TO THE OTHER
In memory of
my parents

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and
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Since 1961 the work of Emmanuel Levinas has slowly acquired a pivotal position in the world of philosophy. Notwithstanding a sort of radical simplicity, its textual difficulty resists any quick or facile understanding. Having taught several courses on Levinas's thought in various schools of Europe and America, I wrote this book in order to facilitate a fruitful reading of his main philosophical texts. Although even the greatest thinkers have elicited criticisms from their students—and are not the best students, like Aristotle, Spinoza, or Hegel, the sharpest critics of their masters?—in this book I have not tried to follow the example of their attempts to transform what they received from their masters into a new, original philosophy but restricted my commentary, as much as possible, to an explanation of the position, the main perspectives, the background and the structure of Levinas's central texts.

In the hope that this introduction, thus, will be able to open doors to a thought that must be heard and meditated upon, I want to thank all those who collaborated in the process of its coming-to-be, especially Joe Flay, David Gandolfo, and Matthew Pacholec, who refined my English; Peter Rijnhart, who indefatigably typed the different versions of my manuscript; Margaret Hunt, who edited it with great care and skill; and Anita Noble, who gave my book its handsome appearance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Works of Levinas


DDVI De Dieu qui vient à l'idée (Paris: Vrin 1982).


PhII "La philosophie et l’idée de l’Infini,” EDHH 165–78; CPP 47–60.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


Works of Other Authors

Ak  Kant's gesammelte Schriften, herausgegeben von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1910ff.).


GA  Martin Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt/M: Klostermann, 1975ff.).

GW  Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Gesammelte Werke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968ff.).