ROADBLOCKS TO THE SUPPLEMENTATION OF

LEVINAS AND HEIDEGGER:

EITHER ETHICS & THINGS

NEVER INTERSECT OR

ALL ROADS LEAD

TO BEING

By

MICHAEL W. BLAZEK

Bachelor of Arts

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1992

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
December, 1997

ROADBLOCKS TO THE SUPPLEMENTATION OF

LEVINAS AND HEIDEGGER:

EITHER ETHICS & THINGS

NEVER INTERSECT OR

ALL ROADS LEAD

TO BEING

Thesis Approved:

Edward G. Lawry
Thesis Advisor

Michael R. Taylor

David Patterson

Wayne B. Powell
Dean of the Graduate College

ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has taken some time — some would say entirely too long — for me to arrive at this moment, in this place. My intellectual journey began almost ten years ago with an intuitive leap. I was asked by a high school teacher what I wanted to study. Without even knowing what it meant, I blurted out the word 'philosophy'. Shortly after arriving at OSU, I had the good fortune to enroll in a class entitled 'Life, Language, and Meaning' taught by Dr. David Patterson. It was in that class that I first heard the name: Emmanuel Levinas. After being introduced to existentialism by Dr. Edward Lawry, I took a seminar he taught on Martin Heidegger. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Taylor taught a seminar on ethics — a good portion of which included Levinas. The influence of those men — all five of them — have culminated in this thesis. I wish to thank these men for their patience, their words of wisdom, and even their criticism. If there is one thing that I have learned, it is that life must be lived in a dialogue.

For enriching my life in innumerable and magnificent ways, I wish to thank my friends and family. For all my friends, 'back in the day' till today — Buster, Cameron, Charles, Dana H., Darin, Dayna N., Ellen, Jane, Jeanne, Jon-Scott, Laurie, Linda, Marianne, Ryan M., Ryan R., Sandra, Shelly, Thomas, and Tony — I give thanks and praise. To the other two members of Tres Miguels — Michael Rhodes and Michael Silva

iii

— I owe a special thanks for many a late night cigarettes and cups of coffee while we 'tripped it out, hard'.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOMENCLATURE

BT	*Being and Time*, Heidegger.
BW	*Basic Writings*, Heidegger.
EE	*Existence and Existents*, Levinas.
EI	*Ethics ans Infinity*, Levinas.
IOF	*Is Ontology Fundamental?*, Levinas.
LR	*Levinas Reader*, Levinas.
PWDII	*Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II, Descartes.
TI	*Totality and Infinity*, Levinas.
TO	*Time and the Other*, Levinas.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"At the intersection between ethics and things, Levinas and Heidegger meet."[1]

This quotation occurs in Silvia Benso's article entitled "Of Things Face-To-Face with Levinas Face-To-Face with Heidegger: Prolegomena to a Metaphysical Ethics of Things." It encapsulates Benso's belief that Levinas and Heidegger can be brought together in an effort to develop an 'ethics of things'. Benso's aim of developing such an 'ethics of things' seems implausible given the position of both Heidegger and Levinas. Clearly, Benso wants to establish an 'ethics of things' in which human beings have a responsibility to Nature, the environment, and all things. Moreover, she contends that human beings' proper response should take the form of "the touching mode of tenderness."[2] If her goal is to establish something like a 'tree-hugging' and/or 'love of Nature' 'environmental ethics', then Benso is destined to fail given the thinkers she is drawing upon. While Heidegger's response to such a modern concern is temporally inaccessible, Levinas plainly denies any such endeavor. In an interview with graduate

---

[1] Silvia Benso, "Of Things Face-To-Face with Levinas Face-To-Face with Heidegger: Prolegomena to a Metaphysical Ethics of Things," Philosophy Today, 40 (1996), 132.

[2] Op. Cit., p. 137.

1

students in 1986, Levinas grants that ethical consideration (based on suffering) "extends to all living beings"[3] but that ethics — which involves an Other rather than simply oneself — is reserved for human beings. The extension of ethics to non-living entities is inconceivable based upon Levinas.

Though her end may be dubious, Benso's means are philosophically interesting. Unlike most writers on Heidegger and Levinas, she attempts to unify rather than isolate the two thinkers in order to develop her own original theory — a so-called 'ethics of things'. She accomplishes this unlikely union through supplementing one with the other — Levinas' concept of ethics is supplemented with Heidegger's conception of things. Although she admits that the "concrete elaboration of such an ethics [an ethics of things] will be left to a future project"[4] and that the "concept . . . still awaits philosophical thematization,"[5] this thesis will show that such a project, though admirable, is futile. The aim of this thesis is twofold: its 'negative' aspect is to refute Benso's proposed development of an 'ethics of things' and its 'positive' aspect is to analyze how a subject is individualized. Both of these aspects will be based upon the thought of Heidegger and Levinas. In the end, Benso's 'ethics of things' fails not because of an incompatibility between Heidegger and Levinas but because Levinas' conception of ethics does not extend so far as to include things.

---

[3] Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, ed., The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 172.

[4] Benso, p. 134.

[5] Benso, p. 140.

A Reading of Benso's Article

In her article, Benso takes a position which refuses to endorse either extreme of the relationship between Heidegger and Levinas — Levinas is neither a complement nor an opponent of Heidegger. They are not the same — "[d]espite the common rootedness in Husserl's phenomenology, their encounter is not that of two Aristotelian friends; nor is the one the forerunner of the other."[6] For Benso, "Levinas and Heidegger do not complement each other, either existentially or historically or philosophically."[7] On the other hand, they are not "in absolute opposition . . . opposition being only the counterpart to complementation."[8] Either position — whether it be complementary or oppositional — reduces the Other[9] to the Same (either Levinas to Heidegger or to anti-Heidegger). The concern for such a reduction has its origins in Levinas' criticism of Heidegger. Benso is quite right when she states that a "complement comes from the interior of a common territory and aims at completion and enclosure . . . [while a] supplement derives its

---

[6] Benso, p. 132.

[7] Benso, pp. 132-133.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Levinas makes a distinction between the Other and the other. While this can be understood as the distinction between persons and things, it does not get to the heart of the matter. The term 'other' signifies something which, though it appears to be 'other-than', can be reduced to the Same. The term 'Other', however, cannot be reduced to the Same. Many commentators use the terms interchangeably, but this thesis will try to maintain the Levinasian usage. The distinction between Other and other is captured by the Levinasian term 'alterity' which will be explored in greater detail below.

authority from the exterior, opening the path for further development."[10] For Benso, Heidegger and Levinas "stand on their own as two separate, autonomous philosophical figures"[11] whose supplementation would be an original 'further development'.

Benso attempts to create a position that is capable of "preserving differences . . . [without] instituting an oppositional confrontation between Levinas and Heidegger."[12] Derrida's notion of 'supplementation' provides Benso with an account capable of preserving each thinker's autonomy; "As supplementing each other, Levinas and Heidegger remain external, exterior, other, each not defined as the other than the Same."[13] Derrida warns that the "structure of supplementation is quite complex."[14] Supplementation involves the notion of 'differance' — "*sameness* which is not *identical*."[15] In supplementation, the signifier not only represents an-other absent signifier but also replaces it. According to Benso, "two different meanings cohabit, oddly although necessarily, in the notion of the supplement. The supplement is surplus, an addition . . . Yet the supplement is not only an excess. . . . Its addition aims at replacement."[16] Benso's

---

[10] Benso, p. 133.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Jacques Derrida, Speech and Phenomenon (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 89.

[15] Op. Cit., p. 129.

[16] Benso, p. 133.

view aims at replacing both Heidegger and Levinas by supplementing them with each other.

As the quotation which precedes this chapter indicates, Benso's proposed supplementation occurs at the intersection between ethics and things. What makes such an addition (as well as a replacement) possible is a lack on the part of both Levinas and Heidegger. In the views of both men, "there is a remainder of being that is not described, that is forgotten in . . . [each of their respective] meditation[s]."[17] According to Benso, "there are no things for Levinas. . . . [and] there is no ethics in Heidegger, at least according to the most common reading."[18] Thus, if one were to place them "face-to-face in a confrontation neither of them would advocate enthusiastically, the result is a . . . double negation — non-ethics and non-things."[19] Moreover, each one provides what the other lacks. Benso's supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger is possible because "each of them offers the remainder that the other lacks."[20] To the supplementation, Levinas can offer ethics and Heidegger can offer things. Thus, the double negation is also "a double

---

[17] Ibid.

[18] Benso, p. 132.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Op. cit., p. 133.

affirmation — ethics and things."[21] What Benso calls the "ethics of things is the outcome of the supplementarity of Levinas and Heidegger."[22]

The composite term 'ethics of things' contains "non-traditional"[23] notions of both 'ethics' and 'things'. For Benso's supplementation, "ethics cannot be traditional ethics in any of its formulations (utilitarian, deontological, virtue-oriented), and things cannot be traditional things (objects opposed to a subject)."[24] The term 'non-tradition' is an apt description of both Levinas' ethics and Heidegger's objects. There is no room in a post-Nietzschean and post-Heideggerian landscape for overarching (traditional) ethical systems. The hermeneutics of suspicion (of which Heidegger is a part and with which Levinas must deal) have "compromis[ed] irremediably the possibility of a 'big' ethics in the Aristotelian, or even Kantian, sense of an ethical system able to give laws to reality by imposing norms and prohibitions to be respected."[25] The result is what Benso calls "residual ethics"[26] — 'small' ethical systems devoted to only a potion of reality. The modern areas of medical, legal, environmental, and business ethics have been "deprived of the possibility of a holistic approach to reality . . . [and as a result] try to bridle at least that small part of

---

[21] Op. cit., p. 132.

[22] Op. cit., p. 133.

[23] Op. cit., p. 132.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Op. cit., p. 134.

[26] Ibid.

reality within which they constitute themselves."[27] Such 'small' ethics are content to operate within their own "minimum realm"[28] and spend their time "seek[ing] common values and principles able to give that part of reality order and rationality, upon which those who belong to the specific realm can ground their activity."[29] These sorts of 'small' ethics — which are a sort of *"locus minimum"*[30] — fail because of their structure. They attempt to be "a practical guide, or a moral ought, or a science of *mores*, traditions, behaviors . . . [and attempt] to posit rules and values as conditions for the development of human beings; of providing its followers with static sets of norms to direct moral actions."[31] It is precisely because of its normativity that ethics fails. These sorts of traditional ethics are "necessarily limited, not only with respect to the domain in which they rule, but also in terms of credibility."[32] The major failure of ethics in the twentieth century is the often repeated example of Auschwitz. In an interview with graduate students from the University of Warwick, Levinas concurs with Benso on this point: "The essential problem is: can we speak of an absolute commandment after Auschwitz? Can we speak of morality after the failure of morality?"[33] Blanchot echoes this when he questions

---

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Bernasconi and Wood, p. 176.

"How can one philosophize, how can one write within the memory of Auschwitz . . . it is this thought that traverses, that bears, the whole of Levinas' philosophy and that he proposes to us without saying it."[34]

In the wake of the collapse of traditional ethics, Benso endorses phenomenological ethics. This type of ethics is expansive rather than limited, 'big' rather than 'small'. Phenomenological ethics is based on "not an abstract principle or value, but reality itself, its concreteness, the gravity of things."[35] Thus, "good is defined in terms of what preserves the maximum of reality from destruction. What is bad is what works against reality, for its destruction and annihilation."[36]

There are two candidates for more traditional categories under which phenomenological ethics might fall: metaphysics and ontology. While Heidegger criticizes the term 'metaphysics' Levinas criticizes the term 'ontology'. As a result, Benso is hesitant to call the phenomenological ethics characterized by an 'ethics of things' as either metaphysical or ontological. Instead, she finds what she believes is common to both; "Both metaphysics and ontology . . . are characterized by the same concern: that of not being oblivious to differences."[37] It is the nature of the difference which distinguishes metaphysics from ontology as well as Heidegger's enterprise from that of Levinas. Both

---

[34] Richard A. Cohen, ed., Face to Face with Levinas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 50.

[35] Benso, p. 134.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Op. cit., p. 135.

metaphysics and Levinas are concerned with "the difference between being and beyond being"[38] while ontology and Heidegger are concerned with "the difference between Being and beings."[39] The name each of these thinkers applies to this difference is also distinct; "[f]or Levinas, the difference is transcendence; for Heidegger. . . [it] is rather what, with a Derridian expression, one could call *différrance*, the giving of itself of being, which can only give itself in beings, but always withdraws from them."[40] Benso, however, eradicates these distinctions by maintaining that "Levinas reproduced at a second order of reality what Heidegger enacts at a first order: horizontal verticality in Heidegger (what we have called *différrance*), vertical verticality in Levinas. But the structural movement remains the same."[41]

Benso finds structural similarities between both Levinas' metaphysics and Heidegger's ontology in the work of Descartes. What Descartes has suggested in the Third Meditation is that there is a difference between "formal reality and objective reality . . . between reality as it is and its perception."[42] According to Benso, metaphysics could be considered the difference "between the order of being and the order of knowing. Metaphysics is the fact that there is a reality that is bigger, or richer, than

---

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

consciousness."[43] For Heidegger, however, knowing is one particular — perhaps the primary — mode of being. This does not mean that Heidegger lacks such a distinction. For Heidegger, as well as Levinas, "reality is greater than what can be grasped of it."[44] Although Benso bases this statement on "the structure of the Fourfold"[45] the same can be maintained according to Being in *Being and Time*. In particular, Benso maintains that what exceeds consciousness for Heidegger is things and for Levinas is the Other. For Descartes, the idea of God exceeds consciousness. For Levinas it is "the Other as person, who is always the *idea* of the Other"[46] that exceeds consciousness just as Heidegger maintains that things exceed consciousness. Given the affinity to Descartes, "ethics can be said to be metaphysical, whether it involves the relation with the beyond-being (Levinas) or with Being (Heidegger). Metaphysics becomes transversal to the notions of transcendence, immanence, or *différrance*. It describes what epistemology cannot achieve, what only the ethical dimension can approach."[47]

From Descartes, Benso takes the idea of what exceeds consciousness (the idea of God), applies it to the metaphysics of Levinas and to the ontology of Heidegger, and arrives at her conception of a phenomenological ethics. Given this understanding, Benso is content to call ethics metaphysical. It is the concept of 'Other' which provides ethics

---

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

with its metaphysical nature and distinguishes it from other 'small' ethics. According to

Benso, "metaphysical ethics receives its orientation not from the subject, or from its

formulation of values . . . but from what epistemology cannot reach, from the Other, or

from the Other of the Other, from the things themselves."[48] The non-traditional nature of

ethics is that it "is a locative description, not a normative procedure. Ethics opens up a

space"[49] where the Other can be encountered. Rather than a prescriptive list, ethics

amounts to "a response that does not proceed from the individual her/himself . . . to

respond (or not to respond) to an appeal coming from the exterior."[50] If ethics is a

response to Otherness then Benso wants to apply it not only to the Other which is another

person (Levinas) but also to things (Heidegger). Ethics is "the place where Otherness can

be encountered . . . [it is] where the *locus* of the Fourfold can be inhabited."[51] The

authority of the "ethical imperative comes from Otherness, from its right to existence as a

form of reality. The only imperative is the injunction to let this Other be."[52]

According to Benso, what marks ethics as metaphysical is non-indifference to

difference. Thus, both Heidegger and Levinas are included in a metaphysical /

phenomenological ethics because they contain elements which are 'other' — Heidegger

because of his concept of things and Levinas because of his concept of ethics as a response

---

[48] Op. Cit, p. 136.

[49] Op. cit., p. 134.

[50] Op. Cit., p. 136.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

to the Other (person). Although Benso's consideration of metaphysical ethics contains a

predominance of Levinasian concepts (the Other, ethics as response, exteriority, etc.), she

maintains that "Levinas need[s] to be supplemented by Heidegger."[53] Because of an

apparent lack in Levinas — that otherness is restricted to other persons — there is a need

for his thought to be supplemented by that of Heidegger. As Benso points out, "[n]ot

only the Other, but also the Other of the Other must become part of philosophical

discourse for that discourse to achieve the level of metaphysicity it advocates."[54] Benso

treats the work of Levinas as an "exemplar of ethics . . . a model, a paradigm, an

illustration."[55] But his paradigm is in need of expansion since "a paradigm is not self-

sufficient and all-inclusive."[56] Because it provides a space for the examination of the

Other, Benso contends that the work of Levinas allows for consideration of "other

Othernesses."[57] Levinas restricts the term 'Other' to the other person and this

"obliterate[s] another form of Otherness, which is different from the Otherness of the

other person, and whose presence is less apparent, less evident, less loud; the Otherness of

what Levinas's ethics neglects: things."[58] It is the notion of the otherness of things that

Benso hopes to gain from Heidegger. With the supplementation of Levinas with

---

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Op. Cit., p. 138.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

Heidegger, the resulting "ethics of things may take its move from the ethics of the Other (person), but its truth is independent from the Other (person). It lies in the reality of the things themselves. The ethics of things reaches further than Levinas's ethics, even if it may receive an inspiration from that ethics."[59]

As has been shown above, the supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger requires that both be joined in a metaphysical union: that the concept of metaphysics be understood as a non-indifference to difference so as to allow Levinas' concept of the otherness of persons be joined with Heidegger's concept of the otherness of things. Moreover, as has been stated above, what distinguishes Levinas from Heidegger is the precise nature of the difference inherent in their thought — beyond being for the former, and between Being and beings for the latter. Benso is aware that "difficulties arise in the project of extending Levinas's notion of ethics to Heidegger's concept of things . . . [not the least of which is] the distinction between transcendence and immanence/*différance*."[60] Benso contends that this "opposition between transcendence and immanence . . . should not be thought in terms of an antinomy."[61] Yet the fact remains that for Levinas the "Other is beyond being . . . [but for Heidegger] Things are not beyond being. If anything, they are in being."[62]

Benso maintains that "in the differences [between Levinas and Heidegger] there may be elements of similarity, without yielding to identity but rather maintaining

---

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Op. cit., p. 139.

[62] Ibid.

equivocity."[63] In order to accomplish supplementation, she contends that Heidegger's

notion of immanence/*différance* "is a case of reversed immanence, which grants some

form of transcendence"[64] similar to that of Levinas. What Benso calls "circular ringing"[65]

is "what Heidegger calls the ontological difference, Being is beyond the thing in which it

gives itself, so that [it] may appear as reversed immanence, [though it] is not properly

transcendence although [it] is *différance*."[66] While the Other (person) in Levinas has

height, "the Other as thing has the open circularity of differing"[67] in Heidegger.

In order to overcome this apparent difficulty in supplementing Levinas and

Heidegger, Benso employs a "torsion, which is not a dis-tortion."[68] The 'torsion' that is

required is to equate height with depth. For Levinas "the voice of the ethical Other comes

from on high . . . In Heidegger, there is no height in things, although there is a depth in

them."[69] Although persons and things are united in otherness, their positions remain to be

equated. This is accomplished, according to Benso, because "[t]hings and humans both

entail the verticality of metaphysics, but each in its idiomatic way."[70] In essence what

---

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Op. cit., p. 138.

[69] Op. cit., pp. 138-139.

[70] Op. cit., p. 139.

Benso does is equate the depth of things as an inversion of height (as is the case with the other person). Things do "not appeal from on high, but from below. The lowness is height, as the height of the Other (person) is also a lowness in the destitution of the Other."[71] In the supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger, things would also maintain the structure of the ethical relationship with another person as outlined by Levinas. As in the relationship with the Other person, things "are both Master — they obsess the I with the authority of a constant presence; they are always there — and hostage — they are frail, dependent on continuous protection; their existence is the frailty of a reality always in danger of being destroyed."[72] Moreover, such a relationship is also asymetrical; "[a]s with the Other (person), despite the fact that things apparently do not stand on high, there is no reciprocity between the things and the I."[73]

Benso's project to develop an ethics of things depends upon her successful supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger. The supplementation process is catalyzed by a view of metaphysics as a non-indifference to otherness and ethics as a place for that otherness to manifest. Primarily from Levinas she takes the concept of ethics and the otherness of the Other (person); from Heidegger she takes the concept of the otherness of things. Thus:

> The expression 'ethics *of* things,' as the result of the supplementarity of
> Levinas and Heidegger, acquires a double meaning: it is *of* things, as the
> place where things can manifest themselves in their reality as the guardians

---

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

and the receptacle of the Fourfold, and from their receptivity can appeal to humans to dwell by them. But it is *of* things also in the sense that humans are compelled by things to respond to the demands placed upon them and shape their behavior in accordance to the inner mirroring of things. Things signify both a subject and an object for ethics. *Of* things means thus the directionality of a double movement: that which moves out from the things to reach the I and the Other, and that which, in response to the first, moves from the I and the Other to reach the things and to be concerned by them. The first movement is that of the demand or the appeal that things place on human beings by their mere impenetrable presencing there. It is the thingly side of the ethics of things. The second is that of tenderness, as the response to the demand and the properly human configuration of the ethics of things. Tenderness represents the future of a metaphysical ethics, that is, an ethics that is concerned not only with persons, but also with things in their Otherness.[74]

Preliminary Response to Benso

Benso's approach of taking both Heidegger and Levinas together is admirable. However, along with the Derridian concept of supplementation Benso imports an alarming tendency of deconstruction: acceptance without criticism. According to Benso, "Criticism is not the weapon of the supplement, nor is it its goal. The absence of criticism also renders the need for an apology unnecessary."[75] Critical evaluation and analysis play a necessary role in any intellectual endeavor. The use of a device like 'supplementation' does not absolve one from this responsibility. Nor does it justify an avoidance of contextual analysis — if both criticism and justification (apology) are ruled-out, then compliance or deviance from a given text cannot be ascertained. Moreover, Levinas

---

[74] Op. cit., pp. 139-140.

[75] Op. Cit., p. 133.

contends that criticism is part of language — it is more than an 'act', it is a relationship between the same and the Other. The "need to enter into a relation with someone . . . is what we call the necessity of critique. . . . [C]riticism . . . is the word of a living being speaking to a living being" (LR, 147-148). Criticism is a relationship in language between persons. The role of criticism is the "integrat[ion of] the inhuman work of the artist into the human world" (LR, 142) of relationship and language.

In her article, there are several examples of Benso's acceptance without criticism. One of the most glaring errors is the statement that for Levinas "the Other as person . . . is always the *idea* of the Other."[76] Levinas clearly states that the encountering of an other person is constantly "exceeding *the idea of the other in me* . . . [and that this] *mode* does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze" (TI, 50). Moreover, the exceeding of the idea of the other "will not be a knowledge, because through knowledge, whether one wants it or not, the object is absorbed by the subject and duality disappears" (TO, 41). That is, if the Other is always the idea of the Other as Benso claims, then the Other is reduced to the Same. Elsewhere Levinas says that "the relation to the *other* breaks with the model of the subject taking cognizance of an object" (EI, 65) which repudiates the claim that the Other is always the idea of the Other.

Although this example may be taken as an isolated error, a deeper understanding of Levinas' distinction between ontology and metaphysics would have prevented it. In a section of *Totality and Infinity* entitled "Metaphysics Precedes Ontology" Levinas maintains that "Knowledge or theory . . . comprehension . . . is a way of approaching the

---

[76] Op. cit., p. 135.

known being such that its alterity with regard to the knowing being vanishes" (TI, 42). That is, knowledge reduces the Other to the Same. One of the ways this is accomplished is "through a third term, a neutral term, which itself is not a being . . . This third term may appear as a concept thought. Then the individual that exists abdicates into the general that is thought" (TI, 42). If the Other is always the idea of the Other, then its alterity is eliminated, it is reduced to the Same, and no longer is other.

The omission of Levinas' distinction between ontology and metaphysics allows Benso to categorize both Heidegger and Levinas as metaphysical based upon a weak reading of the concept of otherness. It seems that any otherness / difference is sufficient for Benso to proclaim a similarity; the same, however, cannot be said for Heidegger or Levinas. A deeper reading of Levinas reveals that there is a distinction between otherness and alterity — the former being reserved for otherness which can be reduced to the same and the latter being reserved for otherness resistant to such a reduction. According to Levinas, Heidegger utilizes the concept of difference rather than alterity. This distinction also relates to Benso's characterization of 'metaphysical ethics'. Her summation of metaphysics as a non-indifference to difference as well as the criteria for evaluation (whether it preserves or destroys reality) is broad enough to cover over the distinction between an ethical respect of alterity and a cognitive / ontological 'letting-be'.

Many of Benso's claims are based upon structural analysis rather than analysis of content. For example, a structural analysis of 'excess' or 'beyond' allows her to contend that there is sufficient similarity between the Other as person and the other as thing because both exceed consciousness. The distinction drawn by both Heidegger and

Levinas between things and people is thus subverted. Moreover, neither the Heidegger of *Being and Time* nor Levinas would claim that things exceed our consciousness. In addition, Benso claims an 'equivocity' of things and persons based upon the structure of ethics as the place where otherness can be encountered. Moreover, Benso draws a structural correlation (asymmetry) between the relationship between a person and a thing in Heidegger and Levinas' relationship between a person and the Other. There are structural similarities between the asymmetrical relationship between a person and a thing as well as between a person and the Other. However, the exact nature of the imbalance is different.

One of the best candidates for a structural analysis is the difference between Levinas' ethical height and Heidegger's ontological difference. This is a fitting area in which Benso is able to exercise her structural analysis since it is contained in a spatial metaphor. On the surface of it, a claim that depth is equivalent to inverted height seems plausible. Yet a closer examination of Levinas' metaphor will reveal the flaw in such thinking. Benso maintains that a thing for Heidegger contains depth — that is, it is impenetrability (to one degree or another) to comprehension. The height which a person contains for Levinas is not only its impenetrability but also its status as absolutely other — its alterity. The Other is unknowable because it exceeds our attempts to contain it.

At one point, Levinas likens the Other to the "curvature of . . . space [that] inflects distance into elevation" (TI, 291). The space to which he is referring is Heidegger's notion of Being — within which one may encounter others and things. This space is two-dimensional — it contains only ontological difference. At the center of the Heideggerian

universe is Dasein and the boundary is marked out by that particular Dasein's death. Anything which occurs in this space bears a relationship to Dasein through a referential totality.

What Levinas does is introduce a third-dimension into Heideggerian space. According to this metaphor, Heidegger's world is comparable to Abbot's "Flatland". What Levinas proposes with his conception of the Other is a three-dimensional object interjected into a two-dimensional world. Suppose, for example, that the Other is a sphere. From the perspective of the two-dimensional world (Heidegger) the sphere would appear to be a dot just like any other (Dasein). But it cannot be contained or even known from the two-dimensional perspective — a perspective incapable of perceiving height, it would convert it into distance. The third dimension which the Other has is the ethical dimension. It is not that the Other cannot be represented as a dot (concept, Being, Dasein) it is that it overflows such a representation because it is more than that. Given this understanding, the 'equivocity' of height with depth obliterates the distinction between the two and does amount to a 'dis-tortion'. In the end, 'circular differing' in Heidegger is not 'height' in Levinas.

Just as a weak reading of otherness allowed Benso to develop her argument, a weak reading of demand / appeal and response allows her to contend that things, as well as other people, are capable of this. A deeper consideration of 'things' is forthcoming. Such an analysis will show that Benso's claim that Levinas is in need of supplementation because he has no adequate concept of things results from an inaccurate reading of Levinas (and results in misstatements). These may prove to be more than mere

'difficulties' arising from the supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger; they may prove
to be fatal flaws.

CHAPTER II

ETHICS

Benso's supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger rests upon the claim that Levinas has a concept of ethics which Heidegger lacks but Heidegger has a concept of things which Levinas lacks. According to Benso, "there is ethics in Levinas, even if his notion of ethics extends only to the other person (certainly the other man, hopefully, also the other woman and child). Conversely, there is no ethics in Heidegger, at least according to the most common reading."[77] Levinas defines ethics as "the extreme exposure and sensitivity of one subjectivity to another."[78] Elsewhere he defines it in the following way:

> We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thought and my possession, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics. Metaphysics, transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely

---

[77] Benso, p. 132. Benso's attempt to impugn Levinas on the basis of a perceived misogyny — by claiming that Levinas' concept of the Other is 'hopefully' applicable to women and children — is unwarranted. Levinas considers, at length, the role of the feminine as one example of alterity and specifically includes "the stranger, the widow, and the orphan" (TI, 77) in his ethics. There is nothing gender-specific in Levinas' definition of ethics. Any minor usage of masculine personal pronouns is overshadowed by the overwhelming use of the gender-neutral term "Other".

[78] Cohen, p. 29.

produced as the calling into question of the same by the other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge. (TI, 43).

As Colin Davis observes, "the whole philosophy of *Totality and Infinity* is contained in embryo in this passage."[79] This chapter on ethics will explore many of Levinas' concepts including: the Other, alterity, solitude, exposure, language, and call.

Levinas' Ethics

Ethics in the Levinasian sense rests upon the relationship between a self (the Same) and an Other. According to Davis, the "distinction between other and Other (*l'Autre*, or its personalized form *Autrui*) may appear trivial, but it is nevertheless indispensable to Levinas's thinking."[80] As noted above, the former refers to otherness which can be converted into the same, while the latter is reserved for otherness resistant to such a reduction. Thus, the Other is completely other — "*something else entirely . . .* [it is] *absolutely other*" (TI, 33). For this type of otherness, Levinas reserves the term 'alterity'. In an effort to elucidate the concept of alterity, Levinas states the following:

> The alterity of the Other does not depend on any quality that would distinguish him from me, for a distinction of this nature would precisely imply between us that community of genus which already nullifies alterity. And yet the Other does not purely negate the I; total negation, of which murder is the temptation and the attempt, refers to an antecedent relation. The relation between the Other and me, which draws forth in his

---

[79] Colin Davis, Levinas: An Introduction (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 36.

[80] Ibid.

> expression, issues neither in number nor in concept. The Other remains
> infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign . . . (TI, 194)

Alterity means that the Other is not equivalent to the same but is not in complete

opposition either.

As mentioned above, Benso acknowledges that Levinas draws upon Descartes'

Third Meditation for historical philosophical precedence (however rudimentary) for the

existence of an Other. According to Davis, Descartes' *Meditations* is "a crucial point of

reference for Levinas's thought."[81] Beavers concurs with Davis when he writes that "the

single most important characteristic of Levinas' work is the quest for exteriority, for

otherness . . . [and] this quest is first articulated by Descartes."[82] In the *Meditations*,

Descartes found that he had "the idea that gives me my understanding of a supreme God,

eternal, infinite" (PWD II, 28). Descartes could not himself be the source of such an idea

since it contains more objective reality than Descartes' formal reality. The source of such

an idea could only be an infinite being (God) — an example of an Other which cannot be

converted into the same. Levinas writes that "Descartes . . . discovers a relation with a

total alterity irreducible to interiority" (TI, 211); interiority being synonymous with the

same.

Moreover, the idea of an infinite being that a finite being has is necessarily limited

and incomplete; in the words of Levinas it is always "overflowing its idea" (TI, 47).

According to Levinas, "the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic

---

[81] Op. Cit., p. 39.

[82] Anthony F. Beavers, <u>Levinas beyond the Horizon of Cartesianism: An Inquiry into the Metaphysics of Morals</u> (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), p. 1.

image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its *ideatum* — the adequate idea" (TI, 51). This indicates that precedence must be granted to the infinite as source of the finite and not the other way around. The idea of an infinite being is not simply the inversion of finitude. As Descartes puts it:

> I must not think that, just as my conceptions of rest and darkness are arrived at by negating movement and light, so my perception of the infinite is arrived at not by means of a true idea but merely by negating the finite. On the contrary, I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself (PWD II, 31).

This precedence, which accounts for the priority of ethics over ontology, is the result "not [of] the insufficiency of the I . . . but the Infinity of the Other" (TI, 80).

Just as Descartes discovered his origin as a finite being in an infinite being, the existence of an Other is the foundation of subjectivity for Levinas. As Beavers notes, for "both Descartes and Levinas, the idea of the infinite transcends the isolation of the *ego cogito*, for it always entails that the self is not alone."[83] The foundation of the subject is based upon the existence of the Other. Just as the "Cartesian subject seizes itself as subject by reference to the non-self,"[84] the Levinasian subject establishes subjectivity by the existence of the Other. As Beavers puts it, "subjectivity is born by being exposed to

---

[83] Beavers, p. 14.

[84] Davis, p. 39.

the other."[85] Thus, "Levinas transforms Descartes's infinite God into his Other."[86] As

Levinas writes, the "Cartesian notion of the idea of the Infinite designates a relation with a

being that maintains its total exteriority with respect to him who thinks it" (TI, 50) just as

the Other cannot be reduced to the same. Subjectivity owes its existence to alterity since

"Alterity constitutes the grounds which make separation possible; the self exists because

the Other is irreconcilable with it."[87] Though subjectivity is determined by the Other, it is

not determined in opposition to the Other. Opposition amounts to a reduction of the

Other to the same; "If the same would establish its identity by simple *opposition to the*

other, it would already be a part of a totality encompassing the same and the other" (TI,

38). As suggested both by Derrida and Davis, opposition amounts to two sides of the

same coin.

Having established that subjectivity is determined by the existence of the absolutely

Other (alterity), the presence of the Other before the same is in need of explication. In one

of the definitions of ethics above, Levinas refers to the presence of the Other before the

same as an 'exposure'; in many other places he refers to it as an 'encounter'. The reason

for this is pointed out by Davis who warns that "to describe the relationship with the Other

as a relationship implies a totalizing perspective from which both self and Other are seen

---

[85] Beavers, p. 70.

[86] Davis, p. 40.

[87] Davis, p. 44.

to share a common ground."[88] The terms 'exposure' and 'encounter' are less likely to be associated with a reduction of the Other to the same than is the term 'relationship'. Davis points to Levinas' paradoxical characterization of this relationship as "a relation without relation" (TI, 80). So long as one keeps in mind the criteria of alterity, one need not resort to such an enigmatic expression. Any relationship which does not dissolve the Other into the same is an adequate example of such a relationship. As Levinas puts it, the "relationship between me and the Other does not have the structure formal logic finds in all relations. The terms remain absolute despite the relation in which they find themselves" (TI, 180).

Levinas proposes several relationships capable of preserving alterity, maintaining the difference between the same and the Other. This separation can be upheld in the relationships of desire, the face-to-face, and language. Traditionally, desire is associated with need. Need, however, implies lack. Thus, the satisfaction of a desire based on need amounts to making the Other the same — what is desired (other) is the very same as what one lacks / needs (same). Completion or satisfaction of the same is the goal of a desire based upon need; thus, the other which is desired is not Other. The desire that Levinas has in mind is the "desire for the absolutely other" (TI, 34). Such a desire "does not rest on any prior kinship" (TI, 34) between the same and that which is desired as is the case with desire based on need. Rather, it "has another intention; it desires beyond everything that can simply complete it" (TI, 34). It is because of the structure of desire — the same desiring something other than itself, the Other — that the relationship formed by it does

---

[88] Op. cit., p. 45.

not eliminate alterity. As Levinas writes, such "a relationship . . . is not the disappearance of distance, not a bringing together . . . [it is] a relationship whose positivity comes from remoteness, from separation" (TI, 34). Referring back to Descartes, Levinas writes that the "infinite in the finite, the more in the less, which is accomplished by the idea of Infinity, is produced as Desire — not a Desire that the possession of the Desirable slakes, but the Desire for the Infinite which the Desirable arouses rather than satisfies" (TI, 50).

Like desire, the face-to-face relationship preserves the alterity of the Other and involves infinity. The face is not a concrete object. It is, rather, a mode of being — an *existentiale*, to use a Heideggerian term. The face is the "way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*" (TI, 50). The fact that "the idea of infinity . . . [is] revealed in the face" (TI, 151) of the Other accounts for the exceeding of the idea of the other in me. Radical separation (alterity), not prone to the reduction to the same, is accomplished through the relationship of the finite (same) and the infinite (Other). According to Levinas, "the face . . . does not only *require* a separated being . . . the face is necessary for separation" (TI, 151). For Levinas, The "conjuncture of the same and the other, in which even their verbal proximity is maintained, is the *direct* and *full face* welcome of the other by me" (TI, 80). The welcoming of the Other in the face to face relationship preserves alterity; the "face to face both announces a society, and permits the maintaining of a separated I" (TI, 68). Levinas characterizes the face to face as "an ultimate situation" (TI, 81) and "a final and irreducible relation" (TI, 291).

As was the case with both the face to face and desire, language is also a relationship which preserves the alterity of the Other and is related to infinity. In the

opening pages of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas contends that the "effort of this book is directed toward apperceiving in discourse a non-allergic relation with alterity" (TI, 47). Language is capable of preserving the difference between the same and the Other; "Absolute difference, inconceivable in terms of formal logic, is established only by language . . . *discourse* relates with what remains essentially transcendent [the Other]. . . . Language is the relation between separated terms" (TI, 195). But this relation does not dissolve difference. As Levinas puts it, the "relationship between me and the Other does not have the structure formal logic finds in all relations. The terms remain absolute despite the relation in which they find themselves. The relation with the Other is the only relation where such an overturning of formal logic can occur" (TI, 180-181). Moreover, language involves an element of infinity because of its relation with the Other. According to Levinas, to "approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity" (TI, 51).

Ethics is the result of (or, more precisely, equivalent to) these relationships. The first definition of ethics which began this chapter — that ethics is the exposure of one subjectivity to the Other — has been expanded upon through consideration of alterity and the relationships between the same and the Other. This chapter also began with a more detailed definition of ethics — one which Davis considered an embryonic encapsulation of the entirety of Levinas' philosophy. That definition points to the ethical element inherent in all three of the relationships between the same and the Other. The disparity between the

same and the Other — the fact that the former is limited / finite and the latter is transcendent / infinite — allows for the ethical characterization of the Other as occupying a position of 'height'. It is because of the difference between the same and the Other which allows the Other to occupy a position of height — not the very fact *that* the other occupies a position of height — that makes "intersubjective space . . . not symmetrical" (TO, 84-85). It is because of separation that anything like an ethical 'calling into question' of the same by the Other can occur.

The ethical aspect of such a 'calling into question' is due to alterity itself, not simply because it originates from a height. The Other is what I am not and it is precisely this difference that calls me into question. It is for this reason that the "transcendence of the Other, which is his eminence, his height, his lordship, in its concrete meaning includes his destitution, his exile, and his rights as a stranger" (TI, 76-77). It is the "strangeness of the Other . . . [which constitutes] his very freedom! Free beings alone can be strangers to one another. Their freedom which is 'common' to them is precisely what separates them" (TI, 73-74). It is this freedom and the resistance to the assimilating efforts of the same which marks the alterity of the Other. To be free is "to maintain oneself against the other, despite every relation with the other to ensure the autarchy of an I" (TI, 45). It is when the same encounters the Other — an entity incapable of being assimilated — that it begins to questions its free reign. According to Davis, the "Other puts me into question by revealing to me that my powers and freedom are limited. . . . the encounter with the Other

shows such freedom to be egoistical, arbitrary, and unjustified."[89] The questioning

encounter also distinguishes the Other from that other which "does not fundamentally

challenge its [the same's] supremacy."[90] As will be shown in the chapter below, the Other

(person) is distinguished from other (thing) based upon the ethical criterion of this

challenge.

The counterpart to the calling into question of the same by the Other (ethics) is the

(ethical) response. Although the term 'responsibility' — which is usually accompanied by

the reciprocal term 'obligation' — conjures up ideas of ethics in the normative sense, this

is not Levinas' aim. In *Ethics and Infinity*, Philippe Nemo asked Levinas whether

"starting from this ethical experience [of the I and Other] . . . you construct an 'ethics' . . .

made up of rules" (EI, 90). To this, Levinas replied that his "task does not consist in

constructing ethics; I only try to find its meaning. . . . One can without a doubt construct

an ethics in function of what I have . . . said, but this is not my own theme" (EI, 90). As

the section of this thesis above makes clear, the meaning of ethics lies in alterity. Davis

reminds the reader of Levinas that in "keeping with his phenomenological background he

is descriptive rather than prescriptive, attempting to depict fundamental realities"[91] rather

than constructing normative systems. This (Levinasian) concept of ethics is in keeping

with Benso's concern that an 'ethics of things' will be necessarily 'non-traditional' i.e.

non-normative.

---

[89] Op. cit., p. 49.

[90] Op. cit., p. 43.

[91] Op. cit., p. 49.

Just as subjectivity is made possible by the existence of the Other, true freedom —

as opposed to egoistical freedom — is conferred upon the same by the Other through the

response. As Davis summarizes it:

> Without the Other, freedom is without purpose or foundation. In the face
> to face, the Other gives my freedom meaning because I am confronted with
> real choices between responsibility and obligation towards the Other, or
> hatred and violent repudiation. The Other invests me with genuine
> freedom, and will be the beneficiary or victim of how I decide to exercise
> it.[92]

In an egology — which is what Levinas contends Heidegger's ontology amounts to —

freedom is the same making choices in relation to itself. Only when an Other occurs can

there be true freedom in the Levinasian sense. The response of the Other to the same is —

as the relationship of language implies — indeterminate. One cannot control or even

predict what an Other might say or do. As Edith Wyschogrod states, the "other is

opposed to us not through the force which he uses to resist us but through the absolute

unpredictability of his responses."[93] Levinas states it best: The Other "can oppose to me a

struggle, that is, oppose to the force that strikes him . . . the very *unforeseeableness* of his

reaction" (TI, 199).

Levinas makes clear the implications of the freedom inherent in the resistance of

the Other to the same. The opposition offered by the Other can "not [be] a greater force .

. . not some superlative of power" (TI, 199). If that were the case, then the same and the

Other would be bound in a reciprocal relationship of force and counter-force whereby

---

[92] Ibid.

[93] Edith Wyschogrod, Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics
(The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 86.

alterity would be annulled; the reaction (resistance) of the Other would be "presenting itself as though it were part of a whole" (TI, 199) which included the action (force) of the same. Davis summarizes this in the following way:

> The resistance offered by the Other should not be understood as a force which is superior, or even comparable, to my own. The Other is not stronger than me in any ordinary sense: to speak in such terms implies a commensurability between self and Other which would be contrary to the essence of alterity. No comparison can be made between the force with which I attack the Other and the resistance it offers.[94]

Here, Levinas employs an inversion — Benso attempted a similar move above when she unsuccessfully tried to equate height and vertical difference (distance) — such that the 'power' of the resistance of the Other to the same is "impotency" (TI, 198). As Davis puts it, "ethical resistance is not measurable in terms of force. In it lies both the strength and the weakness of the Other."[95] According to Levinas, "Infinity presents itself as a face in the ethical resistance that paralyses my powers . . . from the depths of defenceless[ness] . . . [and] destitution" (TI, 199-200). The 'power' of the Other is not some force of opposition; rather, it is "precisely the infinity of his transcendence" (TI, 199). It is in this sense that the resistance of the Other to assimilation by the same is related to freedom and alterity.

Just as both the 'calling into question of the same' and the ethical resistance evince an asymmetrical relationship between the same and the Other, there is an asymmetry involved in the response as well. If the response is taken in the normative sense as a

---

[94] Davis, p. 51.

[95] Ibid.

responsibility, then it is borne entirely by the same. That is, the response on the part of the same cannot be motivated by any expected reciprocity on the part of the Other. The Other does not share a common responsibility with the same. This "decoupling of responsibility from reciprocity"[96] is aligned with the asymmetrical ethical relationship; "[t]his asymmetry is consistent with Levinas's conception of the Other: to insist on symmetry or reciprocity would be to imply that I was empowered to speak for the Other, that the Other belongs to the same species or genus as myself."[97] Moreover, Davis identifies the correlation between Levinas' relationship between the same and the Other and the non-normative aspect of his ethics; the asymmetrical aspect of the ethical relationship prevents codification into a universally applicable ethical system.

Because of the separation inherent in the relationship between the same and the Other, the ethical calling into question is nonviolent (as was the resistance of the Other to the same). As Levinas puts it, the "presentation [of the Other to the same in the face to face relationship] is preeminently nonviolence, for instead of offending my freedom it calls it to responsibility and founds it. As nonviolence it nonetheless maintains the plurality of the same and the other" (TI, 203). The response, however, because it occurs out of freedom may be non-violent or violent. As Davis points out, "the fact that the encounter with the Other is ethical does not mean that I will respond to it in an ethical way. . . . I am

---

[96] Ibid.

[97] Op. cit., pp. 52-53.

just as likely to respond to the non-violence of the Other with violence as with respect."[98] Because the relationship with the Other preserves alterity, the response is made in freedom. As Levinas puts it, the "order of responsibility . . . is also the order where freedom is ineluctably invoked" (TI, 200).

What does appear to be ethical in the normative sense — at least on the surface — is the command, issuing from the Other, that "you shall not commit murder" (TI, 199). But the 'shall' is not to be taken in a normative sense; it is descriptive. The attempted reduction of the Other by the same amounts to a negation (of the Other) through the affirmation (of the same); such a reduction shows that the same has this ability and exercises it. Murder, on the other hand, is "the total negation of a being" (TI, 199). Unlike reduction, murder "is not to dominate [affirmation of the same] but to annihilate [negation of the Other]" (TI, 198). Because of alterity, the "Other is the sole being I can wish to kill" (TI, 198). But because the Other is infinitely Other (alterity), the same shall not commit murder; the Other escapes all attempts by the same to negate it. As Levinas puts it, "I can wish to kill only an existent absolutely independent, which exceeds my powers infinitely" (TI, 198). Davis summarizes this in the following way:

> Levinas does not denounce violence as wrong; rather he attempts to show that it always fails, that it can never succeed in its true aim. When I kill, I am trying to kill the Other, that which is utterly beyond my powers; I may succeed in killing the other, or even innumerable others, but the Other survives. . . . In distinguishing between the Other (the true object of hatred which I cannot kill) and others (whom I can kill, all too easily), Levinas is

---

[98] Op. cit., p. 49.

attempting to demonstrate the futility and ultimate failure of violence, which never attains its real targets.[99]

Because the Other is Infinite, it cannot be killed; "Neither the destruction of things, nor the hunt, nor the extermination of living beings aims at the face, which is not of the world" (TI, 198).

In his book, Davis outlined three "fundamental problems"[100] faced by Levinas' conception of the same and the Other. First, "a description and defense of subjectivity"[101] is needed. For Levinas, subjectivity is allowed only on the basis of alterity. Second, "an account of alterity which does not reduce the other to the Same"[102] is necessary. Through the adoption and adaptation of Descartes' conception of the infinite, Levinas provides just such an account. As Levinas writes, his "analyses are guided by a formal structure: the idea of Infinity in us. To have the idea of Infinity it is necessary to exist as separated" (TI, 79). Finally, Levinas "needs some means of accounting for the relation between the Same and the Other that does not effectively abolish either."[103] With the three relationships outlined above — desire, the face to face, and language — Levinas is able to bind the finite (same) with the Other (infinite) while maintaining their alterity. For Levinas, the Other is not just different / separate from the same; it is infinitely different / separate and

---

[99] Davis, p. 51.

[100] Op. cit., p. 41.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

this amounts to its alterity. The existence of the Othe9r (which is transcendent / infinite) founds subjectivity and the relationships between the same and the Other — desire, the face to face, and language — do not abolish alterity.

Heidegger's Lack of Ethics

Benso's argument relies upon an understanding of ethics akin to that of Levinas: ethics amounts to an encounter of otherness — restricted by Levinas to the otherness of the Other (person) but presumably expanded by Benso to include the otherness of things. As Langan suggests, a "reader can almost exhaust Heidegger's sustained analyses of the experience and reality of persons other than myself by reading the paragraph on *Mitsein* in *Sein und Zeit*."[104] It is there, if anywhere, that one might find a Heideggerian notion similar to that proposed by Levinas and accepted by Benso. The sections on *Mitsein* occur in the fourth division of *Being and Time* entitled "Being-in-the-world as Being-With and Being-One's-Self. The 'They'" (BT, 113:149). With such a title as this, one expects Heidegger to be able to answer not only to the question "of who Dasein is" (BT, 114:150) but also to the question of who the Other is.

The 'who' question arises out of the distinction drawn in the preparatory analysis between "*Existentialia* and categories [which] are the two basic possibilities for characters of Being. The entities which correspond to them require different kinds of primary

---

[104]Thomas Langan, The Meaning of Heidegger: A Critical Study of an Existentialist Phenomenology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 230.

interrogation respectively: any entity is either a '*who*' (existence) or a '*what*' (presence-at-hand in the broadest sense)" (BT, 45:71). Moreover, it is the concept of 'substantiality' that provides "the ontological clue for determining which entity is to provide the answer to the question of 'who'" (BT, 114:150). According to Heidegger, "man's '*substance*' is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*" (BT, 117:153) whereas substantiality is usually associated with things. In this section, Heidegger is concerned with the 'who' questions rather than the 'what' questions whereas in the preceding section the opposite was the case.

Heidegger begins his 'who' interrogation with that aspect of Dasein's Being which is 'proximally and for the most part' given — Dasein in its 'everydayness'. In the first place and instant, "Dasein is fascinated with its world. Dasein is thus absorbed in the world" (BT, 113:149). This 'fascination and absorption' is a type of Being that Dasein has — Dasein is most often found *to be* in its 'everydayness'. Given its close association with the world and entities within it, "Dasein itself — and this means also its Being-in-the-world — gets its ontological understanding of itself in the first instance from those entities which it itself is *not* but which it encounters 'within' its world, and from the Being which they possess" (BT, 58:85). Given that Dasein is Being-in-the-world and thrown into the world, it is understandable that it attempts to understand itself in terms of that world. But this amounts to a 'category confusion' of sorts — Dasein gets conceived as a thing-like entity rather than an existential way of being. Heidegger reiterates the fact that although "Dasein is tacitly conceived in advance as something present-at-hand . . . presence-at-hand

is the kind of Being which belongs to entities whose character is not that of Dasein" (BT, 115:150). In its 'everydayness', Dasein is often confused — even about itself.

Because Dasein in its everyday Being is 'fascinated and absorbed' in the world, its first encounter with Others is likewise determined by the world. As the world is a referential totality, entities encountered within-the-world are bound together in a network of interconnecting relations. Dasein primarily encounters equipment within-the-world; that is, things that have an 'in-order-to' structure and a ready-to-hand type of Being. The work produced also has the type of Being that belongs to equipment (ready-to-hand) and is characterized by its 'towards-which' structure. Within this referential totality is also something with a 'whereof' structure — the material out of which things are made and upon which the work produced is dependent. All of these things have a Being other than that of Dasein — they are ready-to-hand.

But also in the world, Dasein encounters entities with a Being the same as Dasein. As Heidegger points out, "along with the work, we encounter not only entities ready-to-hand but also entities with Dasein's kind of Being — entities for which, in their concern, the product becomes ready-to-hand" (BT, 71:100). We encounter these entities in the same world as we encountered equipment — the "public world" (BT, 71:100). In the 'public world' the Other is either a worker / producer like me (one who handles things, to whom things are also ready-to-hand) or is the consumer defined in contradistinction to my producer / worker status. In this instance, the encounter with the Other is always mediated by work or objects. This means that "Others are encountered *environmentally*" (BT, 119:155) — out of the referential totality of the world and, in particular, the work-

world. When everyday Dasein 'goes about its business' so to speak, it encounters objects

which have a reference / assignment to others:

> When, for example, we walk along the edge of a field but 'outside it', the
> field shows itself as belonging to such-and-such a person, and decently kept
> up by him; the book we have used was bought at So-and-so's shop and
> given by such-and-such a person, and so forth. The boat anchored at the
> shore is assigned in its Being-in-itself to an acquaintance who undertakes
> voyages with it (BT, 118:153-4).

Others are encountered in the work-world environmentally through references and

assignments associated with things which are ready-to-hand.

When a Dasein comports itself towards things ready-to-hand within the world, it is

operating out of the mode of 'concern'. On the other hand, when Dasein comports itself

towards entities which have the Being of Dasein rather than the kind of Being which

belongs to entities within-the-world, then it is operating out of 'solicitude'. Thus, the so-

called 'object' of comportment determines whether Dasein is acting out of concern or

solicitude. If the 'object' is an entity with the kind of Being of ready-to-hand, then Dasein

acts out of concern; if the 'object' is an entity with the kind of Being of Dasein, then

Dasein acts out of solicitude. Heidegger demonstrates the distinction between concern

and solicitude with the example of someone 'caring' for another or engaged in 'welfare

work'. While the agent may be concerned with objects as means, the person for whom

these objects are intended can only be an 'object' of solicitude.

The way in which a Dasein may comport itself towards others Daseins in solicitude

falls into one of three possibilities: "Being for, against, or without one another, passing

one another by, not 'mattering' to one another" (BT, 121:158). This last way — the

deficient or indifferent mode of solicitude — is the mode in which Dasein is most often found. Everyday Dasein comports itself towards Others, for the most part, in an indifferent manner. Although the indifferent and deficient "modes of Being show again the characteristics of inconspicuousness and obviousness which belong just as much to the everyday Dasein-with of Others within-the-world as to the readiness-to-hand of the equipment with which one is daily concerned" (BT, 121:158) one should not confuse the two. Heidegger points out that "Indifferent modes of Being-with-one-another may easily mislead ontological Interpretation into interpreting this kind of Being, in the first instance, as the mere Being-present-at-hand of several subjects" (BT, 121:158) that is, as ontical. Indifference is a way of Being, and as such is ontological.

The distinction between the ontical and the ontological is also used to differentiate the positive modes of solicitude; in its "positive modes, solicitude has two extreme possibilities" (BT, 122:158). In solicitude, one Dasein can either leap in for another or leap ahead of another. Dasein "maintains itself between the two extremes of positive solicitude — that which leaps in and dominates, and that which leaps forth and liberates" (BT, 122:159). The first type of solicitude "pertains for the most part to our concern with the ready-to-hand" (BT, 122:158) and is thus, ontical in nature. In this form, one Dasein leaps in for another in order to 'take care of the matter' for them. This leaping-in displaces the other Dasein and removes the possibility of 'care' from it (or for it). The primary 'concern' here is with the 'matter at hand' rather than the other Dasein being displaced or the Being of the other Dasein which is displaced. After one Dasein has leapt in and 'taken care of the matter' for the other Dasein, the latter can either "take it over as

something finished and at his disposal, or disburden himself of it completely" (BT, 122:158). For this reason, this extreme form of solicitude can be considered domination or dependence. The other extreme form of solicitude — leaping ahead — relates to the ontological structure of Dasein; "This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care — that is, to the existence of the Other, not to a *'what'* with which he is concerned" (BT, 122:159). That this form of solicitude is ontological rather than ontical is made clear by the fact that it deals with the "existentiell potentiality-for-Being" (BT, 122:159) which "proves to be a state of Dasein's Being" (BT, 122:159).

The examples Heidegger uses for both forms of positive solicitude are drawn from social existence. There is a difference between a situation in which "one's doing the same thing as someone else . . . [because they have been] hired for the same affair" (BT, 122:159) and when each person "devote[s] themselves to the same affair in common . . . thus becom[ing] *authentically* bound together" (BT, 122:159). At first glance, the only substantial difference appears to be the origin of the commitment — the author of the goal, whether another person (the boss who does the hiring) or the individual him/herself. However, Heidegger draws an ontological distinction between these two ways of comportment. The former type of devotion is "bound up with . . . Being towards the world " (BT, 122:159) while the latter is bound up with "authentic Being towards itself" (BT, 122:159). The determining factor in these ways of Being is the "matter of common concern" (BT, 122:159) for each Dasein and "the manner in which their Dasein, each in its own way, has been taken hold of" (BT, 122:159), respectively. In the first example, the persons are bound together in their concern with the 'work' to be done or the money they

will be paid — in other words, the material / ontic aspect. In the second example, people are bound together by the type of Being which they possess in common. Association in this group is dependent upon the extent to which one's own Being has been revealed — it is an a-social matter. What makes an association or group authentic is the way of Being which each member possesses. Thus, the authenticity of group associations rests with each individual Dasein. In contrast, when people are merely bound together by a common task they operate in "modes of distance and reserve . . . [characterized by] mistrust" (BT, 122:159).

In its everyday Being-with-one-another, Dasein often comports itself towards others in the mode of distantiality. The concept of 'distantiality' may be a mode of Being capable of distinguishing one Dasein from another. This seems like a viable candidate for the factor which would differentiate one Dasein from another for two reason: (i) it includes 'difference' for in 'distantiality' "there is a constant care as to the way one differs from them" (BT, 126:163); (ii) it is an existential / ontological component of Dasein. Elliston is quick to point to 'distantiality' as a distinguishing factor. But he also recognizes that "Heidegger's notion of distantiality does not point to differences between persons but between their worlds — what they possess, have a right to or deserve."[105] Although 'right' and 'deserve' are normative concepts rather than ontological ones, 'possess' is recognized as an ontological word. In fact, the way in which Heidegger actually states it is: "one's concern [is] with what one has taken hold of" (BT, 126:163).

---

[105] Frederick Elliston, ed. Heidegger's Existential Analytic. (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1978), p. 73.

The term 'taken hold of' should not be restricted to the world for Dasein also 'takes hold' of its Self / Being. Elliston is aware of the unity of Dasein and its world for he recognizes that "to destroy all material difference would be to destroy part of each person's sense of self."[106] Yet the fact remains that 'distantiality', although a mode of Being, is concerned with ontical distinctions rather than ontological ones. In the mode of everydayness, Dasein uses material differences in order to differentiate Daseins it encounters. As Elliston points out, 'distantiality' and the material difference it entails is used by Dasein in its everydayness "as the basis for interpreting social relations"[107] between Daseins.

Although another Dasein is encountered in the world along with objects and one Dasein comports itself towards another primarily in 'distantiality' (by taking into account material differences), this does not mean that the Being of Others is the same as the Being of things. Heidegger makes clear that "the kind of Being which belongs to the Dasein of Others, as we encounter it within-the-world, differs from readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand" (BT, 118:154). Although others are encountered within a referential totality that is the world of equipment, they are still encountered as beings whose existence is existentiality rather than substantiality. As Heidegger points out, "even if Others become themes for study . . . they are not encountered as person-Things present-at-hand: we meet them 'at work', that is, primarily in their Being-in-the-world" (BT, 120:156). The encounter of the other is characterized by Dreyfus in the following way: "[m]ost of the

---

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

time . . . we just work with and deal with others skillfully without having any beliefs about them or their beliefs at all."[108]

The latter part of this quotation is an important element for distinguishing Heidegger's conception of 'intersubjectivity' — Being-with — from that of Husserl's. It is not Being-present-at-hand within a world or having beliefs in common with others that allows one Dasein to encounter another; "[w]hen Others are encountered, it is not the case that one's own subject is proximally present-at-hand and that the rest of the subjects, which are likewise occurents, get discriminated beforehand and then apprehended" (BT, 118-119:155). It is Dasein's own being — as Being-with — which makes anything like 'intersubjectivity' possible. Neither oneself or Others should be "encountered as person-Things present-at-hand . . . [but] primarily in their Being-in-the-world" (BT, 120:156).

For Heidegger, Being-in-the-world and Being-with are the ontological ways of being which allow for 'intersubjectivity'. As Heidegger puts it:

> By 'Others' we do not mean everyone else but me — those over against whom the 'I' stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself — those among whom one is too. This Being-there-too with them does not have the ontological character of Being-present-at-hand-along-'with' them within a world. This 'with' is something of the character of Dasein; the 'too' means a sameness of Being as circumspectively concernful Being-in-the-world. 'With' and 'too' are to be understood *existentially*, not categorically. By reason of this *with-like* Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with others. The world of Dasein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *Being-with* Others. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is *Dasein-with* (BT, 118:154-155).

---

[108] Hubert L. Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Division I (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 148.

Both 'I' and 'Others' are united through the ontological structure that we share; we have a 'sameness of Being' since we are both Daseins. For Heidegger, "Dasein in itself is essentially Being-with" (BT, 120:156).

That Being-with is an existential — not an ontical — condition of Dasein is borne out by the fact that a Dasein still is Being-with "even when factically no Other is present-at-hand or perceived" (BT, 120:156). If Being-with were an ontical / factical matter, then Dasein could not possibly be Being-with when no Other is present. For Heidegger, the ontical is made possible by the ontological — not the other way around. Thus, "Even Dasein's Being-alone is Being-with in the world. . . . Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with; its very possibility is the proof of this" (BT, 120:156-157). Conversely, Being-alone is not immediately terminated when one is no longer alone; "Being-alone is not obviated by the occurrence of a second example of a human being 'beside' me, or by ten such examples. Even if these and more are present-at-hand, Dasein can still be alone" ontologically (BT, 120:157). Thus, Heidegger concludes that "Being-with and the facticity of Being with one another are not based on the occurrence together of several 'subjects'" (BT, 121:157).

Being-with is an essential aspect of Dasein's being — one which, according to Dreyfus, is "more basic than relating to particular others."[109] Because Dasein's being is Being-in-the-world, Being will always precede any relationship between one Dasein and another. When a Dasein is operating environmentally or equipmentally it is "always

---

[109] Op. cit., p. 149.

already involved in a shared world"[110] whether there is another Dasein there or not. The world of any particular Dasein is a shared world and due to this fact, when a Dasein *is* there, it is there with others (whether there is another Dasein or not). According to Dreyfus, "[e]ven when I am not encountering others nor using equipment, others are there for me. I have a readiness for dealing with them along with my readiness for dealing with equipment."[111]

With a distinction in Being — between a thing which has presence-at-hand as its type of Being and a Dasein which has Being-in as its type of Being — Heidegger is attempting to avoid many ontological and epistemological problems which naturally result from the subject-object distinction. He resists attempts to reduce his ontology back to one involving subjects and objects. Even his language cannot be translated into one based on such distinctions; "subject and Object do not coincide with Dasein and the world" (BT, 60:87). The reason he resists such attempts is because "the problem [then] arises of how this knowing subject comes out of its inner 'sphere' into one which is 'other and external'" (BT, 60:87). The subject-object distinction is, for Heidegger, "an inappropriate interpretation . . . indeed a baleful one" (BT, 59:86). If one relied upon presence-at-hand as the distinguishing factor for Dasein — one which was capable of "marking out and isolating the 'I' . . . one must then seek some way of getting over to the Others from this isolated subject" (BT, 118:154).

---

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

One must be careful to keep this ontical-ontological distinction in mind when examining Heidegger's consideration of Others. Heidegger subtly reminds the reader of this point in the following passage:

> In clarifying Being-in-the-world we have shown that a bare subject without a world never 'is' proximally, nor is it ever given. And so in the end an isolated 'I' without Others is just as far from being proximally given. If, however, 'the Others' already *are there with us* in Being-in-the-world, and if this is ascertained phenomenally, even this should not mislead us into supposing that the *ontological* structure of what is thus 'given' is obvious, requiring no investigation. Our task is . . . to interpret it [Dasein] in a way which is ontologically appropriate (BT, 116:152).

Because of its inability to 'get Dasein as a whole into view', the ontical analysis — one to which Heidegger refers not only by the use of such terms as 'proximally' and 'given' but also by the use of quotation marks around the word 'is' in order to emphasize its ontical rather than ontological usage — is one which is ontologically inappropriate. That being the case, Heidegger must provide an ontological analysis of both Dasein and Others. The ontological analysis of Dasein, not the ontic, is what is "phenomenally adequate . . . [and] appropriate" (BT, 116:152) for the type of Being which is Dasein. Asking the 'who' question "requires that we formulate the question existentially and ontologically as the sole appropriate way of access" (BT, 117:153) to Dasein; moreover it demands that the answer be an ontological one as well.

By defining Being as Being-in-the-world, Heidegger circumvents the subject-object distinction — the distinction becomes an ontological matter of different types of Being. The result of an ontological understanding of Being as Being-in-the-world which eliminates the subject-object distinction is that there is no longer any "problem of

knowledge other than that of the phenomenon of knowing as such and the kind of Being which belongs to the knower" (BT, 61:88). But it is precisely the kind of Being which belongs to Dasein that presents problems for distinguishing 'I' and the Other. By defining Dasein as Being-with, Heidegger hopes to circumvent the problem of the I-Other distinction.

Again referring to Husserl, Heidegger wants to replace the "phenomenon, which is none too happily designated as '*empathy*' . . . [which is supposed] to provide the first ontological bridge from one's own subject, which is given proximally as alone, to the other subject, which is proximally quite closed off" (BT, 124:162) with his conception of Being-with. Being-with, which is an essential part of Dasein's Being, eliminates the need for any sort of an 'ontological bridge'. That is, if Dasein's being already has Being-with-Others as part of its ontological makeup then there is no need to account for how one Dasein reaches another. As Heidegger states: "Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already is with Others" (BT, 125:162). Since the other Dasein "has itself the same kind of Being as Dasein . . . there is thus a relationship of Being from Dasein to Dasein" (BT, 124:162).

Being-with as an ontological definition of Dasein is, however, incapable of distinguishing one Dasein from another. Both the 'I' and Other are unified by the fact that they are both Dasein and in the particular type of Being that Dasein possesses — Being-in-the-world and Being-with. Yet Heidegger includes the term 'Dasein-with' which represents the being of other Daseins themselves — as if they were able to be distinguished existentially / ontologically from Dasein. Perhaps there is no such thing as one Dasein or an other Dasein; maybe there is only Dasein.

It is quite true that Dasein in its everyday dealings with others, has a tendency to identify itself with others. If the 'who' question is asked of a Dasein as Being-in-the-world / Being-with, the answer would most likely be 'I am'. But Heidegger views this response as nothing more than "a non-committal *formal indicator*, indicating something which may perhaps reveal itself as its 'opposite' in some particular phenomenal context of Being" (BT, 116:152). But how can the 'I' be 'not-I' without violating the law of non-contradiction? The 'particular phenomenal context' Heidegger has in mind is Being-in-the-world. As noted above, Dasein has a tendency to be 'fascinated and absorbed' by its world and takes ontological cues for interpretation from it. In this sense, the 'I' is 'not-I' because it is the 'they'. When Dasein is "as everyday Being-with-one another . . . It itself *is* not; its Being has been taken away by the Others. Dasein's everyday possibilities of Being are for the Others to dispose of as they please." (BT, 126:164). The 'they' "controls every way in which the world and Dasein gets interpreted" (BT, 127:165) even by Dasein itself; this common way of understanding the world and Dasein is designated by the term 'publicness'. These public ways of Being are part of Dasein's own Being; "*The 'they' is an existentiale; and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to Dasein's positive constitution*" (BT, 129:167).

Although these ways of Being are not authentic — coming from one's own Self — they are a part of Dasein's Being. Once again, we return to a concept of Self with no apparent foundation because we can find no distinction between oneself and Others. It is not the separation of Dasein from the 'they' which constitutes Being authentic for this would amount to Dasein's separation from its own Being; "*Authentic Being-one's-Self*

does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they'; *it is rather an existentiell modification of the 'they' — of the 'they' as an essential existentiale"* (BT, 130:168). A consequence of having the authentic as a modification of the in-authentic, is that "there is ontologically a gap separating the selfsameness of the authentically existing Self from the identity of that 'I' which maintains itself through its manifold experiences" (BT, 130:168). The latter does not maintain itself identically through changes its experiences and must therefore denote the everyday 'I' which is both 'I' and 'not-I', 'Self' and 'Other/they'. The former must denote the authentic Self that answers the 'who' question. For Heidegger:

> the question of the 'who' answers itself in terms of the 'I' itself, the 'subject', the 'Self'. The 'who' is what maintains itself as something identical throughout changes in its Experiences and ways of behaviour, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in so doing. . . . As something selfsame in manifold otherness, it has the character of the *Self*" (BT, 114:150).

The dual notion of Self — both that which changes and is everyday and that which stays the same and is authentic — still originates in Being. Heidegger tries to clarify this distinction in the lengthy passage which follows:

> The Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the *authentic Self* — that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been *dispersed* into the 'they', and must first find itself. . . . Dasein is for the sake of the 'they' in an everyday manner, and the 'they' itself Articulates the referential context of significance. . . . *Proximally*, factical Dasein is in the with-world, which is discovered in an average way. *Proximally*, it is not 'I', in the sense of my own Self, that 'am', but rather the Others, whose way is that of the 'they'. In terms of the 'they', and as the 'they', I am 'given' proximally to 'myself'. Proximally Dasein is 'they', and for the most part it remains so. (BT, 129:167).

The concept of Self does little to differentiate the everyday from the authentic. The everyday self is 'taken hold of in its own way' *as* everyday. Insofar as the 'they' self is part of the authentic self, it is 'my own Self'. Likewise, the 'they' self which is delivered over to the everyday self is part of its own Self. Both the way in which the world and one's own Being is discovered is according to 'its own way' *as* everyday. The ontological gap to which Heidegger referred seems insurmountable, but once accomplished Dasein may be complete and authentic — discovering the ways of *both* the everyday and the authentic.

Indeed, there must be an existential way in which I and the Other are differentiated in Dasein / Being. According to Heidegger, "Dasein's Being is distinctive in that it implies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical *individuation*" (BT, 38:62). Even the earliest definitions of Dasein indicate that this is the case. In the first introduction, Dasein is defined as that "entity *which each of us is himself* and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being" (BT, 7:27. Emphasis mine.). The opening words of the first section are: "We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine*" (BT, 42:67). Again Heidegger writes that "Dasein has *in each case mineness* . . . [and] Dasein is in each case mine" (BT, 42-43:68). The concept of 'mineness' seems to be the differentiating / individuating factor. Moreover, any definition including the concept of 'mineness' is phenomenally appropriate because such a "definition *indicates* an *ontologically* constitutive state" (BT, 114:150) of Dasein. Since 'mineness' is an ontological term, it amounts a 'way of Being' for Dasein. For Dasein to be 'mine' means "to be in one way or another" (BT, 42:68). Ultimately then, the

individual Dasein "has always made some sort of decision as to the way in which it is in each case mine" (BT, 42:68). To be in one way or another means to have possible ways of Being. To have possibilities implies authenticity. Thus, "because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it *can*, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can lose itself and never win itself; or only 'seem' to do so" (BT, 42:68). For Dasein to choose itself amounts to 'mineness' and authenticity; for Dasein to lose itself and/or not choose itself amounts to inauthenticity. Thus, 'mineness' is inextricably bound to authenticity; to be "*authentic* . . . [is to be] something of its own" (BT, 43:68). For Heidegger, "Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent Dasein, and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible" (BT, 53:78). This does not mean, however, that inauthenticity is the same as 'not-mineness'; as a possibility of Dasein, inauthenticity is just as much 'mine' as authenticity.

That mineness / authenticity is a possibility is indicated by the remainder of the above quotation:

> If Dasein discovers the world in its own way and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way (BT, 129:167).

The 'they' represents an obstruction to the discovery of the authentic self — what Heidegger refers to as 'concealments and obscurities'. In contrast to the 'concealments and obscurities' represented by the 'they', Heidegger employs the term 'transparency' to "designate 'knowledge of the Self'" (BT, 146:186) — that is, knowledge which is mine /

from myself (Dasein) / authentic. Transparency is a matter of "seizing upon the full disclosedness of Being-in-the-world *throughout all* the constitutive items which are essential to it" (BT, 146:187). Knowledge arrived at through everyday relationships with others may be true in the sense of having in view *an* aspect of Dasein's being; however, it does not and cannot be true in the sense of complete — encompassing all aspects of Dasein's being. Only mineness / authenticity can claim the latter.

The way in which the 'obscurities and concealments' of the 'they' self and its public understanding is 'cleared away' is through anxiety and death. Anxiety is the discovery of the world which is revealed to Dasein directly (transparently) and death is the direct discovery of Dasein as / in its authentic Being. Anxiety individualizes Dasein by revealing its own Being to it in its entirety. Anxiety operates by bringing "Dasein back from its falling, and mak[ing] manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being" (BT, 191:235). Death is likewise capable of individualizing Dasein:

> Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Its death is the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there. If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost non-relational possibility is at the same time the uttermost one. As potentiality-for-Being, Dasein cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. Thus death reveals itself as that *possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped* (BT, 250-1:294).

Insofar as it reveals Dasein's Being in its entirety to itself from itself, death is Dasein's

'ownmost' and individuates it authentically. But both anxiety and death 'leave the other

behind'. They involve no other than the Dasein in question. Authenticity is accomplished

a-socially.

Levinas' Response to Heidegger

In essence, what Benso's claim about the lack of an ethics (akin to that of Levinas)

in Heidegger amounts to is the "charge that *Being and Time* presents an inadequate view

of the social relation"[112] — a view which lacks a concept of the Other *qua* Other i.e. as

alterity. Manning points out that "[a] first, it may appear as though Heidegger is immune

to this charge, for in *Being and Time* he posits that a basic state of *Dasein* is that it already

and always is Being-With-Others (*Mitseinandersein*)."[113] He points out that:

> Levinas refers to the very blatant fact that in *Being and Time*, sociality is
> almost exclusively presented as an aspect of *Dasein*'s fallenness, and
> solitude is presented as the way whereby *Dasein* can achieve authenticity.
> For Heidegger, *Dasein*'s inherent aspect of Being-With is what gets it in
> trouble; *Dasein* becomes lost in the inauthentic potentialities for itself that
> the social collectivity, the *they*, presents to it. It is only by turning away
> from the *they* and by turning to itself *via* a process of individuation that
> *Dasein* has any hope of achieving authenticity.[114]

Sociality in Heidegger is not only an inauthentic and everyday way of Being, but there is

---

[112] Robert John Sheffler Manning, Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas as First Philosophy (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1993), pp. 49-50.

[113] Op. cit., p. 49.

[114] Op. cit., p. 50.

no authentic alternative to it — there is only the authentic Self which has individuated itself and in so doing, isolated itself in Being. In examining its possibilities, Dasein must first identify and reclaim itself from the 'they' then must choose itself over the 'they'. This being the case, "in Heidegger the way to authenticity is the way away from sociality, which is primarily a polluting and distorting influence, and toward solitude and individualization."[115] As Manning puts it, "Levinas . . . rejects Heidegger's analysis of sociality . . . [and] interprets sociality explicitly otherwise than Heidegger does — i.e. in terms of the solitude of the self — in favor of analyzing the relation between the self and the other."[116] What Heidegger lacks in his phenomenology of social existence is the recognition of any Other *qua* other. An-other Dasein is still Dasein and shares in the same Being with Others. Given the individuation of the authentic Self, this amounts to a pre-existent relationship with the Other. While "Heidegger . . . sees the importance of the social relation to lie in the fact that it helps or hinders *Dasein* in its solitary task of actualizing its own possibilities . . . Levinas insists that the importance of the social relation consists in the more primordial fact that the self encounters and is encountered by the Other."[117] It is in the encounter with the Other that Dasein should first come in contact with what is truly other rather than what is the same. As Manning puts it:

> In this primordial relation, the self experiences the other not only as an other self, but also as a self entirely different from the self . . . The Other does not merely have other qualities than the self has; the Other is itself the

---

[115] Op. cit., p. 51.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Op. cit., p. 52.

quality of otherness. In the social relation the self encounters and is encountered by the otherness of the Other, the very fact of alterity itself.[118]

As mentioned above, Heidegger rejects the notion of empathy and projection (which is important to the phenomenology of Husserl) as a way of deriving the other from the self. What Manning refers to when he writes of the experience of 'an other self' is not the projection of the self onto an other; rather, it is the reduction of the other to the same. That is, an other is the same as one-self because they are both Daseins / in Being. For Dasein, there is nothing which is other than itself; even death — a candidate for ultimate Other — is not only the impossibility of all possibilities, but more importantly my possibilities specifically. Phenomenologically speaking, Being is the 'end-all and be-all'.

Even though he recognizes the Being-with structure of Dasein, Levinas still denies that Heidegger's conception of it is an adequate basis for sociality. Although the "relationship with the Other is indeed posed by Heidegger as an ontological structure of *Dasein* . . . practically it plays no role in the drama of being or in the existential analytic. All the analyses of *Being and Time* are worked out either for the sake of the impersonality of everyday life or for the sake of solitary *Dasein*" (TO, 40). It is for this reason that Levinas states that "from the start I repudiate the Heideggerian concept that views solitude in the midst of a prior relationship with the other. . . . [for] the conception seems to me ontologically obscure" (TO, 40). According to Levinas, Heidegger establishes the prior relationship with the other (Being-with) and solitude (individuation / authenticity) as correlative terms — sociality is the absence of individuality, while individuality is the

---

[118] Ibid.

absence of sociality. This circular definition may not be vicious, but it may be unfounded — except by Being which is the object of the very inquiry in question. As Levinas puts it, "[i]dentification is in fact the very positing of an entity in the heart of the anonymous and all-invading being. One can then not define a subject by identity, since identity covers over the event of the identification of the subject" (EE, 87). For Levinas, "[t]here is at least an ambiguity. I find here an invitation to go beyond the definition of solitude by sociality and of sociality by solitude" (TO, 40). The Other / alterity is the way one 'goes beyond' these correlative terms. The Other is him/her "wherein this solitude can be exceeded" (TO, 41).

Levinas 'defines' solitude as a condition which "concerns no one other than the existent" (TO, 43). Besides the fact that Dasein must individualize itself to arrive at its authentic Self and such individualization involves withdrawing from the Others, Levinas points to an interesting source of solitude: the relationship between Being and a given Dasein, between "*existing* and *existent*" (TO, 44). The ontological distinction between "the beings that are, existents — from their very work of being . . . is posited from the start of *Being and Time*" (TO, 44). Most definitions of Dasein point to the fact that its ability to relate itself to its own Being distinguishes Dasein ontologically from things with the type of Being as ready-to-hand. In Heidegger's own words, Dasein is that entity which "in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being — a relationship which itself is one of Being" (BT, 12:32). The so-called 'closed-loop' of an entity ontologically defined in the circular, differentiated and

individualized by the way in which it relates to Being is equivalent to 'solitude'. Thus, "solitude lies in the very fact that there are existents" (TO, 43). Solitude is not an ontic matter; it is not "the factual isolation of Robinson Crusoe" (TO, 43) separated from others on a deserted island. It is not an epistemological matter; it is not "the incommunicability of a content of consciousniousness" (TO, 43). It is an ontological matter; "the indissoluble unity between the existent and its work of existing" (TO, 43).

In his consideration of Being-in-the-world as basic state of Dasein, Heidegger has attempted to eliminate the use of such words as 'inside' and 'outside'. He does this by uniting Dasein and its world in Being-in-the-world as well as Dasein and Other in Being-with. But if Dasein in its various ways of Being always is towards that Being and this amounts to solitude as Levinas suggests, then such concepts resurface. For Levinas, "[t]o take up the existing in the existent is to enclose it" (TO, 43) and this means that "[m]y relationship with existing . . . [is] the interior relationship par excellence" (TO, 42). The interiority of the relationship between a being and Being amounts to solitude and it is Heidegger's conception of ontology (which incorporates solitude) which amounts to an 'egology'. The ontological distinction is "the fact of being . . . [that] is most private" (EI, 57) and creates an 'interior' ego. Heidegger's Dasein is marked by "the self-sufficiency of the same, it identification in ipseity, its egoism. Philosophy is [therefore] an egology" (TI, 44). Since "[s]olitude thus appears here as the isolation which marks the very event of being . . . [t]he social is beyond ontology" (EI, 57-58). Although Heidegger tried to

'dissolve'[119] the subject-object, I-other problems with his Being-in-the-world and Being-with, the ontological distinction and the solitude it represents means that "the duality of the exterior and the interior thus recurs in Dasein, as in the whole of traditional ontology" (EE, 47).

In addition to the fact that Heidegger does not recognize the alterity of the Other, Levinas questions the relationship between a Dasein and another — for Heidegger, there is not / cannot be an unmediated relationship with the Other. Even if Heidegger's conception of Being-with were capable of establishing an Other, the relationship with such an Other would still be mediated. For Levinas, the face-to-face relationship with the Other is a direct, unmediated relationship. All relationships with others in Heidegger, however, are mediated. In the first instance, Dasein's relationship with others is mediated by the world / environment / the work-world of equipment. If this is viewed ontically, then the "Others who are thus 'encountered' in a ready-to-hand, environmental context of equipment, are . . . encountered from out of the world . . . a world which is always mine too in advance" (BT, 118:154). Thus, others are encountered from out of world which is *my* concern.

Even if one views the relationship between one Dasein and another ontologically, rather than ontically, the relationship is still mediated by the Being (Being-in-the-world / Being-with) that Dasein shares with others. It is the ontological 'Being-with' which forms the Heideggerian relationship between Dasein and others. Much of Levinas' work

---

[119] Dreyfus, p. 151. I owe this term to Dreyfus who wrote that "the question of other minds, rather than remaining a basic philosophical problem, as it is for Descartes, Husserl, and Sartre, is 'dissolved' by Heidegger."

(particularly that devoted to alterity) amounts to a "putting into question of this *with* as possibility of escaping solitude" (EI, 58). It is Levinas' relationship between one and the Other (alterity) rather than Heidegger's relationship among / with Dasein that represents "a participation in being which makes us escape from solitude" (EI, 58). Thus, according to Levinas, "it is not the preposition *mit* [with] that should describe the original relationship with the other"[120] (TO, 41).

In addition to questioning the ability of the 'with' to capture the relationship with the Other, Levinas questions the type of relationship it establishes. As noted above and emphasized by Benso, the relationship with the Other is assymetrical. Yet the relationship established by Heidegger's use of 'with' amounts to "reciprocally being with one another" (TO, 40). Reciprocity is not assymetrical. In Heidegger's relationship of the 'with', "[o]ne if for the other what the other is for oneself, there is no exceptional place" (TO, 83). Reciprocity means interchangeability, not assymetry. Dasein and another Dasein "are interchangeable because they are reciprocal" (TO, 83). For Levinas, I "and the other do not constitute a simple correlation, which would be reversible. The reversibility of a relation . . . would couple them the *one* to the *other* . . . [and] transcendence would be reabsorbed into the unity of the system, destroying the radical alterity of the other" (TI, 35-36). The best way to describe Heidegger's sociality, according to Levinas, is by the

---

[120] Although Levinas uses the term 'with' in this denouncement of the Heideggerian 'with' as a basis for relationship, it must be remembered that Levinas does not conceive of such a relationship in the terms of formal logic. The preposition does not combine independent substantives into a relationship. Levinas' relationship preserves alterity and it is for this reason that it is a relationship 'only by analogy'. For a linguistic analysis of the term 'relationship' and its ontological implications see EE 21 and TI 180-181.

term 'communion'. According to Levinas, "[s]ocial life in the world is communication or communion. . . . [It is] through participation in something common, in an idea, a common interest, a work, a meal, in a 'third man' that contact is made. Persons are not simply in front of one another, they are along with each other around something" (EE, 41). Heidegger's relationship established by the 'with' is of this structure.

The reason for Levinas' rejection of the Heideggerian preposition 'with' as the basis for a relationship with the Other is because it reduces the Other to the same, thereby eliminating its alterity. The reduction of the other to the same, "depriving the known being of its alterity can be accomplished only if it is aimed at through a third term, a neutral term, which itself is not a being" (TI, 42). That is, mediation is part of reduction. Levinas offers three possible ways in which this reduction can be accomplished. First, the "third term may appear as a concept of thought" (TI, 42). If that is the case then "the individual that exists abdicates into the general that is thought" (TI, 42). Next, the "third term may be called sensation" (TI, 42). If that is the case then the "objective quality and subjective affection are merged" (TI, 42). These first two ways of reducing the other to the same relate to things and will be examined in the chapter below. Finally, and most importantly, the third term "may appear as *Being* distinguished from the *existent*: Being, which at the same time is not (that is, is not posited as an existent) and . . . which is not a nothing" (TI, 42). This third way of interposing a neutral third term is best understood by the general term 'ontology'. For Levinas, Heidegger's *Being and Time* represents "an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being" (TI, 43). That term is the impersonal,

62

neutral term "Being" or "Dasein". As Levinas writes, "*Miteinandersein*, too, remains the collectivity of the 'with,' and is revealed in its authentic form around the truth. It is a collectivity around something common. Just as in all philosophies of communion, sociality in Heidegger is found in the subject alone; and it is in terms of solitude that the analysis of *Dasein* in its authentic form is pursued" (TO, 93).

Both Heidegger and Levinas makes use of the terms 'neuter', 'neutral', and 'anonymous'. For Heidegger, there is anonymity in the 'neuter' 'they':

> The 'who' is not this one, not that one, not oneself, not some people, and not the sum of them all. The 'who' is the neuter, *the 'they'*. . . . Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The *'they'*, which supplies the answer to the question of the *'who'* of everyday Dasein, is the *'nobody'* to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-another" (BT:127-128:164-166).

In the anonymity of the 'they', Dasein 'disburdens' itself and loses its Being. Levinas contends that a being's relationship with Being has the same effect. Being is the impersonal, neutral 'third term' into which Dasein loses itself. According to Levinas, "Heideggerian ontology . . . subordinates the relationship with the Other to the relation with Being in general, [and thereby] remains under obedience to the anonymous" (TI, 46). That the ontological distinction itself amounts to a "forgetting of Being" (TI, 46) is the reason for this. Levinas contends that "the philosophy of the Neuter . . . [is] the Heideggerian Being of the existent. . . .[T]he primacy of the Neuter . . . [is to] place the Neuter dimension of Being above the existent" (TI, 298).

CHAPTER III

THINGS

As was stated in the above chapter, Benso's supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger rests upon the claim that Levinas has a concept of ethics which Heidegger lacks but Heidegger has a concept of things which Levinas lacks. According to Benso, "there are things in Heidegger. For him, things are the place where the gathering of the fourfold — the mortals, the gods, the earth, the sky — comes to pass."[121] Benso draws upon Heidegger's conception of the Fourfold because she perceives there a concept akin to Levinas' 'alterity'. Although the relation between the so-called 'early' and 'late' Heidegger is not the focus of this thesis, it becomes germane because of Benso's use of it in relation to things. To be sure, there are many different views on the consistency or inconsistency between the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and the 'late' Heidegger. However, Heidegger himself notes in *Letter on Humanism* that the more 'poetical' notion of dwelling in the so-called 'late' Heidegger "is the essence of 'being-in-the-world' . . . in *Being and Time*" (BW, 236). As such, references to both 'early' and 'late' Heidegger

---

[121] Benso, p. 132.

shall be used. Whether Heidegger has an adequate notion of things will be examined below. Yet according to Benso, "there are no things for Levinas."[122]

Heidegger on Things

In his introduction to *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Krell states that "Heidegger sees the thing as the concrescence of what he calls *the fourfold* (*das Geviert*) of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities" (BW, 321). Yet he adds that "[n]o introductory words of ours can explain what Heidegger means by the this fourfold. . . . [It] is strange" (BW, 321). Although the concept of the fourfold verges on being incomprehensible, some sense can be made of it. The importance of the fourfold is not so much *what* Heidegger says it *is* as what use he makes of it. The fourfold is a "*primal* oneness [of] the four [elements] — earth and sky, divinities and mortals — [that] belong together" (BW, 327). Heidegger waxes poetic when he writes that:

> Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up in plant and animal. . . . The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether. . . . The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment. . . . The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortal because they can die. . . . Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on earth, under the sky, before the divinities (BW, 327-328).

---

[122] Ibid.

It is difficult (perhaps impossible) to glean the metaphysical meaning Heidegger has in mind in this passage.

However, the concept of dwelling and its relation to the fourfold is of primary concern to Heidegger's notion of things. According to Heidegger, "[m]ortals *are* in the fourfold by *dwelling*" (BW, 328). By dwelling, Heidegger means "to spare, to preserve" (BW, 328). Human beings dwell / preserve with a particular mode of Being corresponding to each of the elements of the fourfold. According to Heidegger "[i]n saving the earth, in receiving the sky, in awaiting the divinities, in initiating mortals, dwelling comes to pass" (BW, 329). These modes are referred to as the "fourfold preservation of the fourfold" (BW, 329). What they preserve is the fourfold's presence in things; dwelling is always associated with things. If dwelling means "the stay of mortals on earth" (BW, 327), then "[d]welling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things" (BW, 329). Human beings dwell among things. Moreover, the presence of the fourfold in things is dependent upon human beings: "[d]welling preserves the fourfold by bringing the essence of the fourfold into things. But things themselves secure the fourfold *only when* they themselves *as* things are let be in their essence" (BW, 329).

This section of *Building Dwelling Thinking* becomes more intelligible when combined with sections of *Being and Time*. Being-in-the-world means dwelling with things (as preserving). Heidegger takes up this notion in the third division of *Being and Time* entitled "The Worldhood of the World". The larger ontological question of the meaning of Being is to be explored within a particular phenomenological setting.

Heidegger begins the third division by asking the question "What can be meant by describing 'the World' as a phenomenon?" (BT, 63:91). The answer he supplies is: "[i]t means to let us see what shows itself in 'entities' within the world" (BT, 63:91). This phenomenological examination will have both an ontical and an ontological element: the enumeration and description of entities in the world as well as the analysis of the type of Being which they possess. Heidegger concludes, however, that "*[n]either the ontical depiction of entities within-the-world nor the ontological Interpretation of their Being is such as to reach the phenomenon of the 'world'*" (BT, 64:92). The reason for this is that the 'worldhood of the world' is an existentiale way of being for Dasein. As Heidegger puts it, "[o]ntologically, 'world' is not a way of characterizing those entities which Dasein essentially is *not*; it is rather a characteristic of Dasein itself" (BT, 64:92). It is this aspect which is overlooked by Benso and creates problems for her proposal of an 'ethics of things' as a supplementation of Heidegger and Levinas.

As was the case with the fourth division, Heidegger begins his analysis by what is 'proximally and for the most part' given — the "world of everyday Dasein which is closest to it . . . the *environment*" (BT, 66:94). When Dasein is 'going about its business' involved in "'*dealings*' *in* the world and *with* entities within-the-world" (BT, 67:95) it encounters equipment in its environment. Equipment has an 'in-order-to' structure — it is used for something. Equipment has an inherent "serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability" (BT, 68:97). It is on the basis of this, that the "kind of Being which equipment possesses — in which it manifests itself in its own right — we call "*readiness-to-hand*" (BT, 69:98). What Dasein is concerned with primarily is not the equipment used

as a means, but the ends to which the equipment is put. Thus, it is the work to be done that is the focus of Dasein's circumspection. The work is ready-to-hand just like equipment; the "work to be produced, as the '*towards-which*' of such things as the hammer, the plane, and the needle, likewise has the kind of Being that belongs to equipment" (BT, 70:99).

Both equipment and the work produced by its use are incorporated in a referential totality. Any given piece of equipment is related to another — a pen, for example, is used with a sheet of paper just as a hammer is used with a nail. Besides equipment and work, other 'entities' are encountered in the environmental referential totality. Nature is an entity which has a 'where-of' structure — it is that out of which the work is produced through the use of equipment. Its Being, however, is not ready-to-hand; it is "pure presence-at-hand" (BT, 70:100). Likewise, entities with the type of being of Dasein are also discovered in the environment. The work produced is intended for someone — a someone which has a 'for-the-sake-of' structure. Both of these entities — Nature and Dasein — are first discovered in the environment of the 'public' world of reference and assignment.

But what concerns Heidegger most is not these entities which can be taken in a purely ontical way; he is most concerned with the ontological basis for encountering any of these entities in the first place. Phenomenology means "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (BT, 34:58). Phenomenology is expressed by the slogan "To the things themselves!" (BT, 34:58). The "world is that in terms of which the ready-to-hand is ready-to-hand. . . . [T]he world . . .

[is what] let[s] the ready-to-hand be encountered" (BT, 83:114). What this, and the

definition of phenomenology amounts to, is that "what we encounter within-the-world

has, in its very Being, been freed for our concernful circumspection, for taking account"

(BT, 83:114) of it. The Being of an entity within-the-world is its involvement in the

referential totality / totality of involvements which is the world. According to Heidegger,

the "fact that it [an entity within-the-world] has such an involvement is *ontologically*

definitive for the Being of such an entity, and is not an ontical assertion about it" (BT,

84:116). The world, as a totality of involvements / references, discloses the ontological

existence of what makes any reference possible. The world ultimately refers to Being-in-

the-world:

> But the totality of involvements itself goes back ultimately to a 'towards-
> which' in which there is *no* further involvement: this 'towards-which' is not
> an entity with the kind of Being that belongs to what is ready-to-hand
> within a world; it is rather an entity whose Being is defined as Being-in-the-
> world, and to whose state of Being, worldhood itself belongs. This
> primary 'towards-which' is not just another 'towards-this' as something in
> which involvement is possible. The primary 'towards-which' is a 'for-the-
> sake-of-which'. But the 'for-the-sake-of' always pertains to the Being of
> *Dasein*, for which, in its Being, that very Being is essentially an *issue*. We
> have thus indicated the interconnection by which the structure of an
> involvement leads to Dasein's very Being as the sole authentic 'for-the-
> sake-of-which' (BT, 84:116-117).

The way in which the 'late' Heidegger is bound to the 'early' Heidegger is by the

relationship between the concept of the fourfold and Being-in-the-world as letting be.

Dwelling (and the preservation it implies) is the same as letting be. The phrase 'letting

something be involved' represents an ontological existentiale. To 'let be' has both an

ontical and an ontological sense. Ontically it means "something which is already an entity

must be discovered in its readiness-to-hand, and that we must thus let the entity which has this Being be encountered" (BT, 85:117). Ontologically, it means the "freeing of *everything* ready-to-hand as ready-to-hand" (BT, 85:117). Dasein frees entities within the world by letting them be. Dasein is the *"condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves"* (BT, 87:120). Only because Dasein exists can entities be freed. All roads lead back to Being.

It is on the basis of Being — as the condition whereby all things can be encountered and known in themselves — that part of Benso's proposed 'ethics of things' runs afoul of Heidegger. Benso contends that:

> Heidegger's notion of things needs to be broadened . . . to include within its range of signification also beings that have never been reached by any human activity. Uncontaminated nature displays the same metaphysical structure that the jug (or the bridge or the domesticated animal) does for Heidegger. Therefore, it participates in an ethics of things with the same dignity and according to the same modalities.[123]

What Benso has overlooked is the fact that Dasein is required for there to be anything of concern / significance. There can be no 'pure Nature' untouched by man because even Nature has a relationship with Being. Nature (presence-at-hand) is discovered in the products of Nature (ready-to-hand). As Heidegger puts it, "[t]he wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind 'in the sails'. (BT, 70:100).

---

[123] Op. cit., p. 137.

That Benso believes things can have an ethics — akin to that of Levinas — applied

to them, is quite evident. Things are candidates for ethical consideration because they

possess an otherness which cannot be eliminated. The fourfold is the element of a thing

which exceeds one's grasp, thereby establishing itself as the basis for otherness.

According to Benso:

> Humans are not the only inhabitants of it [the fourfold in a thing]; other
> inhabitants offer a resistance to appropriative movements that is similar, in
> modes and shapes, to that offered by Levinas's Other. Not only humans
> and divinities, personal presences despite their substantial difference, dwell
> in the Fourfold. The earth and the sky inhabit it, too. And their resistance
> to domination and objectification is as strong as that of the (im)mortal
> Others.[124]

While it remains unclear what exactly Heidegger had in mind by the use of the terms

'earth', 'sky', and 'divinities', it seems unlikely that they are 'personal presences' as Benso

claims. Although the 'earth' and 'sky' have been personified since ancient times, such

concepts do not meet the requirements of Levinas for consideration as 'individual' others.

Moreover, dwelling — which preserves the presence of the fourfold in things — is a mode

of Being which has Dasein / Being as its origin. As such, it is not 'other'. But the process

whereby the fourfold inhabit the thing is equated by Benso with ethics. Although "it is not

possible to possess the abode of the Fourfold; it is possible, however, to inhabit it. The

proper dwelling in it, that dwelling that respects the Otherness of the co-dwellers, is

ethics. Ethics resumes its ancient significance of dwelling place."[125]

---

[124] Op. cit., p. 136.

[125] Ibid.

Benso's equating of Heidegger's 'letting be' with Levinas' ethics is not a surprising position given the degree to which she relies upon Derrida. Many commentators point to Heidegger's 'respect' or 'letting-be' as an analogue for Levinas' ethical relationship with the Other. Bouckaert contends that it may be "possible to discover a common standpoint between Levinas and Heidegger if we start from the theme of *Sein-lassen.*"[126] Furthermore, he claims that "goodness and justice mean, in the first place, that we let the Other be what he is."[127] The origin of his claim, as well as that of Benso, is Derrida. For Derrida, Heideggerian ontology cannot possibly do any violence to the existent since it allows it to be as it is. As Derrida points out:

> [n]ot only is the thought of Being not ethical violence, but it seems that no ethics — in Levinas's sense — can be opened without it. Thought — or at least the precomprehension of Being — *conditions* . . . the *recognition* of the essence of the existence (for example someone, existent *as* other, *as* other self, etc.). It conditions the *respect* for the other *as what it is*: other.[128]

In response, one might point out that Derrida is compacting the various aspects of 'comprehension' into a single function. Comprehension for Heidegger is composed of three elements: pre-knowing or fore-sight, interpreting, and meaning. According to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, fore-sight simply sights the object, interpretation takes what has been sighted and specifies it "*as* that *as* which we are to take the thing in question"

---

[126] Luk Bouckaert, "Ontology and Ethics: Reflections on Levinas' Critique of Heidegger," International Philosophical Quarterly, X (1970), 414.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1978), pp. 137-138.

(BT, 149:189), and meaning combines the entity with the Being of Dasein in order for it to be understood. Before Derrida's respect for the other 'as what it is' can occur, there has to be a sighting. That is, Derrida's respect occurs at the level of interpretation not fore-sight or precomprehension. The way in which the entity which is Other is sighted is against the horizon of Being. Thus Levinas writes that:

> Comprehension for Heidegger ultimately rests on the *opening* of being . . . like a vacancy awaiting its incumbent, opened by the very fact that a being is. . . . It is thus that Heidegger describes in their most formal structure, the articulations of vision where the relation of the subject with the object is subordinated to the relation of the object with light, which is not an object. The understanding of a being will thus consist in going beyond the being, into the *openness*, and in perceiving it with*in the horizon of being*. In other word, comprehension, as constructed by Heidegger, rejoins the great tradition of Western philosophy wherein to comprehend the particular being is already to place oneself beyond the particular, which alone exists, by knowledge which is always knowledge of the universal (IOF, 124).

Levinas is not opposed to comprehension, but the structure of comprehension. The fact that comprehension / letting be is dependent upon Dasein / Being, eliminates any conception of 'otherness' in the object of comprehension. Pre-knowing or fore-sight involves Dasein 'sighting' the 'thing' against a horizon of Being in which it participates. Interpretation likewise occurring against the horizon of Being and meaning is always dependent upon Dasein. All aspects of comprehension amount to a reduction of the other to the same; "knowledge or vision . . . is an act that in some way appropriates the 'seen' to itself, integrates it into a world by endowing it with signification" (TI, 195).

For Heidegger, Being is the 'end-all, be-all'. That is, "Being and the structures of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. *Being is the transcendens pure and simple*" (BT, 37:61). Thus, when Heidegger writes

that the "task of ontology is to explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief" (BT, 27:49), the fact that the Being of entities *stands out in full relief* is not a mere 'figure of speech'. Entities are known because of the Being which Dasein possesses. That being the case, they do not have a concept of otherness which Levinas would recognize. As Levinas puts it, although "knowledge remains disinterested, it is nevertheless marked by the way the knowing being has approached the Real. To recognize truth to be disclosure is to refer it to the horizon of him who discloses. . . . The disclosed being is relative to us and not καθ' αυτό" (TI, 64). Comprehension does not violate the 'letting the thing be' aspect of the definition of phenomenology, it violates the 'from itself' aspect.

As noted above, reduction of the Other to the same can be accomplished in three different ways: the 'object' may be considered a concept, a sensation, or Being. As Levinas points out, "[k]nowledge is always an adequation between thought and what it thinks" (EI, 60). Heidegger considers adequation and correspondence in section 44 of *Being and Time*: 'Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth'. Claiming that the "characterization of truth as 'agreement', *adaequatio*, ὁμοίωσις, is very general and empty" (BT, 215:258), Heidegger concludes that "the 'definition' of 'truth' . . . [is] 'uncoveredness' and . . . 'Being-uncovering'" (BT, 220:263). Earlier, Heidegger used a similar concept in reference to entities discovered within the world of concern / circumspection; "'[d]isclose' and 'disclosedness' . . . shall signify 'to lay open' and 'the character of having been laid open'" (BT, 75:105). Heidegger summarizes the relationship between these terms and truth in the following way:

> Uncovering is a way of Being for Being-in-the-world. Circumspective concern, or even that concern in which we tarry and look at something, uncovers entities within-the-world. These entities become that which has been uncovered. They are 'true' in a second sense. What is primarily 'true' — that is, uncovering — is Dasein. 'Truth' in the second sense does not mean Being-uncovering (uncovering), but Being-uncovered (uncoveredness) (BT, 220:263).

The truth of an 'object' uncovered / disclosed in the world is secondary to the truth of the

Being which does the uncovering / disclosing. Thus, Levinas' first means of reduction

(knowledge) is supplanted by the third (Being) in Heidegger's ontology.

In his discussion of Descartes, Heidegger entertains then dismisses the notion of

sensation. In traditional ontology (of which Descartes is not only the founder but also

member) "the way to get a genuine grasp of what really is has been decided in advance: it

lies in νοεῖν — [which Heidegger interprets as] 'beholding' in the widest sense" (BT,

96:129). If sensation is a type of 'beholding', then it is related to such concepts as 'letting

be', 'uncovering' and 'disclosing'. Sensation is a "possible way of access to entities by a

beholding which is perceptual in character" (BT, 86:129). But as the Wax Analogy

shows, what is uncovered / discovered is the ontical aspect of "this waxen Thing which is

coloured, flavoured, hard, and cold" (BT, 96:129). What sensation cannot reveal is the

ontological Being of the Thing itself. The ontical which is revealed by sensation "is not of

any importance ontologically" (BT, 96:129). Thus, "[t]he senses do not enable us to

cognize any entity in its Being; they merely serve to announce the ways in which 'external'

Things within-the-world are useful or harmful for human creatures encumbered with

bodies. . . . [T]hey tell us nothing about entities in their Being" (BT, 96-97:129). Because

sensation is not ontologically adequate to the task of revealing the Being of things, it is not an appropriate means of uncovering / disclosing.

In the end, it is Being alone which is primary when one is concerned with the disclosure / uncovering of things. According to Levinas, "[o]bjects have no light of their own; they receive a borrowed light" (TI, 74) from Dasein which does the revealing / disclosing. Thus, "something one encounters . . . from the very fact that it is illuminated [by Being] one encounters it as if it came from us [who are beings]. It does not have a fundamental strangeness" (TO, 65) sufficient for it to be considered Other based upon 'alterity'. For Levinas, phenomenology of the Other does not occur in comprehension but in expression; the thing is not disclosed against the horizon of Being, it expresses itself. As Levinas writes, the *other qua other is the Other*. To 'let him be' the relationship of discourse is required; pure 'disclosure' . . . does not respect him enough for that" (TI, 71). The 'philosophy of the Neuter' shows itself again in Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of things. Levinas writes that the "exaltation of the Neuter may present itself as the anteriority of the We with respect to the I, of the situation with respect to the beings in situation" (TI, 298). In the preceding chapter, the sociality proposed by Heidegger was rejected because it failed to recognize the alterity of the Other (person). Now, Being-in-the-world as the uncovering / disclosing of things — the situation (world / Being-in-the-world) with respect to the being in the situation (things encountered within-the-world) — also fails to respect alterity.

If Heideggerian disclosure destroys the alterity of things, Levinasian enjoyment preserves it. "It is interesting to observe", writes Levinas, "that Heidegger does not take the relation to enjoyment into consideration" (TI, 134). It is in the second section of *Totality and Infinity* — entitled "Interiority and Economy" — that Levinas considers the concept of 'enjoyment'. This section, according to Peperzak, amounts to "a correction of Heidegger's description of *Dasein's being-in-the-world*."[129] It is for this reason that there is a 'duality' about this section of *Totality and Infinity* — one which a careful reading will discern and of which Benso was evidently unaware. This section contains both a characterization of Heidegger's system as well as Levinas' original thought. Since it characterizes (and criticizes) Heidegger, many of the claims Benso attaches to Levinas should be directed to Heidegger. For the purposes of this thesis, this section represent a substitution for Heidegger's conception of things — one which should prove acceptable to Benso thereby negating the need for a supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger.

Levinas begins the section by distinguishing his work from that of Heidegger; "[i]n contradistinction to the philosophers of existence we will not found the relation with the existent respected in its being, and in this sense absolutely exterior, that is, metaphysical [the Other], on being in the world, the *care* and *doing* characteristic of the Heideggerian *Dasein*" (TI, 109). Transcendence is the basis for making such a distinction. As Peperzak

---

[129] Adriaan Peperzak, To The Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993), p. 147.

puts it, "[w]hereas . . . being-in-the-world reduce[s] transcendence to the immanence of an all-embracing unity [Being], the metaphysical relation [of Levinas] is a real transcendence."[130] Thus, there is a "difference that separates the relations analogous to transcendence from those of transcendence itself" (TI, 109) — a difference that separates Heidegger from Levinas.

The relationship between a being and things cannot be characterized solely as an equipmental relationship as presented in Heidegger's Being-in-the-world. There are certain things which are not equipment. These Levinas designates as the "things we live from [and they] are not tools, nor implements, in the Heideggerian sense of the term. Their existence is not exhausted by the utilitarian schematism that delineates them as having the existence of hammers, needles, and machines" (TI, 110). An alternative designation for such items is "objects of enjoyment" (TI, 100). Objects of enjoyment are not simply the means to procure the continued existence of a being; they "are not always indispensable to it for the maintenance of that life, as means or as the fuel necessary for the 'functioning' of existence" (TI, 111). Objects of enjoyment are not sought because they continue a being's existence but because they are *enjoyable*. The means (food as necessary for continued life) becomes an end (sought because they are enjoyable, not because they continue life). It is not as if a being first becomes aware that certain things are required for its continued existence; in the first instance, things are objects of enjoyment. As such, they do not have the type of difference necessary to qualify them as Other — alterity. According to Levinas, "[n]ourishment . . . is the transmutation of the

---

[130] Op. cit. 149.

other into the same, which is the essence of enjoyment" (TI, 111). As Peperzak reiterates, the otherness of an object / thing is "a nonabsolute but relative and integratable otherness — [one which] is 'transmuted' in the Same . . . They are assimilated. . . . Enjoyment is always appropriation, assimilation, stilling of need."[131] According to Beavers, "the world loses its alterity in the satisfaction of a need."[132]

There is a 'higher order' non-cognitive element to the structure of enjoyment. In enjoyment, "there is a relation with an object and at the same time a relation with this relation" (TI, 111). One fills one's life not only with objects which furthers one's life, but with objects one enjoys — which add to one's life in a way that is similar to, but distinct from, the way one continues life. Thus, Levinas writes that "[e]njoyment is precisely the way the act nourishes itself with its own activity" (TI, 111). This structure is reflected in the notion of desire, mentioned above. Again Levinas writes that "[l]ife is not the naked will to be, an ontological *Sorge* for this life. Life's relation with the very condition of its life becomes the nourishment and content of that life. Life is *love of life*, a relation with contents that are not my being . . . Distinct from my substance but constituting it" (TI, 122). The reference to *Sorge* summons up Heidegger who might translate this passage in the following manner: 'Dasein's relation with things is a relation with an entity that does not have the being of Dasein — yet the being of things (which do not have existence) constitutes the existence of Dasein'. How curious.

---

[131] Op. cit., p. 151.

[132] Beavers, p. 70.

The dual nature of the enjoyment inherent in life, sounds a lot like the first definition of Dasein as:

> an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being — a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. *Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being* (BT, 12:32).

Heidegger locates the generation of the individual Dasein (self) in the ontological distinction characterized by this definition. What Levinas does with enjoyment is establish a moment prior to Dasein which constitutes an individual (self). As Peperzak points out, the "circularity of life's enjoying itself is typical for the pretheoretical and prepractical consciousness of a solitary ego taken on its most basic level."[133] Enjoyment is what first individuates a being into an 'ego'. In order for there to be an enjoyment of life rather than simply living life as continued existence, there must be an 'ego'. Individuation occurs at a pre-cognitive level; "[e]njoyment . . . is not yet the level of reflection" (TI, 113). As Levinas puts it, enjoyment or "*living from.* . . is not simply becoming conscious of what fills life" (TI, 111) — before a being knows that it is alive or what that life constitutes, it is hungry. According to Peperzak, an ego "is concerned and takes care of itself before it becomes conscious of itself."[134]

---

[133] Peperzak, p. 151.

[134] Op. cit., p. 150.

Although a being is dependent on things for its continued existence, it is not

subordinated to them. It is through enjoyment that the individual gains its independence

from the world. According to Levinas, "[w]hat we live from does not enslave us; we

enjoy it" (TI, 114). A need is not a simple lack but the possibility for satisfaction, an

opportunity for the ego to enjoy itself. The ego is capable of "mastery in this dependence"

(TI, 114). According to Peperzak, "[d]ependence on (nonabsolute but relative) otherness

and independence from it are the two sides of a freedom that shows its mastery in

possession, consumption, and exploitation."[135] The ego, alone in the world because it has

found nothing other than itself (or what can be converted into itself) — no Other —

becomes master of the universe. The ego becomes the "I can" (TI, 117). The ego which

is "[c]onfronted with the 'world' of consumptive and useful things and constellations, the

corporeal subject experiences itself as an 'I can' . . . for which the world spreads out."[136]

Referring to the linguistic relationship between 'I can' and Heidegger's '*Sein-können*',

Peperzak contends that the ego thus described is essentially the same as Dasein.

Enjoyment, like the ontological distinction, "is a withdrawal into oneself, an involution"

(TI, 118). As Levinas writes, in "enjoyment I am absolutely for mysef. Egoist without

reference to the Other, I am alone . . . Not against the Others, not 'as for me...' — but

entirely deaf to the Other, outside of all communication and all refusal to communicate —

without ears, like a hungry stomach" (TI, 134). The 'free reign' of the ego which

discovers nothing in the world which can limit it, is called into question only by the

---

[135] Op. cit., p. 152.

[136] Op. cit., pp. 152-153.

appearance of the Other; "the critical presence of the Other will call into question this egoism" (TI, 119).

More than simply preceding the use of equipment, enjoyment also occurs at the level of equipment. All objects, whether they be tools or not, are objects of enjoyment. According to Levinas:

> Every object offers itself to enjoyment, a universal category of the empirical — even if I lay hold of an object-implement, if I handle it as a *Zeug*. The handling and utilization of tools, the recourse to all the instrumental gear of life, whether to fabricate other tools or to render things accessible, concludes in enjoyment. As material or gear the objects of everyday use are subordinated to enjoyment . . . Things refer to my enjoyment. This is an observation as commonplace as could be, which the analyses of *Zeughaftigkeit* do not succeed in effacing. (TI, 132-133).

One uses a piece of equipment but also enjoys the use of it. Levinas' conception of enjoyment supplements Heidegger's notion of equipment. According to Levinas, the "enjoyment of a thing, be it a tool, does not consist simply in bringing this thing to the usage for which it was fabricated — the pen to writing, the hammer to the nail to be driven in — but also in suffering or rejoicing over this operation" (TI, 133).

Peperzak writes that to "enjoy life is neither a vis-à-vis with regard to the objects nor a participation — by handling tools or following signs — in a network of references; it is much more primitive, but all instrumentality and representation are rooted in it."[137] What makes enjoyment 'more primitive' than the use of implements is the relationship that things have with what Levinas calls the 'elemental'. It is the 'elemental' which could provide Benso with a Levinasian concept — akin to Heidegger's fourfold — which could

---

[137] Op. cit., p. 155.

account for the 'other' status of things. The way in which things are presented to an ego for enjoyment is from a background — which is not Being — medium called the 'elemental'. The elemental "is not reducible to a system of operational references and is not equivalent to the totality of such a system" (TI, 131). That is, the elemental is not the Heideggerian environmental world and is not Being. A possession is what has been removed from the elemental and converted into a thing. This resembles Benso's claim that possession is made possible only through "a perversion of the nature of things — from things to objects."[138] She contends that "[i]t is not possible to possess that abode."[139] just as Levinas maintains that the elemental is "the non-possessable" (TI, 131). For Benso, although "it is not possible to possess the abode of the Fourfold; it is possible, however, to inhabit it."[140] For Levinas, the elemental is "a medium: one is steeped in it; I am always within the element" (TI, 131). Benso's objection to Heidegger — that there is no 'unspoiled nature' — is answered by Levinas. The sailor "who makes use of the sea and the wind dominates these elements but does not thereby transform them into things. They retain the indetermination of elements" (TI, 131).

Benso claims that Levinas has no conception of things. According to her, either:

> He encounters them within the economy of the Same, within a movement
> (of labor, of enjoyment) that takes its bearings from the Same and returns
> to the Same. Or he encounters them as gifts, as the offer that the Same
> makes to the Other to welcome her/him, to cover her/his nakedness, and to
> enact the ethical relationship. It is the Other, however, who constitutes the

---

138 Benso, p. 136.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

principle of the donation, not the things themselves. That is, for Levinas there is no Otherness of things.[141]

Insofar as enjoyment is meant to capture Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world, Benso is correct. However, this claim ought to be made — and is made by Levinas — against Heidegger. Insofar as things are gifts offered to the Other, Benso is correct: this is determined by the Other and not the things themselves. This does not, however, eliminate the possibility that Levinas has an acceptable conception of the otherness of things. If Benso is willing to accept Heidegger's fourfold, then she should accept Levinas' elemental.

In addition to the status of things (its proposed otherness), Benso is concerned with the appropriate response. According to Benso, "[t]hings . . . can be experiences, enjoyed, even possessed, if only through a specific modality of possession that comes into contact without possessing, so that possession is never totalized. This modality . . . is the touching mode of tenderness."[142] Benso proposes 'tenderness' as a relationship between a being and a thing which does not reduce the alterity of the thing. That is, tenderness is a sort of respect for alterity akin to ethics. According to Benso, "[w]hat cannot be possessed, what tenderness respects and preserves, is the fullness of presencing. In other words, a thing is richer than the sound, the smell, the taste of it the I may — and does indeed — enjoy."[143]

---

[141] Op. cit., p. 132.

[142] Op. cit., p. 137.

[143] Ibid.

Two concepts in Levinas — 'gentleness' and the 'caress' — are possible origins for Benso's 'tenderness'. In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas refers to a mode of 'gentleness'. It is in 'gentleness' as a sort of 'intentional structure' that the Other is revealed. But the intentional structure of gentleness originates with the Other, not the self; "gentleness comes to the separated being from the Other. The Other precisely reveals himself in his alterity . . . as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness" (TI, 150). In *Time and the Other*, however, Levinas proposes the caress as an intentional mode originating from the self. He writes that the "caress is a mode of the subject's being, where the subject . . . [comes] in contact with another" (TO, 89). It is not properly speaking a contact like sensation for it "goes beyond this contact" (TO, 89). It is more like desire, mentioned above. The caress "feeds on countless hungers" (TO, 89) because it cannot be satisfied by what is aimed at in such an intentional state. The Other cannot be possessed. In this way, the caress is not a type of grasping, possessing, or knowing; "[i]f one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power" (TO, 90).

While it seems plausible that the caress is a mode of being which respects the otherness of things, Benso is correct when she contends that 'Levinas has no things'. The reason for this, as much of this thesis above demonstrates, is because things do not possess alterity. That is, in many different ways — both by Heidegger and Levinas — the otherness of things can, and indeed is, converted into the Same. The Other as person is the only true Other — that which cannot be converted into the Same. As Beavers puts it, "the alterity of person and that of things is significantly different. Persons resist

possession, things do not. Because of this difference, persons are the types of beings that can be violated, while things are not."[144]

While it is true that things represent a type of otherness, they do not possess alterity for they can be, and are, converted into the Same. It may be true that human beings are 'compelled' to 'respond' to the 'demands' placed upon them by things, as Benso claims. However, the 'demands' of things and the 'response' to them are not ethical in nature. The reason why ethics cannot be expanded to include things is because of the nature of ethics and thing; ethics is tied to alterity and things lack alterity. Moreover, the relationship to things (as proposed by Levinas) involves an inversion of need into mastery. That is, the demands placed upon a being by things is inverted into a mastery of things by being.

---

[144] Beavers, p. 70.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conclusion of this thesis is not that supplementation of Heidegger and Levinas is impossible, only that Benso's article fails to accomplish this task. Benso is correct that Levinas has an ethics. In fact, he proposes the very foundation of ethics — the encounter with the Other. For Levinas, and by extension all ethics, the focal point is the Other. Yet not any otherness will do. Levinas is primarily concerned with alterity — the type of Otherness which cannot be reduced to me, the ego, the Same. Individuation for Levinas is made possible by alterity — only on the basis of there being something different (the Other) can the Same be said to be. In the instant that the Same encounters an Other, ethics is born. Only on the basis of alterity can there be both a Same and ethics.

It is this concept of alterity which Levinas understood but Heidegger lacks, that prevents the latter from having an ethics. Heidegger's Dasein is an entity that individuates itself through the ontological distinction between Being and beings. The way in which Dasein takes hold of its being determines it *as* a being. The most authentic way Dasein takes hold of its being is through death. Rather than an element which would be comparable to Levinas' alterity, death represents the impossibility of Dasein's possibilities. Facing death is the most individual of actions and it individualizes Dasein. Thus,

87

individuation is a-social — it involves no other being than the one in question. As it turns out, however, Heidegger maintains that Being-with is always a part of Dasein's being. As such, a being is never alone whether it finds another being or not. Whatever Dasein discovers in the world (which is part of its own Being) is contained in a referential totality — the center of which is the individual Dasein. If Dasein encounters other, it is as another Dasein — not as anything fundamentally different than itself. Moreover, the relationship with others is mediated — by the world, by work, by Being-with. Ultimately, there is no alterity in a Heideggerian universe because there is only Being. Alterity / the Other is something that is beyond Being. Thus, Heidegger not only does not have an ethics but his ontology precludes an ethics from ever developing.

Benso claims that her supplementation 'reaches further' than Levinasian ethics — all the way to things. What Levinas maintains, however, is that ethics can neither be derived from nor applied to things for they lack alterity. In this sense, Levinas lacks things — not in the sense of not having any or not considering them. What Benso means is that Levinas' concept of the Other cannot be applied to things. She looks to Heidegger's conception of the Fourfold for an analogue to Levinas' alterity. If the Fourfold is beyond possession, then this amounts to an alterity that Levinas might accept. So long as Heidegger's conception of things is analyzed only according to the Fourfold, it may contain something akin to Levinas' alterity. However, the Fourfold relates to Being-in as Being-in-the-world and dwelling. An analysis of Being-in-the-world results, however, in a denial not only of a concept of alterity but also Benso's proposed supplementation. Since all things are interconnected in a totality of references, they ultimately lead back to

Dasein's Being. In this sense, the otherness of things is reduced to the Same (Being). Dasein is the ultimate 'for-the-sake-of-which' all other things are. In the end, even Heidegger does not have a concept of things which recognizes their otherness.

Insofar as Levinas' consideration of things represents a characterization and correction of Heidegger's being-in-the-world, it represents both a denial and an affirmation of the otherness of things. The denial occurs in Levinas' characterization of Heidegger's way of conceiving things. The affirmation occurs in two places: the fact that a thing is an object of enjoyment *prior to* Heidegger's being-in-the-world and with the proposal of the elemental as the medium out of which possessions (as a modification of things) come. If one were to judge Levinas according to alterity, however, then Benso is correct in maintaining that Levinas does not recognize the Otherness of things.

What Benso has in mind by an ethics of things is almost as incomprehensible as what Heidegger means by the Fourfold. If her aim is to establish an ethical responsibility for things — even Nature or the environment as a whole — then such an endeavor is futile if the basis is Heidegger or Levinas (or even some supplementation of the two). As the title of this thesis implies, either ethics and things never intersect because of alterity (Levinas) or all roads lead to Being (Heidegger). If either the former or the latter is the case, then there can be no ethics of things. The supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger is an interesting proposal for philosophical analysis. However, the way in which it is attempted by Benso proves fruitless.

Perhaps an alternative supplementation would join Levinas before and after Heidegger. Levinas' pre-cognitive, pre-conscious moment of enjoyment is the antecedent

to a Dasein that finds itself thrown into its world and operates according to being-in-the-world. The implication here is that Dasein individuates itself at the level of consciousness and cognition — at the level it can have issues / concerns, understand itself in its own being, and disclose its own being to itself. Levinas' person is much 'younger' or, perhaps, more primitive / elemental. Heidegger's being-in-the-world serves as a good basis for understanding how Dasein operates in it everyday life. But as it operates in the world (or even authentically) it finds no Other. Heidegger therefore needs posterior supplementation as well. Thus, Heidegger's ontology can be supplemented with Levinas' ethics. This seems to be an adequate supplementation of Levinas and Heidegger — one which is preferable to that of Benso.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beavers, A. F. (1995). Levinas Beyond the Horizons of Cartesianism: An Inquiry into the Metaphysics of Morals. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Bernasconi, R. (1988). The trace of Levinas in Derrida. In D. Wood and R. Bernasconi (Eds.). Derrida and Différance. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

-----------------. (1985). The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc.

Bernasconi, R. and Critchley, S. (1991). Re-Reading Levinas. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bernasconi, R. and Wood, D. (1988). The Provocation of Levinas: Rething the Other. New York: Routledge.

Benso, S. (1996). Of things face-to-face with Levinas face-to-face with Heidegger: prolegomena to a metaphysical ethics of things. Philosophy Today, 40, 132-141.

Bouckaert, L. (1970). Ontology and ethics: reflections on Levinas' critique of Heidegger. International Philosophical Quarterly, X, 402-419.

Buber, M. (1970). I and Thou. W. Kaufman (Trans.). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Cohen, R. A. (1986) Face to Face with Levinas. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Davis, C. (1996). Levinas: An Introduction. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Derrida, J. (1981). Dissemination. B. Johnson (Trans.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

-----------. (1973). Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs. D. P. Allison (Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

----------. (1978). Writing and Difference. A. Bass (Trans.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Dreyfus, H. L. (1991). Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's *Being and Time,* Division I. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Elliston, F. (1978). Heidegger's Existential Analytic. New York: Mouton Publishers.

Gerber, R. J. Totality and Infinity: Hebraism & Hellenism — the experiential ontology of Emmanuel Levinas. Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, 7, 177-188.

Heidegger, M. (1982). Basic Problems of Phenomenology. A. Hofstadter (Trans.). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

----------------. (1977). Basic Writings. D. F. Krell (Ed.). New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

----------------. (1962). Being and Time. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Trans.). San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

----------------. (1972). On Time and Being. J. Stambaugh (Trans.). New York: Harper & Row, Inc.

Husserl, E. (1962). Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology. W. R. B. Gibson (Trans.). London: Collier Books.

Keyes, C.D. (1972). An evaluation of Levinas' critique of Heidegger. Research in Phenomenology, II, 121-142.

Kockelmans, J. J. (1972) On Heidegger and Language. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Kovacs, G. (1987/88). The ontological difference in Heidegger's 'Grundbegriffe', Heidegger Studies, 3/4, 61-74.

Langan, T. (1959). The Meaning of Heidegger: A Critical Study of an Existentialist Phenomenology. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lawton, P. (1976). Levinas' notion of the 'there is', Philosophy Today, 10, 67-76.

Levinas, E. (1983). Beyond intentionality, Philosophy in France Today. A. Montefiore (Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

------------. (1987). <u>Collected Philosophical Papers</u>. A. Lingis (Trans.). Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

------------. (1979). The contemporary criticism of the idea of value and the prospects for humanism. <u>Value and Values in Evolution</u>, E. A. Maziarz (Ed.). New York: Gordon and Breach, Science Publishers, Inc.

------------. (1985). <u>Ethics and Infinity</u>. R. A. Cohen (Trans.). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

------------. (1978). <u>Existence and Existents</u>. A. Lingis (Trans.). The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.

------------. (1989). <u>The Levinas Reader</u>. S. Hand (Ed.). Cambridge: Blackwell.

------------. (1981). <u>Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence</u>. A. Lingis (Trans.). Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

------------. (1994). <u>Outside the Subject</u>. M. Smith (Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

------------. (1991). Philosophy and awakening. <u>Who Comes After the Subject?</u>. E. Cadava, P. Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (Eds.). M. Quaintance (Trans.). New York: Routledge.

------------. (1973). <u>The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology</u>. A. Orianne (Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

------------. (1987). <u>Time and the Other</u>. R. A. Cohen (Trans.). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

------------. (1994). <u>Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority</u>. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

------------. (1986). The trace of the other. <u>Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy</u>. M. C. Taylor (Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

------------. (1989). Is ontology fundamental? <u>Philosophy Today</u>. P. Atterton (Trans.). 121-129.

------------. (1978). Signature. <u>Research in Phenomenology, VIII</u>. A. Peperzak (Ed.). 175-189.

Lingis, A. (1979). Face to face: a phenomenological meditation. International Philosophical Quarterly, XIX. 151-163.

Marx, W. (1971). Heidegger and the Tradition. T. Kisiel and M. Greene (Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

McManus, D. (1996). Error, hallucination and the concept of 'Ontology' in the early work of Heidegger. Philosophy, 71. 553-575.

Maloney, P. (1997). Levinas, substitution, and transcendental subjectivity. Man and World, 30. 49-64.

Manning, R. (1993). Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Mulhall, S. (1996). Heidegger and *Being and Time*. New York: Routledge.

Peperzak, A. (1978). Beyond being. Research in Phenomenology, VIII. 239-261.

--------------. (1983). Phenomenology — Ontology — Metaphysics: Levinas' perspective on Husserl and Heidegger. Man and World, 16. 113-127.

--------------. (1993). To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Richardson, W. (1967). Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.

Schroeder, B. (1996). Altared Ground: Levinas, History, and Violence. New York: Routledge.

Solomon, R. (1980). Phenomenology and Existentialism. New York: University Press of America.

Spiegelber, H. (1982). The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction. Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Tallon, A. (1976). Emmanuel Levinas and the problem of ethical metaphysics. Philosophy Today, 20, 53-66.

Vassey, C. (1981). Emmanuel Levinas: from intentionality to proximity. Philosophy Today, 25. 178-195.

Wahl, J. (1971) <u>A Short History of Existentialism</u>. F. Williams and S. Maron (Trans.). Westport, CN: Greenwood Press Publishers.

White, S. (1991). <u>Political Theory and Postmoderninsm</u>. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Wyschogrod, E. (1974). <u>Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics</u>. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.

VITA

Michael W. Blazek

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: ROADBLOCKS TO THE SUPPLEMENTATION OF LEVINAS AND HEIDEGGER: EITHER ETHICS & THINGS NEVER INTERSECT OR ALL ROADS LEAD TO BEING

Major Field: Philosophy

Personal Data: Born in Searcy, Arkansas, January 23, 1968, the son of Larry and Jo Blazek.

Education: Graduated from Sapulpa Public High School, Sapulpa, Oklahoma, in December 1985; received Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy from Oklahoma State University in December, 1992; completed requirements for Master of Arts degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1997.

Professional Experience: Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, Oklahoma State University, January, 1993 to December, 1997.