

ORDINARY PASSIVITY:
SELFHOOD AND ALTERITY IN RICOEUR AND LEVINAS

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by
DARREN E. DAHL

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ABSTRACT

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Darren E. Dahl
University of Guelph, 2001

Advisor:
Professor J. Mitscherling

In his book *Oneself as Another* Paul Ricoeur articulates his philosophy of selfhood. Essential to his proposal is his claim that alterity is constitutive of selfhood as such. Through an examination of the tenth and final study of *Oneself as Another* I will analyse Ricoeur's philosophy of selfhood and determine whether or not he achieves this intention. By exploring his account of the temporality of the self and its fundamental capacity for action I conclude that alterity, and its phenomenological correlate which is passivity, is not constitutive of selfhood. The thesis then examines the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. I conclude that his philosophy of alterity accomplishes that which Ricoeur cannot.

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Introduction

In his book *Oneself as Another* Paul Ricoeur articulates his philosophy of selfhood. Essential to his proposal is his claim that alterity is constitutive of selfhood as such. Through an examination of the tenth and final study of *Oneself as Another* I will analyse Ricoeur's philosophy of selfhood and determine whether or not he achieves this intention. Chapter One will address Ricoeur's development of a philosophy of selfhood as he articulates it beyond the tradition that he calls the "philosophies of the subject" and which he defines according to the logic of the posited cogito. Next, my analysis of his hermeneutics of the self will explain Ricoeur's thought as it progresses through his early studies in *Oneself as Another* and, finally, will focus on his discussion of the polysemic identity of the self and the temporality which is proper to it. Ricoeur's understanding of this temporality will be addressed in terms of an analysis of the self-constancy of 'promising' and the understanding of the present-instant that grounds it. Finally, all of this will be recapitulated at the ontological level where the concept of 'attestation' will be taken up to show that the being of the self is a being of act and power. The first chapter will end with the suggestion that, for Ricoeur, the selfhood of the self is constituted by its capability to be an agent.

In Chapter Two I will revisit this suggestion by continuing my analysis of the tenth study of *Oneself as Another*. Here I will turn my attention to Ricoeur's 'triad of passivity' according to which he situates his discussion of alterity. I will begin this chapter by looking at his criticism of Emmanuel Levinas in order to see Ricoeur's own assumptions about selfhood. Next I will analyse each of the three forms of passivity in

the triad (i.e., 'flesh,' 'the otherness of other people,' and 'conscience') in terms of whether or not they serve to locate alterity at a constitutive level of selfhood. After discussing each of the three forms of passivity I will conclude that Ricoeur is not able to make alterity constitutive of selfhood because he defines temporality according to the activity of agency and initiative. The chapter will conclude with the suggestion that it is only by supplementing and correcting Ricoeur's thought with that of Emmanuel Levinas that Ricoeur's own intentions to make alterity constitutive of selfhood can be fulfilled.

In Chapter Three I will analyse Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy of passivity and alterity as it is presented in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*. I will begin by discussing his account of the Said and, particularly, the temporalization of the present that founds it. Next I will explain the relation of the Saying to the Said and argue that the Saying is not meant to replace the Said but, rather, to found it. Once the relation of the Saying and the Said has been defined, I will develop the logic of the Saying. This will involve explaining Levinas' account that begins with a phenomenology of the summons by another person and develops into an account of the radical passivity of exposure, obsession, persecution and substitution. My analysis will be guided by the temporal structure proper to the Saying. I will show that the movement from summons to substitution is supported by the temporality of the trace and, finally, the temporality of recurrence. Levinas' radical account of passivity will be fully developed once I show how, according to the logic of the Saying, the present is transformed from its logic of self-identity in the Said, to a logic of substitution, in which the present is revealed as the non-identical recurrence of the Other-in-me.

Finally, in my “Concluding Reflections,” I will argue that Ricoeur’s third philosophical intention--i.e., to make alterity constitutive of selfhood--is initially developed by referring to the metaphorical force of the word ‘as’ in the title *Oneself as Another*. I will show that despite Ricoeur’s intention to define ‘as’ according to a logic of implication, his actual account of selfhood, activity, and passivity prevents him from achieving such a strong meaning for the word. Next, by showing how Ricoeur’s account of the passivity of the flesh and Levinas’ account of radical passivity overlap, I will argue that in order to give ‘as’ the strong meaning intended by Ricoeur, it must be corrected and intensified by the metaphorical force of the preposition ‘in’ which is developed according to Levinas’ temporality of the Saying. Finally I will conclude that the intensification of the relation between oneself and another defined by ‘as’ according to that relationship defined by ‘in’ is best described as the detour of Ricoeur’s philosophy of selfhood through the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas.

Chapter One: Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Ontology of the Self

1.1. Introduction

In this first chapter I will trace the development of Ricoeur's articulation of human selfhood by focusing on the tense and overlapping relationship between sameness (*idem*-identity) and selfhood (*ipse*-identity). The analysis of this relationship will lead to an account of how the self is specifically characterized in terms of a temporality that divides along the lines of sameness and selfhood while intersecting within the self's ontological attestation of its being-capable. The chapter will begin by locating Ricoeur's treatment of the self beyond the discourse which he characterizes as the "philosophies of the subject." In order to show that it is the self with which he is concerned--and not the cogito--Ricoeur must locate the self within the exegetical operations of hermeneutic analysis and, therefore, the self must first be discovered in the world as an object. The self as object, however, will then be taken up from the perspective of its temporality and it will be shown that, while the self is first hermeneutically discovered as a thing in the world, its proper temporal structure distinguishes it from objects. This temporality will then be developed in terms of initiative and the self will be shown to be a self insofar as it is capable of action. Finally, once the selfhood of the self is articulated in terms of its capability to act in the world, I will follow Ricoeur into an investigation of the ontological understanding necessary to sustain such a view of the self. Here, at the ontological level, I will show that in "attestation" the self-as-agent is reconnected to the world in which it was initially discovered.

Throughout this chapter I will pay particular attention to the way in which the selfhood of the self is understood in terms of its capability for action. In my analysis of both initiative, which initially sets the self apart from a thing, and attestation, which finally rejoins the self to its world, I will seek to show that, for Ricoeur, the self is born according to its capacity to act.

1.2. From the Cogito to the Self: The Detour

Since the 1970s Ricoeur's thought has developed according to his effort to distance himself from a philosophy of subjectivity which originates from a self-positing, transparent, and immediate cogito. Since that time he has called the philosophies which share the cogito as their common starting point "philosophies of the subject." Within *Oneself as Another*¹ he once again makes clear that it is his intention to develop a philosophy of selfhood beyond the terms of discourse established by the "philosophies of the subject."

Within *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur's claim is that that which holds all "philosophies of the subject" together is their common equation of the terms 'subject' and 'I' (OA, 4). He wishes, however, to place his philosophical investigations "at an equal distance from the apology of the cogito and from its overthrow" and, therefore, supersede the "quarrel over the cogito" (OA, 4). As a result he seeks to contest this equation of 'subject' and 'I' by arguing that the subject is more adequately understood as a 'self'. The transition from 'I' to 'self' is governed by his intention "to indicate the primacy of

¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). All further citations will appear within the text as follows: (OA).

reflective mediation over the immediate positing of the subject as this is expressed in the first person singular: 'I think', 'I am'" (OA, 1). Thus, rather than grounding his philosophy of subjectivity upon the usual foundation of the cogito--transcendental or otherwise--Ricoeur proposes to discover the self as a mediated self within the hermeneutic activity of intentional consciousness.

In an early essay entitled "Existence and Hermeneutics," Ricoeur provides an account of the necessarily indirect nature of consciousness understood as hermeneutic. The move of reflective mediation is first a move wherein consciousness seeks itself outside of itself and is, therefore, a move outward into the world of 'objects'. As a result, the identity of the self is not posited as an immanent identity already determined by the self-referential nature of the cogito itself. Ricoeur draws upon an image of the activity proper to the origin of the discipline of hermeneutics to show instead that "the subject . . . interprets himself while interpreting signs. . . [and is therefore] a being who discovers, by the exegesis of his own life, that he is placed in being before he places and possesses himself."² Unlike the cogito the self is discovered in the signs of itself in the world.³

In *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur intensifies the indirect manner in which hermeneutic consciousness proceeds. His hermeneutic phenomenology as it arose within earlier texts like *Conflict of Interpretations* sought to purge Husserlian phenomenology of

² Paul Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, translated by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 11.

³ For an excellent analysis of the difference between Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy and the idealist "philosophies of the subject" see Gary Madison, "Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of the Subject," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, edited by Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 75-81.

its interest in a transparent subject. In his more recent studies, however, even the hermeneutic consciousness at the core of his revised philosophy of reflection must be pushed further. Even though the self discovered according to hermeneutic consciousness is no longer the posited cogito it is still too private and subjective because its first move is always a move of self-designation.⁴ In the early studies of *Oneself as Another*, however, Ricoeur proposes to locate the self as a third person within the world of designated objects. Thus, while his quest for the self will always be in terms of the question ‘who?’ (OA, 16-19) it will not be a “short path” wherein the ‘who’ simply finds itself as the externalization of itself but, rather, a “long path” wherein the ‘who?’ will have to pass through the detour of the ‘what?’ and the ‘why?’ of action.⁵

By taking up the analysis of ‘persons’ according to P.F. Strawson, Ricoeur is able to show that within the structure of language the self appears as first of all a singular identifiable thing among other things.⁶ According to Strawson’s account of the way in which language identifies according to an “individualizing intention” (OA, 27), Ricoeur shows that a self-as-a-person first emerges as a “basic particular”, that is, a particular

⁴ For a good analysis of this change in Ricoeur’s thought see Edi Pucci, “Review of Paul Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another*: personal identity and ‘selfhood’ in the thought of Paul Ricoeur.” in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, edited by Richard Kearney (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 185-187.

⁵ Pucci, 186-187.

⁶ According to the network of action questions which governs Ricoeur’s investigations this initial discovery of the self-as-object corresponds to the question ‘what?’

individual which can be identified without having to presuppose anything else about it.⁷ Thus, the self-as-a-person emerges from Strawson's project as the necessary protection against "the drift toward private and non-public reference to which a premature recourse to self-designation might lead" (OA, 32). By beginning with Strawson's self-as-a-person identified within the public world of ordinary language, Ricoeur has initiated his analysis of the self beyond the discourse of the posited cogito characteristic of the "philosophies of the subject." Ultimately, however, Strawson's project must be left behind because he provides no adequate account of how the self is able to designate itself. For Ricoeur this means that Strawson is not able to account for the self as more than an object among objects because he is not able to understand the self as a *subject* of designation as well as a designated object.⁸

Ricoeur's next move is a move into the philosophy of speech-acts. What is important for our purposes is the development of *action* as a central category of the self. By moving from a semantics of the self, wherein the self was located according to the individuating procedures inherent to the structure of ordinary language, to the pragmatics of discourse, Ricoeur introduces the notion of action at the very heart of language (OA,

⁷ According to Strawson a "basic particular" is identified according to the procedures of ordinary language itself. First, a "definite description consists in creating a class that has but a single member through the intersecting of well-chosen classes . . . with the aim of opposing one member of a class to all the others" (OA, 28-29). Second, a "proper name permanently designates a single individual in opposition to others of the same class (OA, 29). Third, personal pronouns and deictic terms designate differently according to their existence as an event in the external world (OA, 30).

⁸ Ricoeur states: "We may well wonder, though, if we can get very far in determining the concept of person without bringing in, at one time or another, the power of self-designation that makes the person not merely a unique type of thing but a self" (OA, 32).

43). Insofar as the self-as-a-person designates itself according to the self-referentiality of being a speaker (e.g., being able to say 'I' in speaking to 'you') the self ceases to be merely an object in the world and, instead, becomes the subject of an action. This discovery of speech-acts is crucial for Ricoeur's project because it supports his intention to allow the self to arise first of all as him about whom one speaks *and* as the subject of one's own speech (OA, 52). However the discovery is also the beginning of a dead end. For as soon as the event of speech is realized in speech-act theory the subject of the speech act is ignored in order that the "fact" of the event might become the focus.⁹ With the subject of action lost behind a theory of the event in general Ricoeur is led to seek other resources for his continued discovery of the self.

Speech-act theory disclosed the possibility of discovering a self that is both the object of designation and the subject of self-designation but it could not deliver the resources to develop a full articulation of the selfhood of this self. In order to further develop this initial sense of selfhood Ricoeur seeks resources in the phenomenological tradition and turns to intentional consciousness and a teleological account of action.¹⁰

⁹ Ricoeur states that "the 'I' is lost, however, when one sees that speech-act theory places its emphasis on the 'fact' of the statement made" (OA, 49). The loss of the agent of action because of a refusal to look for the agent of action within speech-act theory carries over into action theory characterized by the thought of Donald Davidson (OA, 60). As a result Ricoeur will need to seek the selfhood of the agent beyond the resources of analytic philosophy. Positively, the detour through speech-act theory and, in the following study, action theory, corresponds to the question 'why?' located within the important network of questions that govern Ricoeur's analysis. Taking the event as simply an event without an agent serves to prevent eventfulness from being too immediately founded on the basis of subjectivity and thus, once again, Ricoeur's analysis of selfhood is checked against a premature appeal to the self as author of its own existence.

¹⁰ As Charles E. Reagan points out, when Ricoeur returns to an analysis of the place of intentionality in human action he does so in terms of the "power" of the agent to act and

From this he determines that a general ontology of events has eclipsed the temporal dimension necessary in an account of action (OA, 78). As we will now see, the distinction between the temporality proper to the self as object and that of the self as self will open the way to a more fully developed account of selfhood.

1.3. From Sameness to Selfhood: Promise and Initiative

In the fifth study of *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur provides the important distinction between the identity of the self on the basis of its *idem*-identity (i.e., self as object) and that of its *ipse*-identity (i.e., self in the mode of selfhood).¹¹ He explains this distinction by articulating the temporal structure which is proper to each form of identity. The question of the temporality of *idem*-identity is a question of permanence in time (OA, 116). Temporal permanence is the temporality proper to objects because it is the temporality proper to substances, that is, to things whose substantial identity does not change even though certain accidental qualities of the things do (OA, 116-118). This straightforward connection of permanence in time with the temporality of that which bears an *idem*-identity leads Ricoeur to ask if this is how we should account also for the temporality of the self. He argues that it is indeed the case that we do often account for the identity of the self in this way. For example, I can be identified as the self that I was

situates this power within the potentiality of the “lived body” phenomenologically understood in terms of the ‘I can’. In this current chapter I will address the question of the agent’s power to act in terms of the temporal structure of initiative which underlies it. In my second chapter the connection of this theme with that of the body will be discussed. See Charles E. Reagan, “The Self as Another,” *Philosophy Today*, 37:1 (1993), 8-9.

¹¹ Ricoeur introduces this distinction on p.3 of OA.

yesterday even though I may be wearing a different shirt.¹² However, despite the correspondence between the permanence of objects and a certain kind of permanence of the self. Ricoeur argues that when we seek the temporal structure of the self as the *subject* of action we presuppose a different account of permanence because we presuppose a different account of temporality (OA, 118).¹³

The temporal permanence specific to the self as self, that is, as the self-designating subject of its own action, is the permanence of faithfulness to one's intentions (OA, 123). The self is identifiable over time because, as a subject of action, it is able to remain constant to its intentions by committing itself according to its capability to carry out the action promised. Thus, the temporality of the self as agent is structured according to the temporality of the agent's intentionality. In his essay "Initiative", which will be discussed in more detail below, Ricoeur makes the connection between a promise, intentionality and the self as agent: "I would say that every initiative is an intention to do something and, as such, a commitment to do that thing, hence a promise that I make silently to myself and tacitly to another."¹⁴ The self as agent is discovered, then, in the temporality of promising and the self-constancy that arises from it. The self discovered

¹² Ricoeur's most developed account of how identity is thought in terms of the permanence in time proper to substances (particularly the very developed sense of substance which one finds in Kant) can be found in his account of 'character' in his discussion of narrative identity (OA, 121-122).

¹³ Reagan, 10.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, "Initiative," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, translated by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 217. Further citations to this essay will appear within the text as follows: (Int).

with and beyond Strawson's semantic identity and Davidson's theory of action is the self whose selfhood comes into its own specific identity through the distinction between the temporal permanence of objects and the temporal permanence of self-constancy, or promise. The temporality which underlies that self-constancy will now be developed.

Essential to the temporal structure of self-constancy is Ricoeur's development of the dialectic between the 'present' and the 'instant'. The present, in this case, means the present that has an internal relation with the past and the future within itself. Because of this internal relation Ricoeur characterizes the present as having a certain "thickness" and distinguishes it from the instant. He states:

The present, indeed, as future present, includes within its thickness a part of the future, as our notion of imminence and our entire vocabulary of adverbs, verbs, and nouns express so well. . . . The same is true of the immediate past, well characterized by the notion of the recent: it is that which has just happened and which, in a certain manner, is still there in the form of primary memory, intertwined with present experience. . . . As we see, the present is pregnant with this imminent future and this recent past and does not allow itself to be represented by the figure of a point without thickness placed on a line (Int, 210).

The instant, as Ricoeur has just hinted, is characterized by a point on a line. It "marks the now as *incidence*, [as] what could be termed its effect of irruption, or rupture" (Int, 210).

Unlike the 'thick' present, the instant is a point-like interruption which forces us to construe time not in terms of the synthetic unity of the past, present and future but, rather, in terms of an "indefinite series of instants and of intervals between these instants" (Int, 211). The 'thick' present is, for Ricoeur, "phenomenological time" while the point-like instant is representative of "cosmological time" (Int, 211).

To each of these accounts of the present and the instant corresponds an account of the tense relationship between activity and passivity. I will first take up the relation of

activity and passivity in phenomenological time and then move on to show how the same relation appears in cosmological time. In the context of his reflections upon Augustine's theory of time in Bk.XI of the *Confessions*, Ricoeur provides a clear account of how phenomenological time reveals the activity and passivity inherent in subjectivity. Tracing Augustine's aporetic investigation of time, Ricoeur comes to the point where time is discovered as the time of the soul and the present is discovered as a "present intention."¹⁵ Along this way of discovery the past and the future are revealed as "impression-images" existing within the soul.¹⁶ When these discoveries come together we get the first glimpse of the essential relation between activity and passivity and the temporality of the human subject. Ricoeur states that "[i]t is *in* the soul, hence as impression, that expectation and memory possess extension. But the impression is in the soul only inasmuch as the mind *acts*, that is expects, attends, and remembers."¹⁷ Thus, in her very temporality the subject is an acting being: "the present is not simply traveled through, but [quoting Augustine] 'man's attentive mind, which is present, is relegating the future to the past.'"¹⁸ As Ricoeur himself comments, "[t]he vocabulary here continues to oscillate between activity and passivity."¹⁹ The activity latent within Augustine's "present intention," itself clearly connected to phenomenology's notion of intentional consciousness, and the passivity

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol.I, translated by Kathleen McLaughlin & David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 19.

¹⁶ *Time and Narrative*, 18.

¹⁷ *Time and Narrative*, 19.

¹⁸ *Time and Narrative*, 19.

¹⁹ *Time and Narrative*, 21.

revealed in receiving “impression-images” point to the tense relationship of activity and passivity that exists at the core of subjectivity.

This relation of activity and passivity that is central to our experience of the phenomenological present also shows itself in cosmological time. In the essay “Initiative”, Ricoeur argues that “the experience of the present as a transit [in the sense just described] is an experience of passivity that delivers us over to the force of circumstances. . . .And we cannot help representing this force of circumstances to ourselves as the external course of time, punctuated by light and shadows, by day and night, by seasons and years. . . .In this way, physical time, represented by a line with its points and intervals, makes its mark on the time of the living present in experience of passivity” (Int. 211-212). Just as in phenomenological time where the impression-images of memory were imprinted upon a passive soul so, in cosmological time, does the human being experience the coming and going of elements and forces within her external world as the passivity proper to the time of the instant.

It should be noted that already in this initial account of activity and passivity within the lived present and the instant it seems clear that activity is primordial and that passivity, while undeniable, is secondary. Ricoeur argues that, for Augustine, the past and future are in the mind as impression-images and, therefore, are representative of passivity. But, while passivity is undeniably present, it is present only as the result of a more primordial or originary activity wherein “the impression is in the soul only inasmuch as the mind *acts*.”²⁰ Following my investigation of attestation, where we will see the agent’s

²⁰ *Time and Narrative*, 19.

power-to-be most clearly developed, I will return to the question of the relation between activity and passivity and ask if passivity is not subordinated to activity in Ricoeur's philosophy of selfhood in the same way as it is here in his analysis of time. This question will then become the key question in my second chapter where I will explicitly investigate the place of passivity in relation to selfhood.

To these two accounts of time, and their corresponding references to activity and passivity, Ricoeur adds a third account: that of calendar time. Essential to the relation between calendar time and action is Ricoeur's notion of "axial time." Axial time is that time which is the intersection of cosmological time and phenomenological time wherein we discover a "living today" that is both a datable instant on a calendar and a lived present experienced in its 'thickness' as the ability to integrate the future and the past. It is the intersection of both of these times insofar as it is a "novel event, held to break with a former era and to inaugurate a course of events different from all that had preceded it" (Int, 213). Ricoeur argues that axial time is the time of "*initium*" and is, therefore, the time of "beginning: the axial moment of the calendar is the first model of a beginning, in that this axial moment is determined by an occurrence so important that it is held to set a *new* course of events" (Int, 214). Thus, axial time, like the "present intention," points to initiative, to the power to begin, and therefore to the capacity for action that lies at the core of the human agent. Passivity is present here too insofar as initiative is linked to beginning and beginning is linked to birth. For it is in birth, Ricoeur says in agreement with Heidegger, that we are 'thrown' into our world "and thus bear the imprint of a passivity and an opacity that escapes us" (Int, 215). Once again, though, it is not our birth

that characterizes our selfhood but, rather, our ability to intervene within the world into which we have been thrown (Int, 216). The selfhood of the self lies in its capacity to act.

Because we are temporal beings for whom the present is the lived present we are fundamentally capable of an agency understood first and foremost in terms of initiative. After having followed the “long path” starting from the designation of the self as an object among other identifiable objects, through the possibility of this self’s own self-designation according to the logic of speech-acts, we now see that the temporality of self-constancy, and therefore the identity of the self, is based on the temporality of agency, or initiative. The selfhood of the self lies in its *agency* because such selfhood is constituted according to its temporalization in the lived present which attests to an intentional initiative that is capable of making a beginning.²¹

Ricoeur’s investigation into the selfhood of the self does not end here however. In the final study of *Oneself as Another* he asks what kind of being such a self must have (OA, 297). Given that the selfhood of the self has been articulated according to the “originary conception of initiative”²² what sort of ontology would be needed in order to explicate the being that is proper to this acting self? It is to this question that I now turn.

1.4. Attestation: The Ontology of Selfhood

²¹ Ricoeur also discusses this concept of beginning in relation to Kant’s philosophy in OA, 104-107 and in “The Concept of Responsibility: An Essay in Semantic Analysis.” See *The Just*, translated by David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 17-24.

²² *The Just*, 17.

When Ricoeur introduced the notion of attestation in the Introduction to *Oneself as Another* it was in the context of establishing an alternative account of truth in the face of the two extreme cases of Descartes and Nietzsche who, respectively, sought absolute truth and, inversely, the relativity of all truth claims (OA, 20-23). Within the specifically epistemological account of attestation Ricoeur presented the promise of this concept in terms of its ability to point the way beyond the oscillating extremes of the “philosophies of the subject” by drawing upon an understanding of truth supported by the notion of credence (OA, 21-22).²³

In the final study, however, Ricoeur wishes to develop the notion of attestation at an ontological level by drawing out the fundamental notion of agency within the concept of credence. To attest to something is to commit oneself to its truthfulness, it is to act in faith towards it. Therefore, to attest to the truthfulness of oneself is to commit oneself to oneself. Insofar as the selfhood of the self lies in its agency, to attest to the truth of oneself is to attest to the power of the self to commit to its capacity to act (OA, 302). For Ricoeur therefore, each expression of agency--whether that be in speaking, acting, narrating or imputing--is already an attestation to the self.

It is at this point, however, that Ricoeur’s discourse begins to sound dangerously similar to those philosophies of the subject which he has sought to transcend. Thus, one could object and argue that Ricoeur’s notion of attestation still bears within it the cogito which, in the self’s expression of agency, is posited as the truth of that self. However, in order to meet this objection, Ricoeur articulates this notion of attestation in such a way as

²³ See Mark S. Muldoon, “Ricoeur’s Ethics: Another Version of Virtue Ethics? Attestation is not a Virtue,” *Philosophy Today*, 42:3 (1998), 303-304.

to thoroughly identify it according to the detours through which he has just come in his philosophy of selfhood. He accomplishes this by arguing that at the ontological level the being of selfhood will be accounted for by showing that the self's reflective discovery of itself in the world is its discovery of itself as *simultaneously* having the mode of being proper to objects of the world and that of subjects of agency. When the detour of reflection by way of analysis was developed at the epistemological level we saw the self emerge as a designated object among objects and as the subject of its own self-designation. At the ontological level this earlier overlap between the self-as-object and the self-as-agent is transformed from an analytic and phenomenological structure into two intersecting ways of being characteristic of the self (OA, 300). As we will now see, this is the essential point behind Ricoeur's notion of attestation.

Insofar as the self is an acting self its being must be connected to its capability to act. Thus Ricoeur asks what sort of an ontology of action could support a self that must, at the same time, *be* a thing among things and the subject of agency. His response to this question takes shape as an account of how the being of human action is always already located within the potentiality of the actual world. To develop this he starts with Aristotle's metaphysical distinction between *dunamis* and *energeia*. However, as soon as he starts here he locates a problem for anyone seeking to use Aristotle's metaphysics in order to account for the being of *human* action (OA, 306). Ricoeur explains that when, in his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle considers *dunamis* and *energeia* he uses examples drawn solely from the world of *poiesis* and not *praxis*. As a result the realm of properly human

action--*praxis*-- is little served by Aristotle's discussion.²⁴ However, Ricoeur seeks to turn this obstacle into a "means of support" (OA, 307). He asks: "Is it not essential, for a deepened ontological understanding of human action, that the examples taken from this final sphere appear by turns as *central* and *decentered*" (OA, 308)? In turning Aristotle's obstacle to his favor Ricoeur seeks an understanding of being that will provide a ground for human action while not being exhausted by it. He realizes that the being of human action can only be adequately explored at its properly ontological level when it has been decentered (OA, 308).

At this point Ricoeur moves on to explore the resources in the thought of another philosopher who was concerned with the relation between being and human action. By analysing *Being and Time* Ricoeur is able to draw out Heidegger's correlation between selfhood and the being of Dasein that is revealed in attestation. This correlation allows Ricoeur to set up an initial distinction wherein the "ontological status of selfhood is . . . solidly based upon the distinction between two modes of being, Dasein and *Verhandenheit*" (OA, 309). Ricoeur continues: "In this regard, the correlation between the category of sameness in my own analyses and the notion of *Vorhandenheit* in Heidegger is the same as that between selfhood and the mode of being of Dasein" (OA, 309). Ricoeur goes on to argue that this connection between selfhood and Dasein is mediated by 'care' (OA, 309). It is at this point that we first see Ricoeur define *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity as two different modes of being. At this stage he is prepared to

²⁴ Ricoeur's point here is that when one turns from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the structure of action as *praxis* is investigated, to his *Metaphysics* in an attempt to discover the ontological ground of *praxis*, one does not discover an analysis of *praxis* but, rather, *poiesis*.

follow Heidegger in splitting these two modes of being and, in so doing, he attempts to find in Heidegger's notion of 'care' a way to locate the ontology of human action within this distinction. Thus he asks: "Might care, taken in its ontological dimension, be the equivalent of what we have called the analogical unity of action" (OA, 310)? What is most interesting about this question is that Ricoeur does not immediately answer it. Instead he indicates that such an answer cannot be given until 'care' is properly considered within the "broader framework of being-in-the-world" (OA, 310). It is here, when Ricoeur questions the interpretation of this broader framework, that his critique of Heidegger begins.

For Ricoeur, the question of the 'way-of-being-in-the-world' is, as we have seen, precisely the question of the detour by way of 'objects'.²⁵ A proper understanding of the self's way-of-being-in-the-world, therefore, must be able to account for the self as both the subject of action *and* a thing among things; it must be able to account for the being of the self in terms of both *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity (OA, 310-311). For Heidegger, however, Dasein's way-of-being-in-the-world has to do with a self that is sharply distinguished from 'things'. Thus, 'facticity', Dasein's 'care'-ful engagement with the world, is limited to a merely subjective understanding of the self because it is grounded on an ontological dichotomy between sameness and selfhood (OA, 314).²⁶ The result is

²⁵ It is the detour by way of the 'what?' and the 'why?'

²⁶ Matthew Daigler explains this point well: "Characterizing Dasein in terms of categories that are appropriate for the entities it encounters within the world would rob Dasein of its unique mode of existence and, indeed, of its very selfhood, which is to be a being that projects itself into the future by way of a retrieval of the past." See Matthew A. Daigler,

that the Heideggerian 'way-of-being-in-the-world' robs from the self any *real*²⁷ connection to the world. While Ricoeur agrees that the correlation of the self and 'being-in-the-world' is "indisputable" (OA, 313) and, further, that because of this "the self is essentially an opening onto the world" (OA, 314), he argues that it is precisely because of this that one must be able to account for the *real* connection between the agency of the self and world. In conclusion Ricoeur states:

But how is one to do justice to this very opening, if one does not perceive in human initiative a specific co-ordination with the movements of the world and all the physical aspects of action? It is the detour of reflection *by way of analysis* that is at issue here. The revelatory function recognized in Dasein not only does not seem to me to be a substitute for this objectifying detour, it appears to presuppose it or require it (OA, 314).²⁸

Given the ontological importance of the detour of reflection by way of analysis it is now clear that the distinction between Dasein and *Vorhandenheit*, to which Ricoeur added his own distinction between *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity, is to be accounted for in terms of a relation of tension and overlap rather than as a dichotomy. Ricoeur's interpretation of the early Heidegger allowed him to move beyond his original

"Being as Act and Potency in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur," *Philosophy Today*, 42:4 (1998), 382.

²⁷ My use of 'real' accords with Ricoeur's comment that attestation as the detour of reflection by way of analysis gives his philosophy of the self a "*realist* twist" (OA, 300).

²⁸ Again, I find Matthew Daigler's explanation to be on the mark: "The detour by way of analysis. . . is the only thing that will enable us to place the subject back into the world of living things, the world of *phusis*, to which. . . the human being possesses a sort of community in spite of its freedom and subjectivity. This rootedness in life is not sufficiently captured by Heidegger's notion of facticity. Understanding the world as merely the horizon of human care, as Heidegger does, blinds us to the degree to which acting and suffering is rooted in being that is at once actual and potential" (Daigler, 383).

Aristotelian starting point and develop the ontology of act and power in terms more closely aligned with selfhood. Heidegger's analysis placed the being of human agency within the horizon of Dasein's being-in-the-world but was not able to account for the worldhood of the world outside of a subjectivist notion of care. For this reason Ricoeur's analysis must move beyond Heidegger just as it moved beyond Aristotle.

It is in the philosophy of Spinoza that Ricoeur finds an ontology of act and power that maintains the tense relationship between actuality and potentiality.²⁹ Power, according to Spinoza, "does not mean potentiality but productivity, which is not to be opposed to act in the sense of actuality or realization" (OA, 315). Thus, from the start, Spinoza's account of power is such that power is generative of and present within the actual world. Power is not merely the potential of a volitional being but already the productive force of the world which is disclosed within the objects of that world. This allows Ricoeur to argue that "human action [is] the place of readability par excellence of this acceptance of being" (OA, 308) and *not* the place of origin. The origin of the being of action is in what Spinoza calls the *essentia actuosa* or "the infinite substance".³⁰ Therefore it is, as Ricoeur states, "in the nature of the actual essence of things to be involved in the force-field which constitutes the real world."³¹ The *conatus*, far from a

²⁹ Unfortunately, as Mark Muldoon notes, "Ricoeur's discussion of Spinoza is short and the notion of *conatus* is not as much argued for as it is merely stated" (Muldoon, 305).

³⁰ Daigler, 383.

³¹ Sylvain Zac quoted in Daigler, 383.

posited *cogito*, is, "one among the infinity of the actualizations of the *essentia actuosa*, which by producing itself, necessarily produces all things."³² Ricoeur states:

What finally matters to me more than any other idea is the idea toward which the preceding discussion of Aristotle's *energeia* was directed, namely, on the one hand, that it is in man that *conatus*, or the power of being of all things, is most clearly readable and, on the other hand, that everything expresses to different degrees the power or life that Spinoza calls the life of God (OA, 317).

Human action, therefore, is but one expression of the actual active life-force of the world. Given the resources of Spinoza's philosophy, Ricoeur's ontology of attestation points to a self that is discovered in its fundamental relation with the world. Its power to be is not its positedness but rather its "specific co-ordination with the movements of the world and all the physical aspects of action" (OA, 314). It is because of this ontological relation to the world of 'things' that all attestation of the self is always already attestation to the being-true of the detour of reflection by way of analysis

1.5. Conclusion

Ricoeur's hermeneutic ontology of the self has been developed in order to show how, through an account of *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity, the selfhood of the self bears its own proper temporality and way of being. In an effort to supersede the philosophies of the subject Ricoeur traced the selfhood of the self through a detour by way of objects while, at the same time, saving the self from being merely an object and, therefore, from being identified according to the temporal permanence of sameness. The agency that was disclosed in his analysis of speech-acts was rediscovered when the temporality of the self

³² Again, Zac quoted in Daigler, 383.

was determined as the temporality of initiative and, therefore, commitment and faithfulness to one's intentions. Ricoeur went on to show, however, that both dimensions of the self are vital in his ontological account of the self that is simultaneously the subject of its agency and a thing among things, now understood in a Spinozistic manner.

In preparation for the analysis to follow in the second chapter it is useful to return to a point raised earlier in the discussion of initiative. In the context of my discussion of Ricoeur's interpretation of Augustine's account of temporality I suggested that Ricoeur's philosophy of selfhood, like his account of the relation between temporality and activity, privileges activity over passivity. If we can link passivity with alterity, as Ricoeur does (OA, 318), we can develop this by asking if, as Edi Pucci suggests, attestation is always already attestation of Otherness,³³ or if attestation as an ontological category is another indication that activity--i.e., agency--is that which constitutes selfhood. Thus far Ricoeur's analysis of selfhood has given us good reasons to suspect the latter option. In his analyses of the temporality of promising and in his ontology of the self as an explicit ontology of act and power he has consistently developed the selfhood of the self in terms of agency, initiative and the capable subject. Yet, in the midst of this Ricoeur suggests that his philosophy of selfhood is governed by an intention to make otherness "*constitutive of selfhood as such*" (OA, 3 emphasis added). It remains to be seen if his account of alterity in terms of passivity will be able to deliver on this promise.

³³ Pucci, 203.

Chapter 2: Alterity and Passivity in *Oneself as Another*

2.1 Introduction

In the Introduction to *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur situates the studies to follow by accounting for the three philosophical intentions guiding his project. The first two, to indicate the primacy of reflective mediation and to distinguish between *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity, were discussed in the previous chapter. I will now turn to a discussion of his third philosophical intention, the one most explicitly indicated by the title of the work as a whole: "*Oneself as Another* suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other" (OA, 3). Ricoeur warns us not to interpret this intention in such a way that alterity will be understood as though it is merely implicated by the presence of a plurality of selves. Such an understanding, wherein the plurality of selves would necessarily point to one self and another, does not capture the intimacy which Ricoeur seeks. The otherness which Ricoeur wishes to address is the "otherness of a kind that can be constitutive of selfhood as such" (OA, 3).

2.2 Ricoeur on Levinas: The Problem with Absolute Alterity

According to Ricoeur "only a self can have an other than self" (OA, 187). As we will see, this statement is fundamental to Ricoeur's account of the relation of alterity to selfhood. In order to introduce the basic idea behind such a claim it is worthwhile to take up his criticism of Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy of alterity. In taking up Ricoeur's criticism, however, I intend only to show how Ricoeur's response to Levinas is governed

by his own conclusions about the structure of selfhood. I *do not* think that Ricoeur's interpretation of Levinas is based on a fair or rigorous engagement with Levinas' texts. Therefore, I do not present it as an explanation of Levinas' thought and I will not seek to evaluate it as such.¹

Ricoeur's critique of Emmanuel Levinas' is twofold. According to Ricoeur, his account of both the Same and of the Other suffers from a certain philosophical "hyperbole." By hyperbole Ricoeur does not mean that Levinas is simply prone to inflated rhetoric. Instead he characterizes such hyperbole as "the systematic practice of *excess* in philosophical argumentation"(OA, 337). Ricoeur's reference to hyperbole here is not his first. In his discussion of the self-defeating nature of the "philosophies of the subject" earlier in *Oneself as Another* he characterized them as also being based on philosophical hyperbole. I wish to argue, therefore, that Ricoeur's effort to locate Levinas' philosophy of the Same and of the Other within the context of philosophical hyperbole is his attempt to locate it within the tradition of the "philosophies of the subject".

As I suggested in the first chapter, Ricoeur's movement beyond the philosophies of the subject arises insofar as he articulates the selfhood of the self without recourse to the *posited* cogito. Ricoeur argues that, within the philosophies of the subject, "[t]he cogito is without any genuine philosophical signification unless its positing is invested

¹ I will provide my own interpretation of the pertinent themes from Levinas' thought in the following chapter. For an excellent assessment of Ricoeur's critique of Levinas in *Oneself as Another* see Peter Kemp's article, "Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas: original affirmation between ontological attestation and ethical injunction," in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, edited by Richard Kearney (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 55-56.

with the ambition of establishing a final, ultimate foundation” (OA, 4). The act of positing characteristic of these philosophies is best defined by hyperbole because of its use of excess to achieve the ambition described above. In other words, the cogito can only be founded absolutely insofar as that by which it is founded is measured by the same excess as the desired result. Ricoeur goes on to suggest that the strategy of hyperbolic positing also contains within itself a system of opposites. That by which the cogito is founded must be its inverted reflection. In the case of Descartes, for example, in order to have an absolute foundation (i.e., cogito) one must assume its contrary to be equally absolute (i.e., evil genius, doubt). Ricoeur indicates such a move when he suggests that, “[t]he foundational ambition belonging to the Cartesian cogito can be recognized from the outset in the hyperbolic character of the doubt that opens the area of investigation in the *Meditations*. The radical nature of the project is thus of the same scope as the doubt” (OA, 5). While Ricoeur’s interpretation of Descartes might not satisfy his readers, it is essential to grasp the kind of logic to which he is pointing in his analysis of Descartes in order to fully appreciate his criticism of Levinas.

Now that Ricoeur has shown us that hyperbole operates within a system of opposites we can better understand what he means when he says that Levinas is a philosopher of hyperbole. Insofar as Levinas develops the Otherness of the Other against, and therefore on the basis of, the Sameness of the Same, he remains caught within the “philosophies of the subject.” Ricoeur starts his critique by focusing on the role of hyperbole in Levinas’ philosophy of the Same. He states:

It is remarkable that *Totality and Infinity* begins by establishing an ego possessed by the desire to form a circle with itself, to identify itself. . . . [T]he ego before the encounter with the other (it would be better to say, the ego before it is broken into by the other) is a stubbornly closed, locked up, separate ego. . . .The theme of separation, as bound up as it is with phenomenology. . .already bears the mark of hyperbole” (OA, 337).

Ricoeur is concerned to show that Levinas’ strategy in achieving the radical exteriority which he believes is necessary to escape Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology is to posit an excessive or hyperbolic understanding of the Same against which he will construct his philosophy of the Other. What is most important here is Ricoeur’s claim that Levinas’ Other is a *product* of his philosophy of the Same. This logic is apparent in Ricoeur’s statement that “[a] pretension dwells within [the Same], one more radical than that driving the Fichtean, then Husserlian ambition of universal constitution and radical self-grounding; this pretension expresses a will to closure, more precisely a state of separation, that *makes* otherness the equivalent of radical exteriority” (OA, 335-336, emphasis added). It is the last clause that is important. It is by positing Sameness in a hyperbolic manner that Levinas is able to arrive at a philosophy of radical exteriority. Or, to use his words, only the excessive philosophy of the Same can “make” radical exteriority possible.

Levinas’ Other, therefore, is the inverted image of the Same. Further, it is the product of this posited Sameness insofar as Levinas’ philosophical strategy is one of hyperbolic excess. From here Ricoeur moves on to show how such an achievement of Otherness by these means actually turns Levinas’ philosophy against itself. For both Ricoeur and Levinas the philosophy of alterity is intended to disrupt the conventional Western philosophical discourse which privileges unity and sameness over alterity and

difference. Thus, Levinas' radical understanding of alterity is meant to open the way for a genuine philosophy of intersubjectivity. However, Ricoeur argues, it is this very notion of radical alterity that seems to spell the end for intersubjectivity. Insofar as Levinas has defined the Sameness of the Same in terms of radical closure *in order to* invest the Otherness of the Other with a radical alterity, he is forced to establish the terms wherein the Same and the Other are without a relation (OA, 336-337). With this being the case Ricoeur asks how the properly intersubjective relation would ever occur: "If interiority were indeed determined solely by the desire for retreat and closure, how could it ever hear a word addressed to it, which would seem so foreign to it that this word would be as nothing for an isolated existence" (OA, 339)? For Ricoeur, the problem with Levinas' philosophy of absolute alterity lies in its failure to break out of the trap set by a philosophical discourse whose terms are generated according to the strategy of hyperbolic positing. For Ricoeur, a genuine philosophy of alterity will *not* arise on the basis of the cogito--either posited or deposed. Instead, Ricoeur argues that if the selfhood of the self is to be fundamentally related to alterity such selfhood will have to show itself as already including an openness to that alterity (OA, 339).

2.3. Phenomenological Passivity and the Question of Alterity

In Ricoeur's critique of Levinas' philosophy of alterity we learned that alterity must present itself according to the structure of the self. An understanding of otherness that grows out of a posited philosophy cannot describe the constitutive relation of otherness and selfhood because, from the beginning, such a posited philosophy is not descriptive of a self but is, rather, a metaphysical contrivance. Ricoeur reinforces this point when he

argues that the metaphysical discourse of the Same and the Other must be locatable on a level of discourse that is proper to the self. As Ricoeur points out, his earlier analysis within the tenth study of *Oneself as Another* was already the development of the metaphysical category of the Same at the phenomenological level (OA, 318). Now, as he explicitly takes up the category of Otherness, it too will have to be developed at the phenomenological level. Ricoeur states that, “the *phenomenological* respondent to the metacategory of otherness is the variety of experiences of passivity, intertwined in multiple ways in human action” (OA, 318). Alterity is to be accounted for according to the passivity intertwined within human action such that insofar as we attest to the passivity intimately connected to action we attest to an alterity at the heart of selfhood (OA, 318).

Just as the phenomenological account of sameness was developed according to the polysemy of *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity so will the account of alterity be developed. Rather than accounting for alterity by solely developing the passivity of the self in relation to the otherness of other people (OA, 317) Ricoeur introduces his “working hypothesis,” which he calls the “*triad of passivity and, hence, otherness*” (OA, 318). This triad of otherness is made up of the passivity of the body in its experience of itself as ‘flesh’, the passivity of the self in its experience of the otherness of other people and the passivity of the self experienced as its being-enjoined by conscience. I will now address each element in Ricoeur’s triad. Within my analysis I will be particularly concerned with the question raised at the end of my previous chapter: Does passivity, and

thus alterity, play a secondary role within the constitution of a self that is primarily and primordially an acting self?²

.A. "One's Own Body, or the Flesh"

Ricoeur argues that insofar as the body is experienced as 'flesh' the embodied self becomes an occasion for passivity. Within *Oneself as Another* the topic of the body plays a role in several studies (OA, 319).³ However, according to Ricoeur, the passivity proper to the experience of one's own body cannot be fully developed at an ontological level until it is thought through in terms of suffering (OA, 320). This is so because, as Ricoeur has said, passivity is discovered as always already 'intertwined' with action. Earlier Ricoeur argued that human action has its phenomenological source in the power of the "I can", that is, the power of the body to-be-able (OA, 181). Thus, insofar as passivity is intertwined with action and discovered in the body it is discovered as suffering: "the decrease of the power of *acting*, experienced as a decrease of the effort of *existing*" (OA, 320). Activity and passivity are in a tense relationship insofar as the self is discovered in the tension between activity and its negation, passivity. According to Ricoeur such a relationship is first discovered in one's own body because it is in one's own body that one suffers or undergoes at the most intimate level.

² Charles Reagan suggests, following Ricoeur, that the "main point" of the account of passivity to follow "is to prevent the self from pretending to occupy the place of a foundation" (Reagan, 20). However, insofar as passivity and, therefore, alterity remain secondary to the agency that constitutes the selfhood of the self, it is questionable to what extent Ricoeur actually prevents the self from becoming its own foundation.

³ The body plays a role in Ricoeur's discussion of Strawson (study 1), Davidson (study 3) and Parfit (study 5).

Drawing on the work of Maine de Biran Ricoeur suggests that the body reveals different levels of passivity through which “one’s own body is revealed to be the mediator between the intimacy of the self and the externality of the world” (OA, 322). With this understanding of the passivity of the body as that which connects us to the world, Ricoeur introduces the positive role of the passivity of the body. By drawing on the thought of Edmund Husserl he sets out to show how the passivity of the body opens a space for our own action and initiative. Through a reading of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* he argues that the experience of my ‘body’ as my own ‘flesh’ provides a way to understand the relationship of activity and passivity within the self. He quotes Husserl in order to elaborate on this point:

Among the bodies belonging to this ‘Nature’ and included in my particular ownness, I then find my [flesh] as *uniquely* singled out--namely as the only one of them that is not just a body but precisely [flesh]: the sole object within my abstract world-stratum to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe *fields of sensation* . . . the only object ‘in’ which I ‘*rule and govern*’ *immediately*, governing particularly in each of its organs (OA, 324).

Starting from an experience of other human bodies which are beyond my control, Ricoeur suggests that my own body is discovered as flesh, that is, the otherness which I am. In agreement with de Biran and Husserl, he argues that such an otherness lies at the basis of my activity, that is, my ability to “rule and govern.” In other words, before I act I experience my self as flesh and, therefore, as that from and through which I must act. My agency does not begin in an immediate way but, rather, is always already mediated by

that which I must undergo.⁴ Thus Ricoeur states: “I, as this man, this is the foremost otherness of the flesh with respect to all initiative. Otherness here signifies primordality with respect to any *design*. Starting from this otherness, I can *reign over*” (OA, 324). Suffering, then, is the ultimate disclosure of this passivity because suffering is precisely the breakdown of this mediation such that I cannot act.

At the end of my previous chapter I suggested that, despite Ricoeur’s assertions to the contrary, it is agency that dominates his philosophy of selfhood. Ricoeur’s account of the passivity of the flesh seems first to support and then to problematize this claim. First, insofar as passivity is defined in terms of suffering and suffering as the negation of activity, it seems clear that the selfhood of the self is grounded solely on its power-to-be. This is the case because passivity is by definition the lack of agency. If passivity is the lack of agency, the selfhood of the self cannot be constituted by anything other than agency itself. Passivity can have no constitutive role because it is, by definition, a negation. However, such a conclusion is immediately problematized when Ricoeur argues that, as flesh, passivity is the point of origin of my activity. Here passivity is no longer defined in terms of suffering and, therefore, as a mere negation of activity. On the contrary, as the passive syntheses from which agency originates, passivity is originary. The agency of the self originates in the passivity that the self experiences as flesh. Following Ricoeur’s correlation of passivity and alterity it can be concluded that my action does not come from myself but from another. In the experience of one’s own body

⁴ Edi Pucci makes an interesting argument for the connection between Ricoeur’s analysis of the *conatus* and the ontological passivity that shows itself in the body as flesh. She argues that “*conatus* and desire attest themselves in the body and flesh at the moment of the involuntary which affects us from our origins” (Pucci, 203).

as flesh the agency that has defined the selfhood of the self is shown to begin not from the self but, rather, from an other-than-self already 'in' the self.⁵

B. The Otherness of Other People

The flesh was discovered when, among other bodies, I discovered my own body alone to be the source of actions that are under my control. Therefore my experience of my own body as 'flesh' is already based on the presence of other bodies within my horizon of experience. As a result of this recognition, the question is no longer how to understand my experience of my body as 'flesh', but how to understand my 'flesh' as a body among other bodies. With this question the issue of the otherness of other people is discovered (OA, 326). Throughout Ricoeur's earlier analysis, the presence of other people has been important. In his early studies of the self as an object among other objects the person was designated as a person among other persons, that is, other objects to whom mental and physical predicates can be applied.⁶ In the seventh, eighth, and ninth studies, in which Ricoeur specifically addresses the question of the ethical relation between people, the presence of others receives its fullest development. What is at issue here, however, is the otherness of the other person and the way in which the self is in relation to that otherness. This relates to the distinction made earlier between an analysis of the relations that exist

⁵ In my chapter on Levinas I will explore the force of this metaphorical use of the preposition 'in'. In my 'concluding reflections' I will further develop this in comparison with Ricoeur's use of 'as'.

⁶ In Ricoeur's conclusions to his study of Strawson's thought in the first study he clearly indicates that there is never one self alone because the ascription of identity to others is just as primitive as the ascription to oneself (OA, 38).

de facto within human community (i.e., ethics and politics) and the analysis of the otherness of the other person as constitutive for my selfhood.

When Ricoeur takes up his analysis of Husserl he recognizes that, for Husserl, the actual presence of others is not in question.⁷ Nevertheless, Husserl's analysis is crucial because, through the phenomenological reduction wherein what is taken for granted is 'bracketed', it shows us the relation of the self to an other so as to disclose the relation of the otherness of the other to the selfhood of the self. Husserl's understanding of the "analogizing apprehension" serves as Ricoeur's first step. Through such an apprehension the body of the other is understood as itself flesh. The logic here is analogical: insofar as the self gnoseologically moves from its body as flesh to its flesh as body, it is also able to recognize the possibility that the other bodies on its horizon of experience are also flesh in the same way as it is. Drawing directly on Husserl's analysis, Ricoeur states that the "'analogizing apprehension' . . . whose origin lies in the body of the other perceived 'over there' . . . [is] an analogizing apprehension by virtue of which the other's body is apprehended as flesh, for the same reason as my own" (OA, 333). Insofar as the self relates to the otherness of the other according to the possibility that the other is flesh, just like the self is flesh, it absorbs the otherness of the other into the sphere of its ownness. In other words, the self locates the otherness of the other by identifying it as that which is most properly its own and, therefore, that which makes the self and the other the same. However, that the analogical relation is one of "appresentation" means that this logic of

⁷ Ricoeur states: "To be sure, Husserl, like everyone, knows that we are not alone and that we deny our transcendental solitude by the sole fact that we name it and address it to some partner in the discourse of the *Cartesian Meditations*" (OA, 331).

discovery transcends the recognition of sameness. Because of appresentation, Ricoeur argues that, “the kind of transgression of the sphere of ownness constituted by appresentation is valid only within the limits of a transfer of *sense* [in which] the sense of ego is transferred to another body, which, as flesh, also contains the sense of ego” (OA, 334). Once the other person is recognized as another ego a certain transcendence is introduced. The other can be said to be *like* the self but it cannot be said to be the same as the self because the other ego has her own experiences which can never belong to the self (OA, 333). For Ricoeur, therefore, Husserl’s analysis is essential: “The resemblance based on the pairing of flesh with flesh works to reduce a distance, to bridge a gap, in the very place where it creates a dissymmetry” (OA, 335). The otherness of the other person is such that it is dependent upon the self and not wholly immanent to the self. Without a self who is able to recognize the other as another body first as flesh and then as an ego, the other would be beyond the possibility of entering into a relation with the self. However, without the other being recognized as an ego the other would not be other because she would be the same as the self.

In the last section we saw that Ricoeur’s analysis of the alterity of my body as flesh opened up the possibility of understanding passivity as constitutive of selfhood because it placed an other-than-self ‘in’ the self. Rather than the self the other-than-self was understood as the origin of the self’s agency. We can now ask if this is also the case with his account of the relation of the self to the otherness of other people. In order to develop this it is necessary to note that Ricoeur’s analysis of the otherness of other people is the place in which one finds his criticism of Levinas’ philosophy of alterity. The

criticism is set within the context of Ricoeur's suggestion that an adequate account of the otherness of other people lies in the "intersection" of Husserl's proposal, where the self approaches the other, and that of Levinas, where the other approaches the self (OA, 335). However, following his criticism of Levinas, Ricoeur provides no argument for what this intersection would look like.⁹ This is so, I argue, because Ricoeur's own position is thoroughly Husserlian and is, therefore, prepared to remain committed to an account of the relation of selfhood to the otherness of other people in which the active recognition of the other-than-self by the self is originary and constitutive. This should not be surprising because, as I indicated earlier, Ricoeur is committed to the claim that "only a self can have an other than self." Even though Ricoeur's analysis followed Husserl's in opening the way for an understanding of the other that is more than simply an identical reflection of the self, Ricoeur is not able to think the possibility of an otherness that is constitutive of the self because he is not able to think of the otherness of other people outside of the self's imaginative apprehension of that otherness. Or, to put it in the terms of passivity and activity, Ricoeur is not able to think the possibility of a passivity that is constitutive of the self because the self is first and foremost constituted by its agency which, in this case, is enacted in terms of recognition.

⁹ It is possible to find such an account of this 'intersection' in the seventh study of *Oneself as Another*. Here Ricoeur develops his notion of reciprocity such that the self and the other are placed at the ends a continuum where the self appears as both that which gives (sympathy and recognition) to the other and that which receives (responsibility and 'feeling') from the other. The middle point on the continuum marks the relationship of friendship between self and other where giving and receiving are perfectly equal. However, as attractive as this proposal is, it reveals that Ricoeur is not willing to allow passivity to develop outside the limits placed upon it by activity. Even in its receiving, the self is present as a self actively recognizing that which is being given to it. See OA, 187-192.

C. Conscience

For Ricoeur, it is the experience of conscience which most clearly discloses the otherness that is constitutive of selfhood. At the heart of his understanding of conscience is the metaphor of the voice “at once inside me and higher than me” (OA, 342). According to Ricoeur it is Heidegger who provides this metaphor and locates it at the ontological level of attestation (OA, 342). Ricoeur argues that in conscience we discover the most original sense in which the passivity of the self is attested to. Essential to his retrieval of conscience is Ricoeur’s claim that it represents an “intimate conversation” between “the agency that calls and the self called upon” (OA, 342). He argues further that this ‘call’ (*Ruf*) is distinguished from the Platonic inner dialogue of the soul because it is a “vertical call” (OA, 342). He recognizes, however, that such a claim is far from self-evident. In order to develop the notion of a vertical call as the essence of the passivity of conscience the concept must be saved from the “moralizing interpretations” which have determined its meaning. He accomplishes this liberation of conscience through a reading of Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger. The result of this exercise of suspicion is an understanding of conscience which is more primordial than the one determined by the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ conscience (OA, 342-350). With the ground cleared, Ricoeur once again draws on Heidegger’s thought and proposes that the passivity at the heart of conscience is connected to the nothingness which Dasein attests to when, in “resoluteness” (OA, 348), Dasein attests to its “thrownness” (OA, 349). Conscience as attestation is an attestation marked by the passivity of the self towards its own placement in being. Thus, insofar as

conscience is understood outside of its traditional connections to morality, it is located within the ontological attestation characteristic of the structure of the self as such.

As Ricoeur indicates, this is not the last word on conscience. As productive as the discovery of conscience as *Gewissen* is, it opens onto a serious problem. Ricoeur recognizes that following Heidegger's reading of conscience means emptying it of its connection to intersubjective human agency (OA, 350). Instead, he argues that "[l]istening to the voice of conscience . . . [signifies] being-enjoined by the Other" (OA, 351). The notion of injunction is developed along two lines. First, Ricoeur situates conscience as resoluteness within the world of intersubjective action. Second, he then takes up the challenge that conscience is other and more primordial than the call of the other person. First, Ricoeur returns to the resoluteness of conscience and locates the "thrownness" of Dasein within the world of intersubjective action. This occurs because human agency with and for others is always action in a situation.⁹ Therefore, the self attests to its being-able-to-do according to its actions with others in the world. Such attestation, however, is always marked by passivity because agency is always marked by limitations. While the demands of the other person upon the self may be limitless, the range of my agency in response to the injunction of the other person is limited by the situation in which I find myself. To the call of the other the self can only respond: "Here I stand! *I cannot do otherwise*" (OA, 352).¹⁰ Human action with and for others is always

⁹ Ricoeur develops this point in his ninth study, where he develops the tragic nature of all action and the notion of 'conviction' that is able to respond to, though not solve, this tragic dimension (OA, 241-249).

¹⁰ This declaration was originally that of Martin Luther.

already located within the 'world' into which the self has been thrown. The experience of acting within this thrownness is the self's experience of passivity at the heart of attestation.

Ricoeur concludes his discussion of conscience by reflecting upon the idea that conscience is not reducible to the call of the other person. He refuses to follow Levinas who, he claims, reduces the modality of otherness to the relation with an other person (OA, 354).¹¹ Instead, the voice of conscience must represent the very structure of selfhood. In other words, the alterity experienced in the passivity of conscience is only possible because the selfhood of the self is always already structured according to an openness to alterity. Without a self there is no other than self. If the call that is the otherness of conscience is not merely the call of an other person what, Ricoeur asks, is it? First he considers the idea that the voice of the other is the voice of the superego, "made up of . . . identifications with parental and ancestral figures" (OA, 353). If this is the case, he argues, it must be that the self is already constituted "primordially as a receptive structure . . . [because without it] the sedimentation of the superego . . . [and] the internalization of ancestral voices would be unthinkable" (OA, 354). Finally, Ricoeur ends his analysis with a suggestive reference to the voice of the Other which is the voice

¹¹ Ricoeur provides a good summary statement which locates his thought in relation to both Heidegger and Levinas. He states: "To Heidegger, I objected that attestation is primordially injunction, or attestation risks losing all ethical or moral significance. To Levinas, I shall object that the injunction is primordially attestation, or the injunction risks not being heard and the self not being affected in the mode of being-enjoined. The profound unity of self-attestation and of the injunction coming from the other justified the acknowledgment, in its irreducible specificity, of the modality of otherness corresponding, on the plane of the 'great kinds,' to the passivity of conscience on the phenomenological plane" (OA, 355).

of God. Even this, however, does not seem to change the fact that the self must be structured so as to be receptive to the voice of the Other (OA, 355).

Whether it is the voice of God or of one's ancestors the voice of conscience is, for Ricoeur, the injunction that is within and above self. Through it the self is enjoined to enter the world of action with and for others and, as an agent, it is thrown into a world of limits that mark the passivity at the core of its selfhood. Conscience is the very internalization of passivity into the selfhood of the self. With such a claim in place it is time to return, once again, to the question that has been present throughout this analysis of Ricoeur's philosophy of selfhood: Does Ricoeur fulfill his promise to make otherness and, therefore, passivity constitutive of selfhood? It is within his discussion of conscience that the full meaning of the word 'constitutive' is felt. The first point that arises in connection with the idea of a 'constitutive' relation between self and other does so in terms of Ricoeur's notion of the call of conscience. If by 'constitutive' Ricoeur means to argue that the call of conscience provides the conditions for the possibility of the self, his basically Husserlian claim that it is the reflexive structure of the self that provides the conditions for conscience does not support such an argument. For Ricoeur, the call of conscience is already accounted for according to the structures of the self. Therefore conscience cannot be said to constitute the self. While in the case of the body experienced as flesh Ricoeur opened a space in which to account for passivity in a constitutive way, his account of conscience is too closely aligned with his Husserlian account of the otherness of other people to allow him to understand the voice of conscience in the same constitutive manner as he understood the passivity of the flesh. The second point that arises in connection with the idea of a 'constitutive' relation between self and other does

so in terms of Ricoeur's notion of the limit or situatedness essential to the passivity of conscience. Unlike the passivity of the flesh, the passivity of conscience is the passivity of a limit. The self attests to itself in its action. In so doing it encounters limits as a result of the situatedness of that action and these limits mark its passivity. However, when passivity is understood in this way it is fundamentally the negation of activity. Thus because there can be no other-than-self without a self it is also the case that there can be no passivity without a primordial and originary agency that constitutes the selfhood of the self. Passivity may be "intertwined" with the attestation of the acting self but it is not constitutive of that self.¹²

¹² On this point the conclusions of my analysis resemble the conclusions reached by Henry Venema in his recent book, *Identifying Selfhood: Imagination, Narrative, and Hermeneutics in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000). However, my analysis differs from Venema's insofar as he thinks that Ricoeur's understanding of agency is limited to that of a voluntaristic cogito which lurks beneath Ricoeur's attempts to achieve a philosophy of selfhood. After providing a vague and, to my mind, mistaken reading of the tenth study of *Oneself as Another* (pp. 146-149) in which he glosses over Ricoeur's discussion of the ontology of act and power and entirely omits a discussion of Ricoeur's triad of passivity, he states: "This is the extent of Ricoeur's development of the ontology of selfhood. How does this say anything more than what has already been described in his preceding studies? What Ricoeur appears to be offering is a further description of the power of agency. Adding that the power-to-do must also be essentially creative or productive seems to be stating the obvious" (p. 150). As this chapter and the one previous have shown, Ricoeur's philosophy of selfhood is based on a complex understanding of the tense relationship between activity and passivity at the ontological level of attestation. While I believe that activity or agency ultimately governs passivity, and therefore alterity, because of Ricoeur's understanding of the temporality of the present, his account of the selfhood of the self is *not* based on a voluntaristic cogito. This is so first of all because Ricoeur's philosophy of the self is not a philosophy of the cogito. Second, Ricoeur's account of the simultaneously centered and decentered source of human agency prevents his understanding of agency from being voluntaristic. Third, Ricoeur goes a long way toward making passivity constitutive of selfhood even though he does not ultimately succeed. Unlike Venema's critique, my own arises after giving careful consideration to the complex relation between activity and passivity in Ricoeur's thought. While my conclusions may be similar to Venema's my reading of Ricoeur is very different.

2.4. Conclusion

By examining Ricoeur's triad of passivity I have suggested that despite his intention to make otherness constitutive of selfhood he has articulated a form of passivity that is fundamentally secondary to the agency that constitutes the selfhood of the self. His account of the otherness of the other person relies too heavily upon Husserl's analysis of intersubjectivity in the *Cartesian Meditations* and is, therefore, unable to think of the relation of selfhood to that otherness beyond the categories of recognition and receptivity. Insofar as his account of conscience shares this Husserlian assumption it too is unable to think of the inner voice of conscience in such a way that the passivity of being-enjoined might be constitutive of the selfhood of the self rather than a result of it. Thus, while his account of the passivity of the self arising from its experience of its body as flesh provided Ricoeur with an excellent possibility for thinking of passivity as the constitutive point of origin of human action, his understanding of conscience ultimately follows the assumptions at work in his account of the otherness of other people.

In the first two chapters I have shown how Ricoeur's account of selfhood and alterity is structured according to his understanding of the relationship between activity and passivity. I have argued that while Ricoeur has a place for alterity, and therefore passivity, within his philosophy of selfhood, on the whole the selfhood of the self is constituted insofar as it is capable of action. I argued that this presents a problem for Ricoeur's own project because it is governed by an intention to make alterity constitutive of selfhood. As I argued in my first chapter, he is prevented from remaining committed to this constitutive understanding of otherness because of his understanding of the

temporality of the present. In turning to Levinas' account of selfhood and passivity in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* I will introduce a different account of temporality of the present by introducing Levinas' fundamental distinction between the Saying and the Said. By showing how Levinas accounts for an originary and creative passivity within the self through an articulation of the modality of approach proper to the Other I will seek to correct and supplement Ricoeur's hermeneutic of selfhood and thereby accomplish what Ricoeur was unable to achieve.

Chapter Three: Passivity and Selfhood in the Philosophy of Levinas

3.1. Introduction

As I indicated at the end of the previous chapter, this chapter will introduce and examine Levinas' notion of the temporality of the Saying and the Said¹ in order to explore how, according to the logic of the Saying, the other is revealed in terms of an originary passivity that constitutes the self. My goal is to develop certain themes of Levinas' philosophy in order to show that in the ethical relationship which Levinas calls the Saying one sees a logic of passivity that is more primordial than the logic of the Said, in which the self is constituted according to its active, intentional relation with time. The chapter will begin with an analysis of the logic of the Said. Here I will show how a certain understanding of the present, disclosed through an analysis of the manifestation proper to entities, provides the grounds for an understanding of reality governed by the self-identity of consciousness. This section will end with the recognition that insofar as consciousness governs our approach to reality the presence of alterity is limited to the logical alterity of entities appearing within the system of essence. For Levinas, such a reduction of alterity is problematic. Before moving into an account of the logic of the Saying I will address the relation between the Said and the Saying in order to indicate their necessary relation. In this section I will argue that the logic of the Said is the logic of being-in-the-world, that is, the logic of thematized and meaningful experience. I will argue that while Levinas is not interested in delivering us from this logic he is intent upon

¹ Throughout this chapter I will capitalize 'Saying' and 'Said' in order to clearly distinguish these words as technical terms.

pointing to another, more primordial logic which exceeds the Said and is irreducible to it. The logic of the Saying will then be addressed through an account of the temporality that structures the passivity of the self that is revealed in the approach of the other. It will begin with an introduction to a time that is otherwise than the Said and proceed to analyse this time according to the excessive time of the 'trace' of the other whose approach is a departure that assigns me as irreplaceable and responsible. From there I will show how, at the climax of this passivity, the self-identical return of the present in the Said is transformed into a non-identical recurrence of the other in me according to Levinas' notion of substitution.

3.2. The Said

The logic of the Said is, to use Levinas' earlier language,² the logic of totality. Within the Said each entity has its place in relation to the system of essence. Using an image given in the Preface to *Totality and Infinity*,³ the logic of the totality is like a military force in which each individual is assigned its identity according to its rank and function in the mobilization of the entire force. To use another of Levinas' images, it can be said that within this domain entities are manifested as silhouettes. To be an entity is to cast a shadow by the bright light of Being, which is the source and organizing principle. The philosopher participates in this totality as a philosopher insofar as she seeks the truth of

² The language of 'totality' pervades Levinas' first major work: *Totality and Infinity: An Essay in Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. 1969).

³ *Totality and Infinity*, 21.

the totality under the name of Being, or more precisely, essence.⁴ To philosophize within the totality is to look for the manifestation of the essence of entities. To do so, however, is to question in a circle. For insofar as one stands within the totality and asks 'what?' or 'who?' concerning an entity, one already presumes the principle of manifestation and will therefore always receive the same answer: essence (OTB, 27). Understanding that the ontological questioner always already presumes the answer to her question is essential to understanding the fundamental characteristic of the Said: its grounding in the principle of self-identity through return.

The self-identical truth of essence, and therefore the very basis of the Said, rests on a certain form of temporality. In order to articulate this form of temporality one must investigate that which makes the basic point of reference within the system--i.e., entities--fundamental. Levinas suggests that the truth of entities is found in their ability to *manifest* essence: an entity shows us what or who it is by showing us what kind of being it is. Therefore, an analysis of the temporal structure of *manifestation* will provide the key to understanding the temporal structure of the Said. In order to follow this structure of

⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 23. Hereafter citations to this source will appear in the text of the chapter as follows: (OTB). When discussing Levinas' arguments it is necessary to be careful when using the term 'being'. In many cases he uses the word to simply refer to ontology, as is the case in the sentence at the end of which this note appears. On other occasions he distinguishes between being and essence as follows: "Does this word being designate an entity, ideal or real, that is, or this entity's *process of being*, its *essence*?" (OTB, 23). Thus, when he is discussing particular entities he will call them beings. However, when he is discussing the Being of beings, an entity's process of being, he will use the word 'essence'. I will follow him in this.

manifestation it is necessary to take a close look at what actually happens when manifestation occurs. Levinas explains:

. . . the manifestation of being to itself would imply a separation in being. The manifestation cannot occur as a fulguration in which the totality of being shows itself to the totality of being, for this 'showing itself to' indicates a getting out of phase which is precisely time, that astonishing divergence of the identical from itself! The getting out of phase of the instant, the 'all' pulling off from the 'all'--the temporality of time--makes possible, however, a recuperation in which nothing is lost (OTB, 28).

The basic movement of manifestation is clear: an entity shows itself as a reflection of the whole within the whole such that we are able to say that the whole shows itself to the whole. However, this important section of text becomes ambiguous when we realize that in showing itself to itself the whole must be somehow set apart from itself. In fact, Levinas starts out by suggesting that the manifestation of essence *cannot* occur in such a way as to rend the totality of being. However, he completes the thought by unexpectedly suggesting that self-identity actually begins as a result of this rending. This is so because the separation of the 'all from the all' is always already a pseudo-separation, a separation governed by the aim of self-discovery and return. The structure of manifestation is grounded on the temporality of the present which, in separating from itself, returns to itself and thereby shows itself to itself without losing itself in the process.⁵

⁵ Levinas' analysis here depends on his earlier account of the nature of the instant. In *Existence and Existents* he develops an account of the present instant in which it is fundamentally defined according to an essential lag, lapse, or gap that opens up within the instant itself. In order to articulate this he takes up an examination of the experiences of fatigue and indolence wherein one experiences a certain lag time, or what he calls, a dead time, between the beginning of an action and its actual happening. This is to show that within the present itself there is a split, or rupture. According to Levinas it is this split or rupture of the instant that is the most primordial reality of time. In our analysis of the Said we will see how consciousness interacts with this rupturing of the present in such a

Starting from the Said and, therefore, the manifestation of the essence of entities, means starting from consciousness. For Levinas the intentionality of consciousness is structured according to the manifestation of essence. In his earlier works he argues that this temporal break located within the present itself introduces the dynamism, or the activity, of thought into the static presence of the 'there is' (*il y a*) and is therefore an advance toward the separate ego, the 'psychism,' developed in *Totality and Infinity*. He reiterates this point in the present discussion and develops it to show how, in the Said, thematization, thought and meaning are structured according to the presence of the present. He argues that the 'gap' that opens up in the present of manifestation is a gap between two identical presents. Insofar as the temporal logic is that of recuperation and return, one present is re-presented to another. So, even though one present is separated from the other, the second present grasps the first and returns it to itself. Thus, the time of the present according to the logic of the Said is structured according to the grasping activity of consciousness itself. Using the Husserlian terminology of 'retention' and 'protention,' Levinas develops this activity of consciousness. He states that "a representation is a recommencement of the present which in its 'first time' is for the second time; it is a retention and a protention" (OTB, 29). In other words, intentionality lies at the basis of re-presentation because, according to Levinas, intentionality is the going-out-of-itself in order to return to itself. It is best characterized by the grasping,

way as to synthesize it into an identity. In our analysis of the Saying we will see how, before any such synthetic action takes place, the rupture of the present leads to a radical alterity in which the gap opened up instantiates the presence of the Other in the Same. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 29-36.

thematizing gaze which draws all 'others' into its self-identical presence, that is, its self-identical return.⁶

So far the metaphor of 'the Said' has been introduced without any attention paid to its obvious reference to language. Levinas develops the connection between language and temporality by providing an account of how language works within the Said. First, insofar as a verb designates an event, he argues that the very 'verbalness' of verbs lies in their ability to draw the lived event into the structure of temporality that has just been described above. Insofar as the eventfulness of manifestation is lived within language it is lived as verbal because verbs mark the temporalization of time according to essence. This is to say that in order to express the way in which something happens--i.e., the way in which the action of an entity happens in time-- language places that happening on the horizon of being by casting it into verbal form. Second, insofar as our understanding of the verb extends beyond its ability to designate events, it is even more so the champion of essence. Levinas argues that the verb which designates nothing, the verb "to be," is the very expression of essence because it is the purest expression of the presence of the present. In this purest of verbs we name the temporalization of time by expressing the essence of being. (OTB, 34-35).

Language is, however, also a system of nouns. If the purest expression of essence arose insofar as the 'verbalness' of the verb "to be" designated nothing but temporalization, it is precisely the opposite for nouns. Insofar as language is a system of nouns it is so because nouns identify entities according to the self-identical return of re-

⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, "Diachrony and Representation," in *Time and the Other*, translated by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 98-99.

presentation. The system of nouns functions as a system of denomination in which “the word identifies ‘this as that’” (OTB, 35) according to the capacity of consciousness to recognize identities within the temporal series and re-present them to itself. This process of identification *is* the process of thematization and, therefore, it is the work of essence. It is as Levinas says “a supplying of meaning” (OTB, 35).⁷

We have seen how, starting from the structure of manifestation and its corresponding form of temporality, the Said is constituted as the domain of the presence of the present. Following this we found, in an account of Levinas’ understanding of the system of language, how nouns and verbs function according to this same temporal structure. The analysis as it has developed thus far has attempted to articulate the way in which entities exist within the Said and to show that that existence is based on the fundamental activity of consciousness, which is, itself, grounded in the present’s self-identical return to itself. While the description of such existence has not explicitly dealt with alterity, there is, within the Said, a notion of alterity. It is, however, a purely logical alterity wherein each entity “marks each part in a whole vis-à-vis the others, where, in a purely formal way, one, this one, is other to that one.”⁸ Logical alterity governs the logic of the Said because each ‘other’ (i.e., each entity) manifests its essence by manifesting its sameness in relation to all other entities. Each entity is the same as all the others because

⁷ The analysis in OTB from which I have drawn for the last two paragraphs is based on Levinas’ more detailed analysis in “Language and Proximity” which is printed in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1986), 109-114.

⁸ “Diachrony and Representation,” 105.

each entity is, ultimately, its essence, which it shares with all other entities in the system of essence that is the Said. Such alterity is purely formal and, therefore, it presents a problem. A notion of true (i.e., non-formal) otherness in which the other is not absorbed within the system of essence that is the Said, is impossible. This leads Levinas to a dilemma: either formal, logical alterity governs human existence, in which case alterity must remain tied to its merely logical form, or the logic of the Said has concealed something essential to the alterity of the other in its account of the nature of time and language. In order to address this dilemma Levinas asks what would happen if the *other person* served as the basic point of reference for an investigation into the structure of temporality in such a way that the other person was understood in terms of an alterity irreducible to logical alterity? To look to the irreducible alterity of the other person for a starting point for one's reflection on temporality is, however, to move beyond the domain of the Said.⁹ It is to seek in the approach of the other a modality of experience "forgotten" by ontology (OTB, 38).

3.3. From the Said to the Saying: The Reduction

The movement beyond the Said is not a movement *out* of the Said. As I have shown, the Said is the place where existence is lived according to knowledge and being. It is the

⁹ As I will show in the discussion that follows, to look for a starting point--a point of origin--is already to adopt the logic of the Said. This is so because the Other always approaches me before I could look for her. The Other is on the scene before I start doing anything: looking, welcoming or receiving. However, in accordance with my means of explaining Levinas' thought, it is helpful to distinguish between taking entities and taking the ethical approach of the other person as one's 'starting point'. To the extent that Levinas' philosophy has a basic point of reference, it is certainly the latter one.

domain of thought, memory and history and, therefore, the domain of institutions, justice, and history. Levinas has no intention of delivering us from such an existence. His intention is, however, to show us that while the Said is the domain in which we live, it is always already derivative of a more primordial domain that constitutes it and is irreducible to it. Levinas develops this distinction between the Said and its primordial other by suggesting that the Said is always already the freezing over of that primordial domain. He suggests that insofar as we approach reality according to essence we discover the primordial domain *as it is lived, thematized and known*. This is to say that it is the nature of that more primordial domain, the Saying, to enter the domain of the Said and to be thematized there according to its system of essence. Levinas argues that “[a]s soon as saying, on the hither side of being, becomes dictation, it expires, or abdicates, in fables and in writing” (OTB, 43). As soon as the Saying is understood by consciousness and thematized according to a meaning in language it is the Saying that is “*already said*” (OTB, 37).¹⁰ As soon as we begin to talk about existence as it is lived in the world, our Saying, that which constitutes our existence according to a logic we have yet to explore, is turned (in)to the Said, “absorbing itself in it to the extent of being forgotten in it” (OTB, 37). Levinas argues that this is necessary because the Saying must pass into the Said in order for the Saying to appear in the domain of thematized action and meaning, i.e., in the domain of the world (OTB, 44). For this reason it is a mistake to see in the Said some sort of “fall” from the Saying, as though the Saying were the more perfect

¹⁰ Levinas states: “We have been seeking the *otherwise than being* from the beginning, and as soon as it is conveyed before us it is betrayed in the said that dominates the saying which states it” (OTB, 7).

domain of existence. On the contrary, according to Levinas it is the “vocation” of the Saying to constitute the Said in order that responsibility and justice appear in the world.¹¹

Another way in which Levinas makes this point is by arguing that the Saying is discovered ‘in’ the Said. Even though language itself is structured according to the Said it provides the place in which the Saying can be discovered. This is to say that even though language is the utterance of being, it “permits us to utter, be it by betrayal, this *outside of being*, this *ex-ception* to being, as though being’s other were an event of being” (OTB, 6). This discovery is the result of the “reduction” (OTB, 53). Unlike the Husserlian *epoché*, however, this reduction is not the work of consciousness. If that were the case Levinas would have to conclude that the reduction of the Said to the Saying is structured according to the temporality of the Said. This would reinstate essence and consciousness, its correlate, to the position of primordially. Instead, the reduction is “energized” by the ethical interruption of the Other. Levinas tells us that to hear the “echo” of the “otherwise” is to reduce, or bracket, the manifestation of essence according to the revelation of the irreducible alterity of the other person and not simply to place thematic brackets around an already thematized domain. Thus, “the reduction is reduction of the said to the saying beyond the logos, beyond being and non-being” (OTB, 45). However, as I said above, even though it is energized by that which approaches from beyond the

¹¹ For Levinas, “justice” is first and foremost the thematization of the logic of the Saying. When philosophy starts from the Said it is unable to move out of the Said and, for that reason, it is unable to correctly articulate the Said. When philosophy starts with the Saying its goal is to move into the Said in order to articulate its order as an order of justice. Levinas states: “It will be possible to show that there is question of the said and being only because saying or responsibility require justice. . . . Thus alone will the terrain of disinterestedness that allows us to separate truth from ideology be given its truth (OTB, 45). See also OTB, 159-160.

present of the Said, the reduction does not point to an escape from the Said. The passage back from the Said to the Saying is not “the passage from some apparent world to a more real world” (OTB, 45). The essence of the entities in the Said is their true essence even though the appearance of that truth rests on a logic of revelation and approach that constitutes it and is irreducible to it.

3.4 The Saying

Just like the Said, the Saying has a basic point of reference: the Other.¹² According to Levinas, the logic of the Saying begins with the Other insofar as the Other approaches the ego and summons it to responsibility by placing upon it an obligation to respond. Before the ego *is*, it is responsive. However, in order to remove such a logic of response from the totalizing logic of essence, Levinas must account for it according to a different temporality than that of the Said. This is so because insofar as one is able to account for the summons to responsibility within the temporal structure of re-presentation and recognition a different account would be unnecessary. According to the logic of the Said the relation of responsibility is understood as a relation in which a self-possessed ego meets, recognizes, and responds--all according to its powers of thematization--to an other manifested to it according to the system of essence. However, such an understanding of the relation would reduce the Other to an entity and land us back in the problem of the impossibility of locating the alterity of the other person beyond the merely logical.

¹² I will capitalize ‘Other’ because, as we will soon see, the Other about which we are going to speak is always a particular other person *and*, as the non-thematizable Other of the immemorial past, more than any particular other.

Therefore in order to locate the intersubjective relation beyond the merely logical alterity of the Said, Levinas must be able to show in the intersubjective relation itself a temporality other than that of re-presentation and return. Our discussion of this temporality begins with an analysis of “proximity”.

We start our investigation of the modality of approach, which Levinas calls “proximity”, with the recognition that the recuperative presence of the present is the site of consciousness and therefore, as we have already seen, the site of the original grasping activity of thematization in which entities are re-presented and re-cognized. For Levinas, the beginning of activity in consciousness is also the point of origin of our freedom and power beyond the realm of thought.¹³ But, as Levinas explains, the Other approaches us before our freedom. He states that “the *for-the-other* in the approach of the face--a for-the-other older than *consciousness of*. . .--precedes all *grasping* in its obedience, and remains prior to the intentionality of the ego-subject in its being-in-the-world, which presents itself and gives itself a synthesized and synchronous world.”¹⁴ The approach of the Other in proximity is prior to our act of consciousness and, therefore, is prior to our freedom. The passivity essential to the logic of this summons is best indicated by noting that, within his discussion in “Diachrony and Representation,” Levinas uses the image of “awakening”.¹⁵ The summons of the Other is the call of the Other that awakens the ego

¹³ The connection of consciousness, power, and freedom is common in Levinas’ thought. See especially, *Totality and Infinity*, 82-85.

¹⁴ “Diachrony and Representation,” 106.

¹⁵ “Diachrony and Representation,” 108 and 111.

prior to the ego's decision. Levinas appeals to a common experience wherein one does not 'decide' to wake up while one is still asleep. On the contrary, one is awakened by an other.

Levinas develops his description of proximity in terms of language. Earlier we saw how language signifies according to the logic of the Said. When signification is understood according to the logic of the Saying, however, it develops in terms of "proximity" (OTB, 46). To move beyond the logic of the Said is to move beyond an understanding of language that is limited to the communication of terms within a system. To do so is to recognize that the very sayingness of the Saying is based on the approach, the proximity, of the Other that is the beginning of all language.¹⁶ This means, however, that the intentional structure of language must give way to an ethical modality of approach. Levinas describes the transformation of signifyingness by arguing that the ethical modality of approach "indicates a reversal of the subjectivity which is *open upon* beings and always in some measure represents them to itself . . . into a subjectivity that enters *into contact* with a singularity, excluding identification in the ideal, excluding thematization and representation. . . as such unrepresentable."¹⁷ The approach of the Other in proximity is, therefore, the "breakthrough" wherein the activity of consciousness finds itself displaced by a passivity that is more primordial. This approach is more primordial than the appearance of the Other as it is mediated by a system of language or

¹⁶ "Language and Proximity", 115.

¹⁷ "Language and Proximity", 116.

consciousness, for it reveals an unrepresentable encounter with the Other who contacts me before consciousness can thematize it.

Levinas develops his account of this primordial approach of the other in the Saying by articulating it in terms of responsibility.¹⁸ The unrepresentable Other who meets me in proximity summons me and, in so doing, obligates me (OTB, 46). This obligation by the Other is far more than a moral accusation addressed to an already existing self. As I hinted at earlier, the Other breaks through my consciousness and, therefore, meets me before I have the chance to recognize, welcome or receive her arrival. By doing that the Other puts me into question. Insofar as consciousness governs according to a process of identification, it re-presents thematized contents to itself and lives in this freedom of knowledge and power. However, insofar as the Other approaches me before and beyond such freedom, it calls into question the very things which I took to

¹⁸ Insofar as the traditional idea of responsibility involves a self-possessed subject speaking for himself in order to account for his actions on the horizon of a universal code of reason it is defined according to the logic of the Said. Levinas' use of the term points to something other. For him responsibility is being-responsive to the summons of the Other before one even recognizes the Other or the need to respond. Levinas would say that only because responsibility is first of all a response for-the-other does it have ethical force at all. On this distinction between responsibility in the traditional sense and Levinas' use of the term see Bernard Waldenfels, "Response and Responsibility in Levinas," printed in *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak (New York: Routledge, 1995), 39-43.

be fundamental to my identity.¹⁹ Thus Levinas says the summons to responsibility “exposes” me to the Other.²⁰

As an unrepresentable approach that is obligation, proximity breaks through the self-identity of consciousness and exposes me. Levinas suggests that the Other exposes me by turning me inside out. Consciousness, turned in on itself, is like a cloak which is turned inside out by the obligation placed upon it by the Other (OTB, 48). The putting in question of self by the Other, therefore, exceeds the merely negative accomplishment of casting doubt on the veracity of the self-constituted ego. Rather, being put in question in the summons of responsibility is, for the self, to be denuded of its identity and disclosed as fundamentally turned out toward the summons of the other and to be, therefore, entirely passive to her approach. He writes:

The passivity of the exposure responds to an assignation that identifies me. . . by stripping me of every identical quiddity, and thus of all form, all investiture, which would still slip into the assignation. The saying signifies this passivity; in the saying this passivity signifies, becomes . . . exposure in response to..., being at the question before any interrogation, any problem, without clothing, without a shell to protect oneself, stripped to the core (OTB, 49).

In order to accentuate the transformative nature of this approach of the Other in proximity Levinas pushes the image of denuding beyond simply an uncovering of the self towards a “penetration” of the self by the Other, such that the self is “torn up from oneself in the core of one’s unity” (OTB, 49). The extreme logic of exposure is important to Levinas’

¹⁹ See *Totality and Infinity*, 82-90.

²⁰ Waldenfels nicely makes this point with a comparison between the “ecstasy” of the self-possessed self moving out of itself towards another and the “exposed” self that finds itself “outside” of itself in the Other (“Response and Responsibility in Levinas,” 44).

notion of passivity and will be developed further in terms of assignation and election once the temporality of this approach is accounted for. In order to do this I must now take up the mode of presentation of the Other: the “face”.

I have suggested that the Other appears without “appearing” according to the presence of the present and is, therefore, unrepresentable. In the last paragraphs I have been exploring what, for Levinas, this Other does in obligating me. It is now time to clarify the temporal structure of proximity and thereby account for the temporal logic behind the passivity of exposure. The Other approaches me as a “face”. What is important about the face is not that it is seen but that it is heard. Levinas says that the eyes of the Other do not shine, they speak.²¹ This is an important shift in images because it introduces us to what, for our purposes, is most important about the face: its excessive and uncontainable character. For Levinas to see something is to lock it into one’s gaze and to contain and hold it in a state of permanence.²² However, hearing the voice of one who calls means being passive to a sound that invades me from out of nowhere and passes away without my being able to contain it. As unrepresentable, because beyond the re-presentation of consciousness, the face of the Other approaches me as an excessive revelation of that which I cannot contain: “The exorbitance of proximity is distinguished from a conjunction in cognition and intentionality in which subject and object enter. Beyond the disclosure and exhibition of the known alternate, surprised and surprising, an enormous presence and the withdrawal of this presence” (OTB, 90). Levinas calls this

²¹ *Totality and Infinity*, 66.

²² “Diachrony and Representation,” 97.

approach that is always already an approach and departure “illeity”, that is, “a way of concerning me without entering into conjunction with me” (OTB, 12). Thus, my ‘relationship’ with the Other is not one of ‘union’ or ‘participation’ whereby I am absorbed into the Other or the Other is absorbed into me.²³ Rather, it is always a relationship in which the Other absolves itself from the relationship in that it *passes me by*.

Levinas calls this ‘passing’ time of the Other ‘immemorial time’. It is important to clarify that it is not immemorial, or uncontainable, because of a weakness in consciousness or memory, as though the original approach of the Other were in principle open to thematization but simply could not be remembered.²⁴ Rather, immemorial time is ‘immemorial’ because the horizon of thought, structured according to the terms set by the presence of the present, cannot contain it. It is, as Levinas says, “the impossibility of the dispersion of time to assemble itself in the present” (OTB, 38). Thus, rather than a time

²³ *Totality and Infinity*, 77-79. Levinas also explains it this way: “[T]he abstractness of a face is a visitation and a coming. It *disturbs* immanence without settling into the horizons of the world. Its abstraction is not obtained by a logical process starting from the substance of beings and going from the particular to the general. On the contrary, it goes toward those beings, but does not compromise itself with them, withdraws from them, absolves itself” (“Meaning and Sense,” printed in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1986), 102.

²⁴ Fabio Ciaramelli’s suggestion that the immemorial, or pre-original, time of the Other is precisely the refusal to locate the approach of the Other in reference to a point of origin is helpful for understanding the radicality of Levinas’ thought here. He argues that the immemorial past is not “something which ‘is’ before origin, which is more originary than origin, for instance, a more ancient origin” (p.88). Rather, it is the “deconstruction of origin” insofar as “the pre-originary means the opening of origin to a radical alterity that is irreducible to the circle of origin” (p.89). See Fabio Ciaramelli, “The Riddle of the Pre-original,” in *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak (New York: Routledge, 1995), 87-94.

which is fundamentally characterized in terms of its correspondence with the grasping, thematizing permanence of consciousness, the time of the Other is revealed as that which exceeds the scope of consciousness and is not, therefore, under its control. Rather, the time of the Other approaches me and passes me by without my being able to circumscribe it. The time of the Other is the basis of the radical alterity of the Other and the passivity towards this Other which is revealed in me.²⁵

In order to further clarify the relation of the face to the passivity of exposure we must further develop the idea of 'departure' which is so essential to the structure of the temporality of the Other. The passing of the Other is both an arrival and a departure. With the arrival of the Other I am obligated and put into question in such a way that my self-sufficiency is turned inside out and I am exposed. Such exposure, however, leads to a movement outward toward the Other. This movement outward is the result of "restlessness" (OTB, 54) that is created by the departure of the Other. Levinas states that "[i]n the neighbor's presence there then arises an absence by virtue of which proximity is not a simple co-existence and rest, but non-repose itself, restlessness."²⁶ Levinas explains this logic of departure by referring to the sensation of being touched (OTB,86). The "contact" made in the approach of proximity is the contact proper to the caress; it is contact that is based on the immediate loss of contact which awakens the expectation of

²⁵ Levinas also develops an account of the future in terms of the "to-God [*a-dieu*]," distinguished from the "to-come [*a-venir*]" of protention, through an analysis of my responsibility for the death of the other. Given the scope of this project and my specific interest in passivity, I am going to omit a discussion of this theme. For a good summary of Levinas' treatment of it see, "Diachrony and Representation," 114-120.

²⁶ "Language and Proximity," 120.

the next touch which, itself, is expected only *because* it is absent.²⁷ The Other's approach is always already her departure and, for that reason, it provokes my restless desire for proximity. Thus, the passing of the Other is creative in the sense that it opens me to the Other by drawing me out of myself with a hunger for the Other that is insatiable.²⁸ In restlessness my being-for-another, which is exposed in proximity, is further developed insofar as my being-uncovered *by* the Other becomes my approach *toward* the Other (OTB, 48). Referring once again to illeity, the logic of which has governed this entire section, Levinas captures the double movement in the passivity of proximity by explaining that "[t]he illeity in the beyond-being is the fact that its coming toward me is a departure which lets me accomplish a movement toward a neighbor" (OTB, 13).²⁹ The ecstatic movement out of the self toward the Other is not the self's move. It is instead the response to a 'pre-original' provocation, a desire awakened by the approach of the Other before consciousness.

²⁷ "Language and Proximity," 118.

²⁸ "Language and Proximity," 120. It is at this point, where approach, obligation and responsibility are defined in terms of the temporality of insatiable desire, that one can clearly see how mistaken are those who read Levinas as only a "moralist" interested in presenting the damning accusation of the Other as some kind of Divine Command theory.

²⁹ That the exposure by the Other turns into a movement of the self out towards the Other gives Levinas the language to express his notion of Desire, as he develops it in *Totality and Infinity*, within the context of his radical understanding of passivity. For this reason I disagree with Gérard Bailhache who suggests that Levinas has an understanding of passivity, articulated in terms of proximity, exposure and so on, *and* an understanding of activity, which is articulated in terms of Desire. I would rather suggest that the metaphysical Desire described in *Totality and Infinity* (pp.33-35) is the result of the restlessness provoked by the approaching and departing Other. See Gérard Bailhache, "Excess: Toward the Outside, or Humanity," translated by Bettina Bergo, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 20:2/21:1 (1998), 134.

In the restlessness provoked by the departing proximity of the Other, the self is assigned or elected. Insofar as I am obligated and exposed by the approaching, departing Other, I am elected as the irreplaceable *one* of responsibility (OTB, 56-59). The proximity of the Saying is a “starting from” that starts before there is a self present to start or to recognize that anything has been started.³⁰ A self is given in responsibility because the restless one who is approached is elected or assigned as “someone” responsible (OTB, 52). Before the summons to responsibility there is no subject because the subject only arises as “someone who, in the absence of anyone is called upon to be someone, and cannot slip away from this call. The subject is inseparable from this appeal or this election, which cannot be declined” (OTB, 53). The passivity that defines my selfhood is such that my very own selfhood “comes to pass” (OTB, 53) in the assignation from the Other.

We saw that the time of the Other is an excessive time that cannot be held within the presence of the present but, rather, approaches it only to pass it by leaving a ‘trace’ (OTB, 11-12).³¹ This notion of assignation is further developed when it is connected to the notion of the ‘trace’. Insofar as the Other approaches and departs, it leaves a trace of its non-presence within the self. Levinas draws an important distinction between a ‘trace’ and an ‘effect’. He argues that ‘things’ within the present leave effects--e.g., a stone scratches a piece of wood and thereby leaves a mark--while it is only that which cannot

³⁰ Bailhache. 116.

³¹ “To be qua *leaving a trace*, is to pass, to depart, to absolve oneself” (“Meaning and Sense,” 105).

be contained by the present that leaves a trace.³² It is here that Levinas' articulation of the approach of the Other is most closely tied to his understanding of the Infinite or God.³³ With regard to this pervasive and complex theme in Levinas' thought what is important for our purposes is the realization that, like the divine, the otherness of the Other can appear in the present only by not appearing. That is, the Other can approach me as a trace of itself only 'in' me. By locating the presence of the Other in the passing of the trace Levinas situates the Other beyond my present and, at the same time, places that Other within my selfhood. The election of the self by the Other is the presence of the Other in the self *as* trace. I am elected by the Other because the Other has invaded me. I no longer answer for myself, because in answering to the Other in me I must answer for the Other.³⁴ In order to understand the sense of this 'in' I will need to develop the temporal logic behind what Levinas calls "recurrence" or the substitution of the Other for the self. Before doing that it is important to see how this trace of the Other in me exceeds any power I may have to receive it.

³² "Meaning and Sense," 106.

³³ At the end of the "Note" which begins OTB Levinas points to the connection between an understanding of God and the discovery of human subjectivity according to the logic of the Saying (OTB, xlviii). This theme is pervasive in Levinas' thought as a whole. Exploring it adequately would exceed the scope of this project. Bailhache's essay (pp.119-121, 131) provides a good explanation of the connection between the Infinite and subjectivity in Levinas' thought.

³⁴As far as I can tell Levinas' language of expiation serves to make this point. Insofar as the Other is in me I am no longer only responsible for the summons that I receive from the Other but, further, I am responsible for the Other's deed which has become my deed (OTB, 112). This points to the theme of persecution which will be developed in the next paragraph.

One might object and argue that it is only insofar as the self recognizes the departure of the Other that desire can properly be said to occur. How, the objection would continue, could the self be called out of itself with hunger for the Other if there were no self to recognize the approach of the Other in the first place? Levinas is prepared for this objection and, as a result of it, he pushes his conceptual framework to a new level of intensity by describing the passivity of proximity as obsession and persecution (OTB, 87). Before I 'receive' the Other, the Other is in me as a sharp pain or an invasive blow. For Levinas the language of obsession is the language of trauma and, therefore, the language of undergoing or summoning is intensified into the language of suffering (OTB, 88). Levinas' account of persecution is connected to his argument that the body itself is the site of passivity. He explains that the "passivity of the 'for-another' . . . is the living human corporeality" (OTB, 51). His appeal to the metaphor of pain shows that as an incarnated subject the exposed self is the site of an unsolicited and unexpected passivity beyond reception. Before the self is consciousness, it is a body which is exposed and persecuted by a radical heterogeneity that is, nevertheless, not enslaving but the condition of desire itself. In the previous paragraph I suggested that the leaving of a trace of the Other in me can be characterized as an 'invasion' of the Other. It is this language of invasion that captures the radical passivity that Levinas is attempting to communicate through images of persecution and obsession. With the idea of the Other-in-the-self developed according to Levinas' notion of the assignation that comes from being invaded by the trace of the Other, we are ready to take up an explicit discussion of the temporal structure proper to this entire logic of the Saying.

Levinas' development of the logic of passivity has advanced according to an intensifying movement of the Other toward and 'into' the self. The final move of this logical development is the substitution of the Other for the self according to Levinas' notion of "recurrence". The notion of recurrence is best situated by recalling that what is necessary to Levinas' project is finding within the temporalization of time the foundation for radical alterity. To do that is to turn our attention back to the way in which time is temporalized in the Said and to look there for a "lapse of time that does not return, a diachrony refractory to all synchronization, a transcending diachrony" (OTB, 9). In the temporalization of time according to the Said we saw the recuperating power of consciousness synthesize the present in such a way that alterity was reduced to a formal, logical alterity between self-identical entities. Now, however, because we have discovered the logic of the Saying, a logic which is more primordial than that of the Said, we are able to take another look at the temporalization of time in the rupture of the present.

Insofar as the logic of proximity was developed so as to lead us to a recognition of the presence of the Other in me, Levinas has set the conditions for his understanding of the temporal logic of recurrence and substitution. He begins his discussion of substitution by asking, once again, if there is any possibility that some shred of initiative has crept into his account of the passivity of the self (OTB, 113). Given the structure of his account of the Said it is no surprise that he suggests that if there is an assumption of initiative lurking behind the passivity of proximity it will be the result of the temporal logic that governs that proximity. Thus from the beginning he ties the development of a notion of substitution to the development of a temporal logic that precludes any "coinciding of self

with self" (OTB, 114). He argues that in substitution "[t]he self is . . . the impossibility to come from all things and concern oneself only with oneself" (OTB, 114). We can say that the Other is 'in' me, or that I am substituted for the Other, only because the present temporalizes itself as a rupture wherein my present does not return to me as my present but, instead, as the other present of the unrepresentable Other. To use the metaphor of the 'beyond,' one could say that it is the breaking up of the present that allows the excessive, Infinite, Other to pass from the beyond into and out of the present of the self and thereby leave a trace of the Other in the very temporalization of the self. To use the language of assignation one can say that the self is elected by the Other because, in discovering itself in its temporalization, the self is identified by the Other as the Other-in-the-self. Selfhood is the discovery of the Other who approaches me in time and obligates me by tracing my present not as my own, but as that of the Other. The self is given to itself--i.e., it is elected in the sense of being given an office through one's election--to the extent that before it is itself it is the recurrence of the Other in it. To use the language of persecution we might say that "[p]ersecution is not something added to the subjectivity of the subject. . . it is the very movement of recurrence. The subjectivity as *the other in the same*, as an inspiration, is the putting into question of all affirmation for oneself, all egoism born again in this very recurrence" (OTB, 111). I am invaded by the Other because my present is always already the present of the Other in me.

3.5. Conclusion

My reading of certain themes in Levinas' *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* has sought to develop the temporal logic behind his understanding of passivity. By showing

how the rupturing of time according to the gap or lapse inherent in the present itself is covered over by the synthesizing logic of the Said, Levinas carries out the ethical reduction of the Said to the Saying and thereby reveals a more primordial temporality of the Other. Starting from the approach of the other person in the relation of responsibility, Levinas follows an intensifying path through exposure, obsession and persecution that finally leads to an understanding of subjectivity wherein the selfhood of the self, in its radical passivity, comes to pass. Rather than a self posited by the thematizing, representing power of consciousness, Levinas finds a self whose very time is the time of the Other: the non-identical recurrence of the Other in me, the substitution of the Other for me in a present that is not my own.

Concluding Reflections: 'Oneself as Another' and 'An Other in Oneself'

Throughout this thesis I have shown that Paul Ricoeur organizes his philosophy of selfhood around three basic philosophical intentions. My critique of Ricoeur's proposal has focused on his third philosophical intention: to make alterity constitutive of selfhood. Once Ricoeur's development of the correlation between alterity and passivity was shown, the issue became whether or not Ricoeur's proposal could account for a passivity that is constitutive of selfhood. In my analysis of the final sections of the tenth study of *Oneself as Another*, I showed that Ricoeur's account of the passivity or otherness of the flesh provides him with a good basis to think a passivity that is not secondary to activity. However, when I went on to examine his account of the passivity experienced in relation to the otherness of other people and to conscience, I argued that his commitment to the agency of the self, which is understood as the power to recognize and receive alterity, prevented him from giving passivity a constitutive role.

Ricoeur's third philosophical intention was initially proposed by way of a comment on the word 'as' present in the title *Oneself as Another*. When he explained that the kind of alterity in which he was interested is an alterity that is constitutive of selfhood, he pointed out that the word 'as' should be given "a strong meaning, not only that of comparison (oneself similar to another) but indeed that of an implication (oneself inasmuch as being other)" (OA, 3). In order to recapitulate my argument against Ricoeur and place it in relation to my reading of Levinas, I will now argue that by remaining committed to agency as that which is constitutive of selfhood, Ricoeur does not allow the word 'as' to have anything but a comparative meaning.

To understand 'as' in the strong terms suggested by Ricoeur at the beginning of his study is to adopt the following logic: when one claims to understand X 'as' Y, one is claiming that X is understood according to Y. In other words, Y sets the conditions for understanding X. So, if one is to understand oneself 'as' another, the second term in that relation must set the conditions for understanding the first. However, as I have argued above, this is precisely what Ricoeur resists. My analysis of Ricoeur's account of passivity returned time and time again to his basic claim that there is no other-than-self without a self. Selfhood is primary. It is required before the otherness of another can even be thought. To use the language introduced here, Ricoeur insists that the relation "oneself as another" is understood in such a way that the first term (i.e., oneself) sets the conditions for understanding the second term (i.e., another or otherness). Thus, the initial logical force of Ricoeur's use of 'as' is diminished by his actual analysis of selfhood, activity, and passivity. As a result Ricoeur's "oneself as another" is basically comparative. Granted, Ricoeur's account of alterity does go beyond a simple comparison where the other and the self are related only through the comparison made by a third party. There is no question that, for Ricoeur, alterity affects the self. However, insofar as his account of alterity is based on the self's activity of recognition and reception, its relation to alterity cannot be constitutive. This is so because the self can be in relation with otherness, and otherness can bear upon me, only insofar as I can compare the otherness of other people and even the otherness of my own conscience to the already constituted self that I am.

At the end of my second chapter I explained that my reason for turning to the thought of Levinas was to supplement and correct Ricoeur's philosophy of selfhood. In

order to save the strong meaning of 'as', it is necessary to first of all locate the other 'in' the self. In my discussion of Ricoeur's account of the otherness of the flesh, I suggested that the experience of my own body as flesh is the experience of an alterity 'in' me. Insofar as the flesh is the point of origin of the self's actions, it is other than the self in the sense of being there before the self acts and being that through which the self must act. However, because the flesh is always *my own*, its otherness is an alterity that is 'in' the self. Because Ricoeur's understanding of the temporal present focused on the synthesis of time through human action, he was not able to provide a way to understand the full metaphorical force of the preposition 'in'. In my third chapter I developed Levinas' logic of passivity and explained that in the non-identical recurrence of the other-in-me, which, for Levinas, is the true way in which time temporalizes itself, we have a fully-developed account of passivity that is constitutive of selfhood. Levinas employs the preposition 'in' to communicate the idea that the selfhood of the self is constituted through the non-presence of the Other 'in' me. Levinas supports and intensifies this use of 'in' with images of invasion, incarnation, and inspiration. Like Ricoeur's account of the otherness of the flesh, Levinas' account of the self constituted by the approach of the Other in proximity, places alterity 'in' the self and thereby preserves the constitutive role of the Other by refusing to reduce it to that which is first recognized and received by the self.¹

¹ In a recent study of Levinas' understanding of 'radical passivity' [Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, Agamben* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999)], Wall draws on the language of 'in' and 'as'. While his attempt to argue that the non-presence of the Other is the anonymous self is not convincing, his argument makes a good case for the importance of 'in' and 'as' as metaphorical indicators of the relation between selfhood and alterity. While I argue that 'in' should correct and intensify 'as', Wall seems to collapse the distinction. As a result his interpretation is not one with which I would agree.

In keeping with the spirit of Ricoeur's philosophy, I conclude that his philosophy of selfhood must be put through one last detour. The argument in *Oneself as Another* can be corrected, supplemented and strengthened not by offering a criticism of Levinas-- which Ricoeur too hastily does--but allowing the metaphorical force of 'as' to be corrected and intensified by Levinas' development of the temporality of 'in'. To save the strong meaning of 'as', the agency of the self must itself be constituted by the presence of the other 'in' me. In order to fulfill his third philosophical intention and to achieve the philosophy of selfhood which he sets out to accomplish, Paul Ricoeur is in need of the conceptual resources to be found in the philosophy of radical passivity as it is developed by Emmanuel Levinas.

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