Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence, which was published in 1974, can be considered as the second opus magnum of Levinas. In more than one regard, it continues and develops the main ideas of Totalité et Infini and answers—mostly in an implicit way—some criticisms that were brought up against the first book. It is, at the same time, an independent whole, which states the problem of Totality and Infinity in a different manner and develops those problems from other perspectives.

It is impossible to understand the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (or any philosophy) if it is isolated from the prephilosophical life (the experience, conviction, events, and the spiritual climate) in which it has its roots. The interpreter of a philosophy does not, however, need to consider explicitly its philosophical and nonphilosophical presuppositions if he/she and most other readers share them with the author of the interpreted text. One can legitimately state that Levinas’s thought is an expression of the spiritual climate of our time,

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1 The most important, in fact the only, critique with which Levinas argues—in an implicit way—seems to me to be the long essay of Jacques Derrida, “Violence et métaphysique: Essai sur la pensée d’Emmanuel Levinas.” This critique appeared first in the Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale 69 (1964): 322–54, 425–73, and was reprinted in J. Derrida, L’écriture et la différence (Paris: Du Seuil, 1967), 117–228; cf. Writing and Difference, 79–153. A respectful dissension, which does not exclude affinity, is to be found in the short contribution under the title “Tout autrement,” which Levinas wrote in an issue of L’Arc devoted to Derrida (no. 54, 1973) and which is also included in Noms propres (81–89).
held in common by all those who were educated in the Greek and European traditions, who went through the Nietzschean crisis of our culture, and who suffered the wars and persecutions of the twentieth century. A particular trait of Levinas’s Lebenswelt that he does not share with all contemporary thinkers is, however, that he is a Jew who, since his youth in Lithuania and the Ukraine, has been familiar with the Bible and who, since the end of the Second World War, has intensely studied the tradition of the Talmud.

The stress that Levinas lays on morality and religion has caused some misunderstandings. Some readers consider his philosophy to be too pious or even to be a sort of theology. Yet few contemporary philosophers have criticized the praxis and the idea of traditional theology more radically than has Levinas; and, although no philosophy can or may free itself from its prephilosophical, and therefore naive, convictions, Levinas has stressed more than once the fact that he is not a theologian but a philosopher, one who tries philosophically to explain and to justify only a part of his convictions and positions.² Is this self-interpretation accurate? The answer to this question must be found through a philosophical analysis of the works themselves. We should thus read them as philosophical works that have won a place in contemporary philosophy. Notwithstanding their surprising originality, they belong to the tradition of Husserlian and post-Husserlian phenomenology. The relation between Levinas’s philosophy and phenomenology is, however, a very special one because it is at the same time a radical critique of the main phenomenological presuppositions. A thorough acquaintance with Husserl’s and Heidegger’s thought is necessary to understand his “method,” but it demands a special explanation beyond this. Although Levinas does not dwell very much on methodological reflections, concentrating instead on direct

² Cf. TH 110: “My point of departure is absolutely non-theological. This is very important to me; it is not theology which I do, but philosophy.” In a conversation of 1 May 1975 on the occasion of his receiving an honorary doctorate in Leiden, Levinas repeated: “I have never even thought that I was doing theology. Whatever my experiences and prephilosophic sources may have been, I have always had this idea (a bit mad perhaps): that I was doing or was endeavouring to do philosophy, even in commenting on the biblical text which called this forth.” This conversation has been published under the title “Questions et réponses,” in DDVI 128–57.
descriptions and analyses of human "phenomena" and relations, the themes of his work are so fundamental that these analyses are themselves a sort of "Fundamentalbetrachtung." However, as we will see later on, even the words used here ("fundamental," "phenomena," "phenomenology") are inadequate to characterize Levinas's way of thinking, for they belong precisely to that manner of thinking which he radically questions and criticizes.

Right from the beginning of his work—in his dissertation and in his early studies on Husserl and Heidegger—Levinas formulated a certain critique that he has since developed and deepened: Western philosophy is an ontology; it is therefore incapable of talking about transcendence. It transforms not only God but also human beings, even the thinking subject itself, into moments or "adventures" of Being.

*Totality and Infinity* described ontology as a philosophical totalitarianism or as an egology and made way for a philosophy of the infinite by means of descriptions of the human visage. The philosophy "beyond the ousia" developed in *Totality and Infinity* was called "metaphysics." As far as I can see, the word "metaphysics" itself does not come up in *Otherwise Than Being*, but Levinas does again criticize Western ontology, including Heidegger's thought concerning Being. Again he investigates the possibilities of a philosophy of transcendence. It is possible that he avoids the word "metaphysics" in order to prevent the impression that he has any intention of restoring the old metaphysics attacked by Husserl and Heidegger. Along with Nietzsche, Levinas is convinced that every philosophy or conception that attempts to explain our world and existence in the light of an other-world (Hinterwelt) is definitively exhausted. The God who dwelled above the earth is dead. Actually, he was never really God. The way in which he was talked about,

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3 *La théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Alcan, 1930). The second (1963) and the third (1970) editions are distributed by Vrin. See also note 1 above.

4 "Martin Heidegger et l'ontologie," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger* (1932) and "L'œuvre d'Edmond Husserl" in the same journal (1940), reprinted in *EDHH* 7–76.

5 This expression, quoted in Greek in *Totalité et Infini*, is translated in *Autrement qu'être* by "au-delà de l'essence" (in which "essence" must be heard in the Heideggerian sense of all-ruling Being). The Platonic text to which it alludes is *Republic* 509b.
thematized, and demonstrated killed him more radically than the so-called atheism of those for whom the human person was always the most important being.\(^6\)

In *Otherwise Than Being*, we find a whole series of words that were scarcely or never used in *Totality and Infinity* (such as *subjectivité, proximité, obsession, substitution, otage, persécution, illéité, énigme*), whereas key words of the earlier work (such as *totalité, exteriorité, séparation, investiture, hauteur*) seldom or never appear in the later one. A partial explanation of this difference in terminology can be found in the fact that Levinas has chosen another perspective in *Otherwise Than Being* for his approach to transcendence and the infinite. In *Totality and Infinity*, the central place was taken by the Other and its visage; in *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas meditates on the "position" and the meaning of the subject; of the self who meets the other.

The two books do not differ only in their problematic and focus. The critical interpretation of Western ontology has developed and become more radical; ideas and formulations that in *Totality and Infinity* were still too dependent upon the ontological tradition are now purified, and critical objections against the content of the first book are answered. Whereas *Totality and Infinity* attempted, with Plato, to think beyond the totality of all beings\(^7\) and closed with eschatological questions, *Otherwise Than Being* goes back to a sort of (under)ground: it attempts to trace down the underlying "fundament" and subject of the various relations that it describes.

The first chapter (3-25/3-20) gives an outline of the whole book. It begins with the question of how it is possible to think transcendence. This question is already suggested by the title of the book: How is it possible to think or to speak beyond (*au-delà*) Being? One can read this first chapter as an analysis of what one may with certain reservations call the "conditions of possibility" of the thinking of transcendence. In order to think transcendence, one has to think "something" that "is" otherwise (autrement) than Being or beyond (*au delà*) Being. This statement presupposes a certain concept of "Being."

\(^6\) Cf. *AE* 10/0B 8 (against the idea of a *Hinterwelt*) and the last paragraphs of the book: "In this work which does not seek the restoration of any ruined concept...; after the death of a certain god inhabiting the world behind the scenes (*les arrière-mondes*)" (*AE* 233/0B 185).

\(^7\) Cf. *Phaedo* 61e; 117c; *Symposium* 212a; *Republic* 484c; *Phaedrus* 250c.
word "Being" stands here for the whole Western philosophical tradition, in particular as it was interpreted and recaptured by Heidegger. "Being" (das Sein) is the realm or the order of the active essence or Wesen (in French essence or—with a neologism—"essance," having a transitive connotation), in whose "phosphorence" the phenomena appear and from which they receive their truth. In order to think that which is beyond or otherwise (than Being), we must first reflect upon the thinking of Being itself, i.e., upon ontology and upon the way of Being of the essence that comes to the fore within its boundaries. It is, however, impossible to free our thought altogether from the structures that reign within the frame of ontology because another order—a world "behind" Being—does not exist. The only possibility of transcending Being and ontological thinking would be a movement by which we point to that which "is" differently than any being and transcends even Being itself: a sort of "An-denken" expressing itself not in a superficial way but "an-archically" (anarchiquement). Such a discourse would not claim, as ontology does, to manifest the origin or archè of its "object." Rather, in close contact with the only world that exists, the world as lived by human individuals in history, it would search for the conditions and the presuppositions of ontology and its grounding archai.

Various points of departure present themselves for a description of Being's reality. Characteristic of any ontological description is an inner coherence, a systematic unity under the light of Being, within which all beings and all formal elements of Being are gathered. The way in which Levinas describes the order of Being is a sort of structural analysis of ontology. He considers the ontological meaning of consciousness, reason, sensation, corporeity, subjectivity, freedom, death, war, peace, etc. and makes it clear that neither a single being, nor the totality of beings, nor Being itself is capable of taking up the role of an absolute primary ground.

The core of Levinas's criticism of ontology was already formulated in his first studies on Husserl and Heidegger. The Husserlian concept of intentionality freed philosophy from the constraint of the subject-object schema. Husserl was right in seeing that not every intention is an objectifying one. In

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this sense, he initiated the overcoming of the monopoly of representational thinking. Meaning is not exclusively found in the objectified contents of consciousness: it can and must also be discovered in intentions and implications that do not appear in the same way as a representation does. The anonymous intentions by which representational intentions are codetermined constitute meanings that can be made conscious by a second reflection and thereafter can be represented in a new representation. The making explicit of these implicit meanings, however, is an endless process due to the fact that every intention has an infinity of horizons. Moreover—and this is decisive—there are many intentions that cannot at all be considered as representations.

Although Husserl's conception of intentionality can be interpreted as a universal characterization of all human relations to some X, he himself stressed the primordiality of the "meinende Intentionen." His theory of intentionality was thus dominated by the model of knowing. In every intention, he saw a variation of the structure of representing. Living presence (lebendige Gegenwart), a presence that can always be re-presented through memory, was for him the key concept of reality. Being is presence, being present for a consciousness that appropriates it by (re)constituting the given in the knowledge of what it is. To abolish the tyranny of the theoretical, it is not sufficient to extend the doctrine of intentionality to practical or emotional intentions, even if these are considered as more fundamental than the theoretical intentions. For it is precisely the representational structure, dominating not only intending (meinen) and knowing but affectivity and the practical realm, that must be brought into question.

It is in light of representational thinking that the relation between subject and reality is interpreted as the relation of a consciousness and the presence of something given. The given presents itself as a "corporeal" presence (leibhaftige Gegenwart) occurring in a certain sort of time, the moments of which can be gathered in the presence of an all-encompassing glance through retention and protention. The position of the subject in this ontological time is that of a free consciousness that is aware of its freedom and wants to realize it by returning to its own self. This self-identification implies a grasping of the phenomena. In the Heideggerian explanation of Dasein, the same structure is dominant: the consciousness, which in an active and transitive way "ex-sists" Being, has a hold on
Beyond Being

The critique that is sketched here has been extended in *Otherwise Than Being* to a series of meditations on various themes of ontology.\(^9\) Being is a gathering and an interweaving of all beings; in it each being and every occurrence fulfills its place and function on a level with every other occurrence and being. Every attempt to escape the dominance of Being, every free action and every form of negativity, is immediately devoured by the rushing "essence" in which everything is equal, irrespective of differences. Mediation and dialectic are the devices by means of which Being fills up all the gaps that negativity breaks open.

The time of Being is the time of its deployment. "Timing" (*Zeitigung*, ripening) is the primordial light, to which phenomena are indebted for their appearance. The way in which Being presents itself is the illumination that keeps the phenomena distinct and brings them forth in their truth. Active essence is essentially the presentation, collection, and interpretation of the phenomena: *phenomenology*. Time, in which Being develops its meaning, can collect itself through memory (retention and protention). Active essence is dispersion and recollection into presence.

On the side of the subject, this process is sensation:\(^10\) an experience of the flowing of the inner time-consciousness. The qualitative variations of sensation (*sensibilité*) are experienced as modifications of flowing temporality; they are adverbial modes of the active essence that expresses itself in its verbal form. In art this (ad)verbiality is expressly displayed.\(^11\) It is also possible, however, to grant autonomy to these variations. As a system of names (*noms*), language is suited to the identification of certain things and experiences. These are no longer adverbially experienced but are ascertained by "the Said" (*le Dit*) of a thesis, an account, or an announcement, through which time is collected and a being is captured in words.\(^12\) On the basis of the flowing

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9 Cf. *AE* 3ff./*OB* 3ff.: The order and "archy" of Being is contrasted in the first chapter as the system of "inter-esse" against dis-interestedness.

10 Cf. the extensive analyses of *sentir*, *sensation*, and *sensibilité* in *AE* 39ff. and 77ff./*OB* 31ff. and 61ff.


12 *AE* 46/*OB* 36; Levinas uses the expressions *epos*, *kerygme*, *fable*, *doxa*, and *narration* as synonyms.
stream of time in which the truth of Being manifests itself, the phenomenon shows and identifies itself, thanks to the “already said” (le déjà-dit) through which it can be grasped and named. Being is inseparable from its being said (AE 47ff./OB 38ff.). Being and wording belong together; the active essence cannot be separated from a verbally pronounced meaning. If beings appear as identities, they owe it to a noun that encloses them in the horismos of a (fore)word which has already been pronounced.

The time structure of the active essence conditions the accomplishment of the highest interest of the subject as consciousness: through collecting and identifying, it orders the entirety of all beings in the pronouncement of a distinct system. In the light of the truth, consciousness constitutes the edifice of reality within which it establishes itself. Thus, consciousness possesses itself and acquires the highest degree of certainty. The subject triumphs after a period of seeming (only temporary) passivity; by means of memory and interpretation, it takes the temporal dispersion, and all events that occurred in it, back into itself. Thinking is remembrance, and thought is a recollection. The order of Being is an eternal return of the Same. This is the Western conception of freedom and subjectivity.

The diagnosis sketched here is not contradicted by the continually repeated attempt of Western philosophy to transcend the order of beings on the basis of one ultimate ground. Indeed the ground, the principle or the archè, is necessary as the condition of the free self-possession in which consciousness can take pleasure in itself. For without an unshakable fundament or a sustaining and surrounding ground that is at the same time cause and end, it would be impossible for the subject to oversee the universe of beings and grasp them by a conceptual knowledge. A thematic and systematizing consciousness is grounding and fundamental. It demands an architectonic and contests every sort of anarchy.

In accord with the way of being of the subject that has just been described, ontology interprets Being as a conatus through which beings exist and persist in their being for themselves. Due to the fact that a multitude of beings exist next to and opposite one another, their concern for themselves results necessarily in a war of all against all (AE 5ff./OB 3ff.). On the basis of the ontological presuppositions indicated above, this battle can only be ended when the fighters give it up for a form of shared and mutual self-interest. The overcoming of violence and the securing of rational peace—the traditional solution of political philosophy—are due to a dialectical Aufhebung of the antitheses within
the sphere of the ontologically understood reality. Being holds war and peace together and rules over both. The incentive to peace remains selfish—striving toward a secure life in mutual exchange with other humans. The self-interested repression of violence secures rational coherence and association. Reason and politics fight every possible anarchy. The order that they assure is not grounded on the selflessness of *désinteressement* but on selfish interests.\(^\text{13}\)

The decisive refutation of ontology is the emergence of the human Other. While *Totality and Infinity* placed the focus on the other’s visage, the analyses of *Otherwise Than Being* concentrate on the Self (*le Soi*), which has from the beginning a special relation to the Other. Both books are concerned with the same relation. In the latter work, however, it is treated within the framework of the question, “Who am I?”

If the order of Being and grounding do not give others, the subject, and the Infinite their due, the question arises: Why is it that our discourse cannot liberate itself completely from the terminology and conceptuality of ontology? The answer is: It is due to the fact that the Said (*le Dit*) predominates. The realm of the Said (either as the confirmation of beings or as the verbalization of the active essence itself) is the realm of ontology.

The Saying (*le Dire*), however, which precedes the Said, is “more” than a collection of Being through verbs and nouns. It breaks through the range of the active essence. Its tense is a different one from that of the Said, in which everything becomes united and viewable. The time of the Saying is not to be won back through memory. During the Saying, time passes by; something gets irrevocably lost, and one grows older. But because of this, surprises and adventures are possible—surprises and adventures that stand in opposition to the monotony and boredom of ontological time, in which all things are synchronized by theoretical overviews or practical projects. The time of Saying resists the

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13 The last of the five introductory devises of *Autrement qu’être* (*vi/OB vii*) is taken from Pascal’s *Pensees*: “On s’est servi comme on a pu de la concupiscence pour la faire servir au bien public; mais ce n’est que feindre, et une fausse image de la charité; car au fond ce n’est que haine” (“They have used concupiscence as best as they could for the general good; but it is nothing but pretense and a false image of charity; for at bottom it is simply a form of hatred.”) (Brunschvicg, n. 451; Lafuma, n. 210.)
simultaneousness of the Said and precedes it. It is an irreducible diachrony (AE 47–48/OB 37–38).

To break through the dominance of ontology, it is insufficient to uncover an Unsaid behind or under the Said. The direction of Heideggerian questioning remains caught in a play of the Said and the Unsaid, of uncovering and hiding. As phenomenology, this ontology is necessarily dialectic: a separation and association of the Said and the Unsaid. To transcend this ontology, one must question back in another way: in the direction of another time; in the direction of the diachronical time of Saying, thanks to which the synchrony of the said exists. The new dimension that is thus opened makes speaking about transcendence possible.

The Said is not opposed here to the written or the engraved (l'écriture, le gramma). For Levinas, writings are, just as much as a spoken text, elements of the ontological order, in which the living speaking that makes transcendence ring has lost its sound. The written is, however, more clearly identified by simultaneity than a speech. The book is an attempt to fill out and heal all gaps and breaches through a complete and permanent synthesis of what is to be said. The foundering of this effort, however, is manifested by the simple fact that a book demands interpretation and thus refers to people who can explain it through living words. 14

The permanent presence of the written synthesis—a kind of nunc stans from which the whole can be systematically regarded—stands in glaring contradiction to the “unsystematic” meditations through which Levinas tries to expose speaking itself (AE 211, 217/OB 166–71). Thematization and systematicity, however, are typical modes of ontological understanding. They change their theme into something said. The peculiarity of Saying is different from reflective thinking. Saying is an exceptional form of “intentionality” because it exhibits no noetic-noematic structure. It happens when it is carried out. But one can only reach the Saying laterally—one can only think back to it. The anachronism of Saying can be shown only by a special form of philosophical reduction (AE 56/OB 43). The asking back from

14 Starting from the Socratic question, “What is?” Western philosophy has made the “what” and the “Being” of beings the central question and, at the same time, the model of all that is intelligible; it has forgotten, however, that this question, too, is addressed to someone. As a question, it is a call for help—demande and prière (AE 31/OB 24)—not (yet) a dialogue, for this presupposes reciprocity. The explicit rejection of dialogue as a primordial relation is found in AE 142 and 152–53/OB 111 and 119–20.
what is already said to the preceding saying is a most important task of philosophy. The accomplishment of this task is possible due to the fact that what is said maintains a trace of the act of saying to which it owes its existence (AE 62/0B 190 n.34). Through "reduction," philosophy goes backward into the time before the repeatable time of what is said. We are moving thus in two times, not simultaneously but switching off: we shuttle back and forth between the synchrony of ontological time and the anachrony of a time preceding it. The latter reveals itself in an untimely way via the restlessness of a coming back to that which cannot become a part of the Said (AE 57, 232/0B 43, 184). So long as we remain within the Said—in the framework of ontology—we have the Saying behind us; but we cannot remember it because it has its own uncollectible time. We point to Saying in criticizing the Said and its time, but the discussion or description of the Saying changes it into a Said, which demands a new critique in turn. As soon as we have said something about Saying, we must take our distance from this Said, too. Saying (dire) and unsaying or denying (dédire) fashion the halting way in which we think back on the preceding Saying. Every denial, however, is necessarily followed by a new Saying, which as a repetition indeed wants to say what was brought to the fore and then negated. This "saying again" (redire) is not a dialectical synthesis but rather a new attempt in the history of the continual Saying that suffers and settles its own (im)possibility.

"Reduction" thus does not lead to any better ontology, nor does it give the last word that could decipher the enigmatic "way of Being" of the Saying. For each last word belongs to the order of Being (AE 57/0B 44–45). The "truth" of the Saying "exists" in the ever-renewed attempt to bear "witness" (témoignage) to the preceding Saying; a "prophetism" (prophétisme) that—as the unending critique of the synchronous and the systematic—has some affinity with skepticism.

Otherwise Than Being can be read as a series of "intentional analyses" of Saying through which its implications and conditions are worked out. The attempt to summarize these analyses comes up against a great difficulty: the succession in which the various gradations and levels of Saying are demonstrated is not always the same. At first sight, the fundamental relations appear muddled.

Sometimes Levinas announces a sequence that signifies a deepening, for example in AE 232/0B 184, where he says that signification is analyzed as proximity, proximity as responsibility
for the Other, responsibility as substitution. Precisely the same order of these three characteristics is found in AE 229/OB 182, where the relation between them is indicated by the expression "is only possible as" (ne se peut comme): "The proximity of the Other . . . is possible only as responsibility for the Other, and responsibility is possible only as substitution for the Other." Is this a question of the relation between a reality and the conditions of its possibility? But how then does the one fit together into the other? Similar difficulties are presented by such formulations as "a signification, which is possible only as embodiment (incarnation)" (AE 87/OB 69) and "Only a subject which can eat can possibly be for the Other or signify" (AE 96–97/OB 76–77). In both cases, corporeity is "deduced" from significance, which was previously described as a relation of the One-for-the-Other.15

Most of the time, however, the various "moments" are placed next to one another, seemingly without allowing a definite order among them. The difficulty hinted at here and the question that rises out of that difficulty might have its ground in the need for an architectonic that is characteristic for the investigating, grounding, and constructing thought of ontology.16 Levinas, however, is not a master-builder: he is rather a ground-worker who laterally digs passages against and under the Being of the world, laying open a texture of references. In connection to this, a before and after of the various layers present themselves, but they bear and call forth each other, without one being able to indicate precisely which one is first or second. In one of the few and short remarks on his own "method," Levinas expresses this as follows:

The various concepts which the attempt to assert transcendency brings forth evoke reciprocal echoes. The necessities of the thematization in which they are said impose a division into chapters, although the themes in which these concepts come up do not lend themselves to a linear development. They actually cannot be isolated, for they cast their shadows and their reflection onto one another. (AE 23/OB 19)

The following attempt to present a resume of the various aspects and levels of transcendence does not pretend to systematize the analyses that are carried out unsystematically. A sum-

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15 TI xvii/28 is, as far as I can see, the only place where Levinas calls his procedure a "deduction." This word must here be understood as having a different meaning from the deduction against which he polemicizes in TI 76/103.

16 Cf. AE 86/OB 68: "The idea of an ultimate or primary sense is ontological."
mary violates the anarchy that belongs to Saying, but every Said does that. As an easy and fast way of introducing a work, it may be considered as tolerable.

As a pronouncing of Being and of beings by means of verbs and nouns, Saying is a speaking to someone—signifying or signification in an active and dative or donative sense. When I say something, it is not only and not primarily a matter of passing on pieces of information; rather, it is a matter of the communication itself—more so than and before any specific piece of information. Signification is thus not primarily the labeling of an object or of a truth but a pointing toward itself: signification of the signification. 17 Signification happens in the proximity of the Other. The other to whom I say something is close to me, my neighbor (le prochain). Proximity is an approach and contact. In approaching, I bare myself. Saying and signification is an exposure through which the center is transferred from me to the other. The structure of intentionality, by which consciousness relates the phenomena to itself, is put out of joint. 18 The activity of speaking robs the subject of its central position; it is the depositing (déposition) of a subject without refuge. The speaking subject is no longer by and for itself; it is for the other: obligated to response and responsible for the other, without ever having chosen this responsibility. Responsibility for the other without any preceding engagement is passivity in a special, exceptional sense. I am delivered to my neighbor. This passivity without choice can only be thought of as patience and pain or suffering, for otherwise—as enjoyer—I would myself still be the focus and neither handed over nor dedicated to the other. My suffering must even be—at least partially—meaningless. For were I able to grasp its meaning, I would be able to integrate it into my consciousness in the form of some piece of knowledge. 19

With this analysis, we are far removed from the traditional identification of the subject with the cogito. "I speak" is not the same as "I think." The sovereign self-consciousness, as developed in

17 AE 153/OB 119–20. The second chapter of AE is devoted to the analysis of Saying. In this connection, the time of saying and the subjectivity of the saying subject especially are illuminated.
18 Desarçonnable, AE 163/OB 127.
19 The analyses of proximity that are summarized here and in the following sections comprise the third and fourth chapters. The fourth chapter, "La substitution," is the heart ("la pièce centrale," AE ix/OB xii) of the book.
Kantian, Hegelian, and Husserlian idealism, is a narrowing of the one (l’un) and the only (l’unique) who speaks. In this form, it already belongs to the realm of the Said. On the other hand, even Heidegger and the structuralists misjudge the peculiarity of the passivity of the vulnerable self (soi) when they—again placing themselves on the level of the Said—conceive it to be completely dependent upon an anonymous "It that speaks" or on "the Language" as such. 20

Since Socrates, the spiritual life of the West has concentrated on knowing and self-knowledge. Consciousness tried to ground and justify itself; for consciousness, images and ideas were only moments on the way to an enjoyment of its certain self-possession; freedom and "Bei-sich-selbst-sein" became the solution; and apology was the mode of philosophizing (AE 125–26, 256/0B 99–100). In contrast to this, the subject whose radical passivity is exhibited by the analysis of Saying is not consciousness or spirit but the one and only (l’unique) who is for-the-Other. This passivity is only possible in the form of a body that is animated and inspired by the orientation of the "One-for-the-Other." The passivity of Saying thus implies corporeity and the senses. Embodiment (incarnation) is a "condition of the possibility" and a necessary implication of the various ways of deprivation (such as pain, labor, decline), without which the relation of the One-for-the-Other would be changed into the selfishness of self-assertion. It now becomes understandable why the subject’s time can only exist in diachrony and not in ontological synchrony: only in an irretrievable time is it possible to truly lose something or to give (AE 66/0B 51–52), to become old and to die.

Burrowing yet deeper, Levinas discovers in passivity an accusation: the obligation that is imposed on me in responsibility makes me guilty—a debtor—without my having made any choice. Beyond this, the responsibility grows to the measure in which I fulfill it. I can thus never pay off the burden of my guilt. There is always more demanded of me than I can accomplish. I stand under an accusation that I have not earned. In the accusation, Levinas uncovers persecution as a necessary presupposition: only a persecuted subject is a subject who—without so desiring, against his will—lives for the Other. The most extreme intensifying of passivity is, however, attained in the concept of substitution: the subject is so little its own possession and so greatly of

and for the other that he/she is responsible for everything that has to do with the other—not only for the other’s misery but also for his/her crimes—even for the outrage that the other initiates against the suffering subject (AE 139–44/OB 108–13).

The outcome of the analyses that Levinas carries out is a totally new understanding of the Self (l’ipseité). It can neither encompass itself by an adequate (ap)perception or concept nor rule over itself in sovereign freedom. As sub-jectum, it bears the entire universe, without comprehending it (AE 147/OB 116). The subject has no latitude, no free space to take any distance from it and rejoin it (AE 136/OB 107). For this reason, it cannot find peace in itself. As a sensibly affected body, one stands in an immediate contact with one’s neighbor, with whom one is obsessed (AE 126–29/OB 100–102). As a mother, I bear the other within me, without fusing together (132–35/104–7). I cannot grasp myself in thought; in saying, however, I expose myself.

The ethical terminology of which Levinas’s philosophy of the subject makes use does not point the way to a system of commands and prohibitions. It describes the situation of responsibility that precedes every ethics—a relation that “constitutes” me even be fore I can ask: “How should I conduct myself?” or “What should I do?” As an adequate description of the subject, insofar as it escapes the order of Being, ethical language is pre- or meta-ontological. As characteristic of a situation that precedes freedom, it is also pre- or meta-ethical. It does not spring from a particular moral experience; rather, it answers the radical questioning of the subject’s mode of “being,” which questioning receives an incorrect solution in ontology. The classical dualism of a spirit according to the model of an autonomous consciousness and a body that is independent from that spirit is a misunderstanding. Human corporeity is animated by the relation of responsibility. This animation or inspiration constitutes the human psychism (le psychisme). The other is “in” me without estranging me from my freedom. The “essence” of the subject is not conatus essendi but inspired giving (AE 180/OB 141), not only in a purely spiritual way—as a giving of the heart—but corporeally: to work

21 The vicarious subject is an exception; cf. AE 143, 149, 156/OB 112, 117, 121–22.

22 Cf. AE 69/OB 54: “service without slavery”; AE 134/OB 105: “nor a slavish alienation, in spite of the gestation of the other in the same which this responsibility for others signifies”; AE 143/OB 112: “Psychism is the other in the same without alienating the same.”
with one's own hands for the other, to take the very bread from one's lips to still the other's hunger.\textsuperscript{23}

These descriptions of the subject have undermined the ontological realm of self-conscious freedom. The Self (le Soi) lives on this side (en deça) without taking a place among ontologically comprehended beings. As an exception, it is a certain nowhere.\textsuperscript{24} It lives in another time, without its own light (AE 20–23/OB 17–19), poor and vulnerable, not in the position to defend itself,\textsuperscript{25} solitary and incomparable but without independence (AE 156–66/OB 121–29).

Nevertheless, the humility of this subjectivity is the point where the infinite reveals itself. The anarchy into which Being comes via the exception of subjectivity makes possible the revelation of the infinite as an enigma. It is of the utmost importance to make a sharp distinction between Levinas's speaking about the infinite and the theology of the Western tradition. As a thematizing within the frame of ontology, this theology localizes God as a (highest) Object in the eternal order of a "world behind the scenes" (AE 4, 6, 10, 193/OB 4, 5, 8). His representation through dogmas and formulas of belief destroys the religious situation.

Theological language rings untrue or becomes mystical (AE 148, 155/OB 196, n. 19; 197, n. 25). As ontological language, it belongs to the fabric of interests that dominate the state and its religious parallel, the church. Being incapable of disinterestedness,\textsuperscript{26} theology impedes transcendence. If seen as an object opposite to a thinking subject that desires knowledge, God is the fulfillment of interested (or "erotic") need (besoin)—not the Absolute to which true desire refers (\textit{le désir de l'Absolu}).\textsuperscript{27} This God is the seducer who apes the infinite; he is an enemy of morality and a principle

\textsuperscript{23} "To give, to be for the other, in spite of oneself, but while interrupting the for-one'self, is to take the bread out of one's mouth, to feed the hunger of the other with my own abstinence" (AE 72/OB 56). Cf. AE 87–91/OB 69–72 and AE 97/OB 77.

\textsuperscript{24} The exception is a non-lieu, AE 9, 17, 21, 148/OB 8, 14, 17–18, 116.

\textsuperscript{25} AE 129–30/OB 102: "The meta-ontological and meta-logical structure of this Anarchy, undoing the Logos in which the apology is inserted, by which the conscience always recovers and commands itself." AE 156/OB 121: "persecution is a disqualification of apology."

\textsuperscript{26} Désinteressement beyond and beside Being, which is always intérèesse; cf. AE 4–6, 120–21, 149, 162–63/OB 4–6, 94–95, 117, 126–27.

of hate. The nonontologically understood God is nonpresent: he is not a theme, not even in the form of a "Thou" with whom a dialogue would be possible. He cannot be known because as noematic correlate, he would immediately be annihilated in the totalizing knowledge of the subject. Even the question, "Does God exist?" testifies to an irreligious attitude (AE 120/0B 94). The question belongs in the sphere where interests, security, utility, projects and results, proof and calculations, totality and conatus are at home. The God who is brought to speech there is not strong enough to overcome the death of God that characterizes our times.

Thinking about God in the form of a negative theology also remains caught in an ontological framework because its statements presuppose an object (even if it is unknown) to which one could assign (negative) attributes (AE 14-15/0B 11-12). A philosophy of the infinite must reduce theology by renouncing pronouncements concerning God and laying open an anterior speaking that precedes every possible pronouncement (AE 193/0B 151). The concern is "to perceive a God who has not become spoiled by Being" (AE x/0B xlii).

The infinite reveals itself in an enigmatic and extravagant way, not by means of proofs but by a trace. This trace is the designation and election of the subject. In its Saying, the subject as it is described above is a testimony for God. Levinas does not appeal to a special religious experience that could serve as a foundation to this testimony (témoignage): the only "experience" and the only "evidence" is the sustaining of the responsibility that must be understood as glory and glorification of the Good (AE 181-94/0B 142-52). Glory is the reverse side of the subject's being delivered over; an anarchical disturbing of the hierarchy

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28 AE 13, n. 7/0B 187, n. 8: "The Good would not be the term for a need susceptible of satisfaction—it is not the term for an erotic need, for a relation with the Seductive which resembles the Good such as to be mistaken for it. It is not its other but its imitator." Cf. also AE 157, 224/0B 122, 177 and the aphorism quoted here in note 13.

29 AE 157-58/0B 122-23.

30 The equivocal character of the "enigma" (AE 11, 15, 23, 57, 118, 120-21/0B 10, 12, 19, 44, 93, 94-95) is thoroughly described in the important essay "Enigme et phénomène," which appeared first in Esprit 33 (1965): 1128-42 and which is included under the title "Phenomenon and Enigma" in the second edition of EDHH 203-17; CPP 61-74.

31 Cf. AE 14-15 and 118-20/0B 12, 93-95. The idea of the trace was first developed in "La trace de l'Autre" (1963). Cf. EDHH 187-202.

of Being; the undermining of established thinking and of the central position of the I; a life that never comes to the end of its task because the obligations of substitution grow while they are being fulfilled. In the inspiration of the “Here I am” that precedes freedom, the infinite reveals its glory without ever appearing. The only evidence is the sincerity of Saying. In that sincerity, “He” (Il) passes by. The thought of the infinite is in fact “something” that is “behind” thought (une arrière-pensée) and “too high to push itself into the first position” (AE 190/OB 149). It declares itself in the prophetic pronouncement, “Here I am in the name of God,” which precedes all theology and even prayer. Pure religion does not pronounce itself in the declaration, “I believe in God,” for this is already the beginning of a thematization. The coming hither of God is not an approaching of us; rather, it is the responsibility, not chosen by me, by which he touches and chooses me. The trace that refers to him (in a remembrance that always comes too late for his passing by) is the liberation from the interests of the ontological web. This is the manifestation of the goodness of the Good that loved me (by its election) before I could love it. All human goodness is derived and gives thus evidence for the glory of the infinite.

The discussion of the “otherwise than Being” (autrement qu'être), by which Levinas attempts to break the tyranny of ontological thinking, is itself a discourse on various concepts and states of affairs that form a particular structure and coherence. No matter how much they differ from the moments of ontology, they still make up a “Said” that—just like phenomena, knowledge, consciousness, repeatable time, memory, certainty, and the relations among them—falls under the laws of ontology and its logic. The anarchy of diachronic transcendence and the nonidentity of absolute passivity change during discussion into elements of an objective whole. The representation of that which is found

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33 God is not a “Thou,” as with Buber and Marcel. His way of more-than-active-essence or having-passed-by is “illéité.” Cf. AE 15, 120, 148/Ob 12–13, 193, 196.


35 AE 13, n. 7/Ob 187, n. 8: “The good . . . chose me before I chose it. Nobody is good voluntarily . . . . And if nobody is good voluntarily, nobody is a slave of the Good.” AE 176/Ob 138: “Goodness in the subject is an-archy itself; insofar as it is responsibility for the freedom of the other, anterior to all freedom in myself but also preceding the violence in me which would be the contrary of freedom, for if nobody is good voluntarily, no one is the slave of the good.”
beyond (au delà) or before (en deça) the active essence of Being assigns it a place within Being. The triumph of the ground and of simultaneousness is irresistible.

Levinas is aware of the inevitability of this metamorphosis, and he himself asks the question of how one can speak of “beyond” and “before” or of “that side” and “this side” of Being when this speaking unavoidably contradicts itself. A first answer may exist in a counterquestion: Did and does not every philosopher entangle herself necessarily in such contradictions when she questions and thinks radically and in this sense pursues metaphysics? The Platonic dialectic of the One, the Aristotelian thought of prime matter, the Kantian explanations of the thing in itself, the always recurring attempts to name God or Being itself—all of these bring forth a result that they immediately must contradict in order to make clear that it is meant differently than it sounds. One can try to use the key words in a transformed, more primordial way along with Heidegger, or state with Derrida that they are merely strategically used, but this only proves the helplessness of a thinking that borders on the unsayable. It uses necessarily the manners of speaking that are possible and comprehensible on this side of the border, but it attempts to bend them in such a way that they—precisely through their inner conflict—point beyond that border. The “realities” that are meant by the use of words such as “transcendence,” “anarchy,” “passivity,” etc. can only be described by means of a misuse of language. Their translation into the language of thinking is always a betrayal (AE 195–98/OB 153–56).

Levinas brings our attention in this connection to the eternal return of skepticism. Insofar as philosophy asks radical questions, skepticism is “her legitimate child” (AE 231/OB 183; instead of “bastard child,” the translation should read: “legitimate child”). Its classical refutation seems simple and irresistible. What the skeptic claims does not correspond to the implicit conditions of his explicit statement. That which he says (for instance, “It is not possible to discover any truth”) contradicts the content of his saying (namely: I state this as a truth). When one compares the two, the contradiction exposes itself.

But should one compare the Said with its Saying? A comparison unites them as if they were two contemporary statements, while they are actually related like a statement and a stating. Only when reflection and memory transform them into two

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36 Cf. for the following AE 9 and 213–18/OB 7 and 167–71.
"Saids" that are there at one and the same time does the absurdity of a universal skepticism appear. But is this reflection not the symptom of an imprisonment in logical and ontological assumptions that would first have to be proved? The classical refutation of skepticism assumes that all explicit statements or "truths" are contemporaneous in the nunc stans of a synchronized state of affairs. Through its refusal to recognize synchrony as the highest viewpoint, skepticism bears witness to the irreducible difference that distinguishes the Saying and the Said. As a denial of the universe of transcendental apperception, skepticism stands on the side of diachronic thinking, whose "truth" has already been indicated positively. It translates the riddle of diachrony in a way that is unacceptable for philosophy. The fact that skepticism always remains possible and continually returns, without the skeptic being silenced by his own words, shows that the synchronous reason of ontology is not the only reasonable one. Reasonable arguments are not sufficient to bring the skeptic to silence. The monopoly of ontological reason demands the exercise of violence. Western philosophy commits this violence by logic, whereas the state conquers anarchy by political means. Clinics and jails, but also scientific institutions, represent the logos of synchrony; humanism, however, lives from the diachronic reason of the One-for-the-Other.

The foregoing discussion does not prove that the thesis of skepticism (its Said) is true, or that it is true in a higher degree than the thesis of its opponents. The "truth" that attempts to pronounce itself in skepticism is rather the necessity, indicated above, of recalling (dédire) the Said, and of replacing it by a new Saying (redire) that is just as little a final Saying as the previous one was. The enigma of transcendence, which can never become evident, does not come into its own by synoptic expositions in which time stands still but only by continual attempts through new speeches to rectify the unavoidable contradictions of speaking.

The order of ontological truth, however, can and must be more positively estimated than it was above. The mistake of Western ontology does not consist in its structure and logic but in its pretense of grasping all reality and in that sense of embodying the absolute principle or point of view. The realm of the Said in which knowledge and thematization, calculation and planning, clarity and objective judgments are at home is even demanded and furthered by the transcending goodness. For it is a necessary presupposition of justice.
The order of active essence and simultaneity is a condition of the possibility of justice. This comes to existence through the fact that I have to do not only with my neighbor but also with others who exist beside my neighbor. In addition to the neighbor, there is also "the third."\(^{37}\) If I could limit myself to confrontation with this unique other-here-and-now whose visage bids me to responsibility, there would be no problem. "The third human," however, the neighbor of my neighbor, disturbs the immediate relation of the twosome and its intimacy. As soon as a third enters the picture, my responsibility is divided. It is no longer an unlimited care for only this one neighbor, and I must ask myself: Who comes first? What are my neighbor and the third man to one another? What should they do for one another? What have they done for one another? My substitution for my neighbor involves my responsibility for his/her responsibility toward his/her neighbor. My neighbor and the third person obligate me simultaneously. Together with my neighbor, I am for the third person; with both of them I am against myself (AE 19–20/0B 15–16).

The infinite obligation now becomes the duty of justice. I must be just in the distribution of my attention and devotion. I must compare and calculate, correct and order, treat others as equals and conduct myself as a judge. This presupposes a synopsis and synchrony and founds the order of law. The order of consciousness and its totality can consequently be derived from saying and substitution. The ethical relation of the One-for-the-Other obligates us to the rational organization of society, in which justice is exercised and violence is suppressed. Thus are the state and reason "deduced" in their ontological way of Being.\(^{38}\) In this perspective, I may and must understand and even treat myself as being equal to all others. My destiny and salvation are also important: I, too, am one of the many who are neighbors of my neighbors. My responsibility for the other includes now also care of myself (AE 202–4/0B 158–61).

The radical inequality of the infinite responsibility for the other does not exclude reciprocity on the level of justice but rather "found" it. On the "primordial" level, however, neither


\(^{38}\) Perhaps the author is referring here to the political philosophy of Eric Weil (who is quoted in another context in AE 143, n. 17/0B 195, n. 17). Cf. Weil's Philosophie Politique (Paris: Vrin, 1956), in which the state is legitimized as the necessary overcoming of violence.
reciprocity nor dialogical relations are possible. Levinas does not support a philosophy of dialogue. But the radical asymmetry that is his real "theme" furthers the equality without which no justice is possible. 39

These analyses do not indicate by "the third" a purely empirical fact, as if this expression meant a third and a fourth being who happen to be there and by their existence urge me to compare them with each other and myself. "The third" is a structure that co-constitutes the proximity of the neighbor. The visage reveals not only the invisible other, who is my neighbor, but simultaneously the visible other, who represents every person. The other is from the beginning the brother of every other. Because I am obsessed by the Other, I cannot escape from the justice that makes me devoted to all human beings. The visage of the other is incomparable and identical with every other visage. The third, who shows him/herself in the visage of my neighbor, is the origin of appearance and, thus, of the realm of phenomena and phenomenology.

The relation to the third, through which the realm of the Said is recovered and justified, rectifies the asymmetry of immediate and intimate relations. It legitimates the state and politics as the regulation of symmetrical relations. At the same time, the (pre)-ethical relation in which it is rooted preserves the state from degenerating into a pure technology of social equilibrium. Insofar as politics borrows its inspiration from the radical responsibility of the One-for-the-Other, the law and the state owe their activities to anarchic transcendence. 40 Thus, they are a trace of the Good that has no place within the time of the active essence of Being but passes by without ever being present.

Justice is the only possible legitimation of the orders of synchronous equality and reciprocity. Therefore it is also the justification of philosophy in its ontological form. Insofar as philosophy oscillates to and fro between transcendence and ontology in order to do justice to the radical responsibility for the other, it preserves Being from its decline into the irresponsible and absurd "there is," which is the primordial nonsense. 41

40 "Grâce à Dieu," AE 201/0B 158.
41 For the absurdity of the "there is" (il y a), which was described as early as 1947 in EDHH 93–113/57–64; cf. AE 3–4 and 207–10/0B 3–4 and 162–65.
To end this chapter, I should like to attempt some reflections on
the method of philosophy expressed in *Otherwise Than Being*.
Since the conceptual exposure essential to any "methodology"
belongs to ontological thinking, we cannot expect here a self-
certain explication of the logos that rules Levinas's texts. The
metaontological speaking that Levinas tries here is out of breath
even before it has said anything. In the few statements about
his "method," Levinas always characterizes it as an "intentional
analysis." Although he does not follow the rules of Husserlian
reductions and brings the whole of classical phenomenology into
question, he remains attached to its spirit insofar as his analyses
expose the forgotten horizons (*Abschattungen*) and "manners"
that essentially belong to it. "Our presentation of notions . . .
remain true to intentional analysis insofar as this means
that one brings those notions back into their horizon of appear-
ing—a horizon which is misunderstood, forgotten, or transposed
in the object's showing, in its notion, in the glance which is
absorbed by the mere notion" (AE 230–31/OB 183).

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas compares his thinking with
the transcendental method, but he refuses the technical proceed-
ing of transcendental idealism. I spoke repeatedly above of "con-
ditions of possibility" and gave some examples of it. For example,
embodiment is the possibility of the victim and of pain. As such,
it is necessary, for that which is made possible through it is
necessary. Pain is assumed to be the possibility of endurance in
passivity for the Other (AE 65–66, 71/OB 51, 55). Giving belongs
to inspiration and to spirituality. They are therefore possible
only in the form of corporeality, for a purely spiritual giving,
which does not offer one's own bread and one's own skin, is a
lie. "Only an eating subject can signify" (AE 86–91/OB 68–72).
The giving out of absolute passivity, however, also implies enjoy-
ment, for without the selfishness of enjoyment, giving could not
be a giving of oneself (AE 92/OB 73). In every case, an implication
is found by looking for something that makes the "object" of
description possible. In this sense, we can also understand the
use of the word "deduction" in *Totality and Infinity*, to which I
referred several times above.

42 This speaking is characterized by "esseruflement," AE x, 5–6, 17/
OB xlii, 5, 14.
44 DDVI 139–43.
Sometimes the transition between two "moments" occurs even more immediately. The making possible is replaced in these cases with a simple "is" (AE 138/OB 108–9). For example: The body is that through which the self is receptive. Only when the persecuted is also responsible for the persecution is his passivity integral and absolute. That is why passivity is atonement (expiation, AE 141/OB 111). Without persecution, the I would exalt itself. It is thus a necessary implication of the dethroning of the I (AE 143/OB 112). Passivity is irritability, receptivity, bareness, vulnerability. Motherliness is the ultimate meaning of vulnerability (AE 137/OB 108). In this last example, motherliness (maternité) is disclosed as an implication of vulnerability. On the other hand, vulnerability is found to be a prerequisite of the relation of the One-for-the-Other—a relation that seems to coincide with the relation of the "Other-in-me" and thus with motherliness. We have thus an example of the "echoing-in-one-another" of which Levinas speaks (AE 23/OB 19).

In order to maintain the reference to transcendental method, one should disregard its connection to a transcendental and foundational consciousness. Insofar as these connections seem essential, the characterization of Levinas's "method" as a "transcendental" one is less suitable than the much more modest and less suggestive characterization as "intentional analysis." Levinas later on rejected the transcendental method because it seemed impossible to detach it from an ultimate consciousness in search for an ultimate ground of all beings, i.e., from the design of ontology.46 Levinas's "method" is not founding, planning, and constructing but rather a new kind of "association."47

"There is another kind of justification of one idea by another, namely the transition from one idea to its superlative or its emphasis.48 In this way, a new idea—which is not implied in the first idea—flows or emanates out of its excess. The new idea is

46 Cf. DDVI 139: The rejection is not absolute, for Levinas also characterizes his "method" as a "transcendentalism that begins with ethics" (143).

47 DDVI 141: "to associate the ideas in a new way."

48 DDVI 142; AE 8, n. 4/OB 187, n. 5: "It is the superlative, more than the negation of the category, which interrupts the system... as if the logical order and the being which it comes to espouse preserved the superlative which exceeds them: in subjectivity, the excess of the non-lieu, in the caress and sexuality—the 'outbidding' of tangency"; AE 13/OB 11: "by its goodness which is the very superlative." For "emphasis," see AE 152 and 161/OB 119 and 125.
thus justified—not simply on the basis of the first one but through its sublimation. As thinking "beyond phenomenology," this philosophy takes its refuge in the superlative and in hyperbolic speaking, the emphasis of which attempts to express the all-surpassing character (excellence) of transcendence (AE 231–32/OB 183–84). An example of this procedure is the deepening and sharpening of the passivity that exists in Saying. The "passivity that is more passive than all passivity" is an extreme possibility of thinking. Another example is the characterization of pain as "excess of passivity." Why does such a sublimation produce a justification and not simply an exaggeration? Levinas himself refers to the relationship with the via eminientiae. But why does one seek an other-than-Being? Because in a certain sense one asks more radically. Emphasis is a way of turning the grounded and the grounding of ontology into transcendence.

In this light, we must also understand the many iterative expressions in Otherwise Than Being, such as "denudation of the denudation," "significance of the signification," "infinitizing of the infinite," "communication of the communication," "gratitude for the condition of gratitude," and so on. Thus, Levinas formulates the structure of the nonidentity and of the nonsimultaneity of the subject with it—its "preceding itself" (se précéder soi-même). Through the iteration of the expression, an inner duplication of the subject shows itself, a duplication that can be thought of as a self-difference in a quasi-time. Here, too, an intensifying, sharpening description radicalizes the investigated theme through a kind of extremism. In an anarchical way, the analysis attempts to shake the movement of grounding through the freeing of a true precedence.

"More I do not know, I do not believe that transparence in method is possible, nor that philosophy is possible as transparence. Those who have concerned themselves with method all their lives have written a lot of books in the place of the more interesting books which they did not write." The idea of a completely transparent, completely self-conscious method and

50 Cf. DDVI 142.
51 AE 63/OB 49 ("denudation of the denudation," "to give a sign of its significance"). AE 119/OB 93 ("infiniting of infinity"), AE 153/OB 119 ("communication of the communications"), AE 190/OB 149 ("gratitude for this state of gratitude").
52 DDVI 143.
methodology is characteristic of ontology. The need for such a self-consciousness corresponds to the desire for a sure foundation on the basis of which one can master everything. The monopoly of this need deafens and blinds one to the enigmatic ambiguity of the Other that the philosophy of Levinas attempts to show. The only way of thinking that corresponds to what is sought is a humble speaking that has lost its self-control and that, while doing unavoidable violence to language, endures "the pain of the expression" (AE 128, n. 4/OB 194, n. 4). It indicates traces without self-assuredness. One always comes too late for what is sought because it has already passed by; it is, however, close to someone who is not caught up in a reflective self-concern.