment. But the moment feels like an eternity—time seems to slow down although this promise, this desire, is never completely fulfilled. We read that, not only pleasure, but also need is a liberation from Being itself. However, this satisfaction or pleasure is an escape that fails, as we feel hungry, lonely, or need to relieve ourselves once again. At the moment of discovering the failure of pleasure to escape being, one is left in a state of shame. Levinas here shifts the discussion to a brief exploration of this phenomenon. At this point, they discover that they are naked, and thus feel ashamed of their situation. They then choose to hide their nudity. Levinas observes, "Shame arises each time we are unable to make others forget our basic nudity" Because she is faced with herself, she has no option but to take responsibility for herself and her actions. Here we have a situation of a "self confronted with itself" 68 , where the cause for such malaise comes from within—we are "revolted from the inside" Rolland writes that "nausea is characterized by an essential indeterminacy" 17 ; when one is nauseated, she is ill at ease, and wishes the situation to quell itself, yet it is not in her immediate power to be rid of the condition. Moreover, the stigma of the dis-ease is often difficult to determine. Is she nervous about a pending decision? Did she eat some bad pork? Are the waves of the ocean getting to be too much? Are the scenes on the movie screen too gory to handle? Is it some of the above, all of the above, or none of the above? He observes that "nausea is not reducible to the determinacy of the object that caused it; nausea lays bare the essential solitude of the being-there it strikes, and manifests nothingness" In this situation, "the existent is submerged by its existence" Levinas observes that "nausea reveals to us the presence of being in all its impotence" Nausea itself confronts the nauseated in all of her nakedness, in her "pure being. In his seventh segment, Levinas begins to summarize his findings. He remarks, "It thus appears that at the root of need there is not a lack of being, but, on the contrary, a plenitude of being" Need is not intended to complete the finitude of an existent, but rather to "release" or "escape" from being itself. An adequate phenomenology of the lived experience of need would reveal the imperfection, even the "powerlessness" of the subject. The imperfect nature of our existence reveals our finitude, and here we have what I consider to be the most original, insightful and contestable claims that Levinas advances in *On Escape*: It is our existence itself that has limits, needs, and wishes to escape. Essentially incomplete, partial, and needing to evade, existents are fooling themselves when they think that theirs is the "be all and end all" of existence. For, as Levinas maintains, "limitation is the mark of the existence of the existent" Here Levinas concludes his reflections by revisiting the point that, throughout the history of Western philosophy, the problem of Being has yet to be either fully theorized or transcended—we are stuck in a situation of "ontologism. Reversing the trend of Western thought as we interpret it, Levinas here and will later more fully develop the argument that "knowledge is precisely that which remains to be done when everything is completed" In his later Talmudic studies, Levinas, in good Jewish fashion, will assert that knowledge comes after the doing—we will do and we will hear. From their perspective, knowledge and choice are supposed to precede activity, whereas for Levinas, wisdom is that which comes after the acceptance of responsibility Commandment, mitzvot and action. Rolland discerns that "the essence of humanity is no longer in freedom but in a kind of bondage" 31 , and this reversal is one that Levinas will later take up and label the situation of being "held hostage" to the Other. The impossible task of escape, then, is to "untie the essential link between the existent and its existence" The self, which is argued to be identical with itself, is thus disengaged. The subject, which modern philosophy has argued is dual in nature, no longer wishes to escape its existence, its Being; rather it seeks to be "delivered" or "dennaturalized" from the world As he concludes *Existence and Existents*, Levinas will later seek a way out of the there is il y a , and discovers it in the concept of the hypostasis. One must go beyond Being to actualize this point. Philosophy, traditionally accepted, has not thought through the implications of such a task. Throughout history, philosophers have been too concerned with beings. Heidegger introduced the ontological distinction, and began teaching us to think Being. Levinas now wishes to help us think through and beyond Being to get to the ethical relation to, and the infinite responsibility for, the absolute Other.

Emmanuel Levinas (/ ɛ̃ˈmɑ̃ˈɛl ʁeˈvɛnɑ̃ˈlɛːn /; French: [ɛ̃ˈmanɛˈɛl ʁeˈvɛnɑ̃ˈlɛːn]; 12 January - 25 December) was a French philosopher of Lithuanian Jewish ancestry who is known for his work related to Jewish philosophy, existentialism, ethics, phenomenology and ontology.